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Cash transfers and vouchers in response to drought in Mozambique

Lessons on social protection linkages and separation of functions



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Summary

Improving assistance to people affected by food insecurity and disaster in Mozambique is a pressing matter. The country is highly exposed to weather-related hazards and faces periodic cyclones, droughts and floods. Mozambique suffered a severe El Nino-induced drought in 2015-16 and below average agricultural yields in 2017-18. In March 2019, Cyclone Idai wreaked incredible damage on lives and infrastructure, followed by Cyclone Kenneth. Lines between vulnerability, poverty and disaster are blurred, with routine spikes in food insecurity during the 'lean season' ahead of crop harvests.

With predictions that more than 800,000 people would face severe food insecurity in the 2018-19 lean season, DFID funded the World Food Programme (WFP) and HelpAge to provide cash transfers or food commodity vouchers in Tete province. The objective was to mitigate the predicted situation of acute food insecurity through assistance to drought-affected households. The project reached 24,354 recipient households, of which 85% received commodity vouchers and 15% cash transfers.

Two notable features were introduced in the intervention. The first was linking the lean season assistance with social protection. The intervention prioritised households assisted by (or meeting the selection criteria of) the Basic Social Subsidy Programme (PSSB). The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action (MGCAS) and the National Institute of Social Action (INAS), which respectively are responsible for policy and implementation of non-contributory social protection, were involved in some elements of the programme design and implementation. The cash transfer value was established at 2,500 MZN per household per month, which aligned with the post-emergency Direct Social Support Programme (PASD-PE) – a recovery social assistance programme conceived in 2016 that has faced delays in implementation. These linkages are part of broader thinking on 'shock responsive social protection' and 'adaptive social protection', which concern the role of social protection in responding to and reducing vulnerability to major shocks such as drought and floods.

The second unique feature was providing transfers through a 'separation of functions' approach, with programme implementation and accountability roles divided between WFP and HelpAge (which worked in partnership with the local civil society organisation APITE). Separately funding certain project activities based on their cost and the expertise of different organisations has been recommended as an alternative model of implementing cash-based humanitarian assistance. WFP was responsible for geographic targeting of intervention areas, delivery of cash and voucher assistance and monitoring outputs and outcomes of assistance. HelpAge oversaw the selection of beneficiary households, accountability and monitoring the distribution of transfers. DFID saw the Tete project as an opportunity to test the separation of functions approach.

The decision of DFID to pursue linkages with social protection was driven by a desire to provide unconditional cash transfers and vouchers. Unlike other countries in the region, cash transfers have not been used in disaster response owing to government concerns about dependency, expectations, responsible spending and market access in rural areas. Cash transfers are, however, provided through social assistance.. It also created an opportunity to develop lessons on the use of social protection systems to support relief and recovery.

Owing to these innovative aspects, a learning component was included in the project. It examined the implicit and explicit assumptions underpinning the decisions to link to social protection systems and separately contract implementation activities, and the intended and unintended results of doing so. Following Cyclone Idai, the breadth of the exercise was expanded to consider emerging issues on the planned use of social assistance for recovery.

IMPLICATIONS OF LINKING WITH SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SEPARATION OF FUNCTIONS

The main areas influenced by the social protection linkages and separation of functions were targeting, registration, coordination and accountability. Other factors also influenced how the programme implementation evolved, notably organisational capacity, systems and the shifting operational and policy context.

TARGETING

The prioritisation of PSSB recipients and those meeting the PSSB criteria resulted in a high proportion of elderly beneficiaries (42% of recipients were over 60, compared to 17% in other WFP projects). The project design assumed a strong correlation between the PSSB criteria – which assists elderly, disabled and other vulnerable households – and food insecurity. PSSB recipients accounted for 17% of project beneficiaries. However, their prioritisation was controversial, with most stakeholders outside of the project expressing that they should not be prioritised given their regular benefits through the PSSB, even though that transfer value is lower than the project's.

Household targeting was affected to a lesser extent by the separation of functions. The limited experience of APITE in large-scale household targeting appears to have contributed to inclusion errors in one area identified prior to the first distribution. As a result, WFP became involved in a re-targeting exercise, owing in part to its strong relationship with local authorities. This issue is more strongly tied to organisational capacity than separation of functions.

REGISTRATION

The separation of registration and delivery tasks impacted the registration process, because WFP used its beneficiary information management system (SCOPE) for the delivery of electronic vouchers. HelpAge and APITE therefore had to use SCOPE for registering the targeted households, which necessitated training, hardware and software. Localities had to be entered into SCOPE prior to registration, which created delays, and APITE staff could not trouble-shoot certain technical issues that impacted registration (e.g. mis-spelling of community names in SCOPE).

Social protection linkages also influenced registration to a certain degree. The project design included using or uploading beneficiary household data to e-INAS – a social assistance information management system that had been under development for several years. Because it was reportedly not possible to import SCOPE data, INAS registered some project households alongside APITE, with each using different registration software. INAS involvement increased logistical coordination requirements for registration and resulted in some delays. As with SCOPE, the issue at play was the desire to use a specific management information system in the registration process (though with a view to populating that system rather than delivering the lean season assistance).

COORDINATION

The straddling of social protection, disaster risk management and humanitarian worlds necessitated coordination with many stakeholders spanning these sectors. Compared with implementation by a single organisation or a sub-contracting arrangement, separation of functions also increased coordination requirements. Both of the partners were accountable to DFID rather than one managing another, but their programming functions were mutually dependent (registration informs delivery, accountability informs changes to implementation, etc.). A memorandum of understanding likely would have clarified and streamlined coordination between WFP and HelpAge/APITE, though some challenges may not have been anticipated from the beginning given the newness of their partnership. The arrangement benefited substantially from their good working relationship and mutual desire to solve issues that arose.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The accountability dimensions of the project were highly influenced by the direct contracting of HelpAge by DFID, which ensured HelpAge and APITE's independence. However, the arrangement would have benefited from a stronger vision on how the independent accountability function would be harnessed to improve the project as it went along – especially as HelpAge needed WFP to resolve operational challenges identified, and WFP needed to be aware of all issues raised

through HelpAge's processes. At the end of the project, WFP and HelpAge were not entirely aware of the feedback received by the other. This gap was symptomatic of decreased communication and coordination between HelpAge and WFP on accountability compared to registration, which was influenced by their focus on fulfilling their individual functions and also attention diverted to responding to Cyclone Idai.

SOCIAL PROTECTION TO SUPPORT CYCLONE RECOVERY: ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Cyclone Idai was a disaster of unprecedented scale for Mozambique. Less than a month after Cyclone Idai, the World Bank and WFP, with support from UNICEF and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), developed a concept note for discussion with MGCAS and INAS on options for using social protection to bridge relief and recovery efforts. While the details were to be worked out in June 2019, social protection is anticipated to play a major role in reaching affected households.

The PASD-PE is set to be the heart of social assistance recovery efforts. Initial planning is that a large-scale version of the PASD-PE (over 100,000 households) will provide unconditional cash transfers through INAS, with support from partners for registration, monitoring and payment delivery as needed. It is anticipated that the PASD-PE recipients will include existing social assistance beneficiaries and other cyclone-affected households registered for disaster assistance.

While such assistance holds important potential to reach people at scale, multiple risks should be anticipated and mitigated:

- Speed and timing: Previous efforts to implement the PASD-PE were severely delayed; there is no experience with the programme in the cyclone-affected provinces (or elsewhere in the country as of July 2019).
- Data, targeting and registration: expanding social assistance programmes beyond pre-existing beneficiaries is complex and requires time and resources. The administrative ease of reaching existing beneficiaries must not disadvantage disaster-affected households not in the INAS management information system.
- Capacity: INAS delegations have limited capacity to make payments to existing social assistance recipients given limited resources and the time-intensive process of making payments manually. They have faced multiple demands in the disaster response and are still responsible for the implementation of regular social assistance programmes. The political will to implement and expand social assistance programmes through the PASD-PE will need to be accompanied by additional capacity within INAS and complemented by support from development and humanitarian partners as needed.

CONCLUSION

While this paper covered both separation of functions and linkages with social protection, the operational and policy implications are somewhat different. Separation of functions is fundamentally about how different entities (mainly aid organisations, donors and companies that facilitate the delivery of money and vouchers) relate to one another, the government and to beneficiaries when implementing a humanitarian programme and promoting accountability. This includes what their tasks are, how they work together and to whom they report. The building blocks of the Tete programme were similar to a 'usual' humanitarian responses but arranged slightly differently. The operational advantages and disadvantages of issuing contracts for different functions looked different depending on the agency's specific role (delivery v. accountability). Had the scale of the response been greater or the reformulation of roles more radical – such as DFID contracting the delivery of transfers to a payment company rather than an aid organisation – the implications likely would have been more radical too.

Whereas separation of functions mainly concerned relationships and responsibilities within humanitarian assistance, linking with social protection opened the door to programmes, institutions and systems largely external to those of disaster management and humanitarian aid. In the case of the Tete response, the links were relatively limited, mirroring social assistance

targeting criteria and transfer values within a humanitarian programme. These links influenced who did and did not benefit from the project and the amount of assistance received.

Plans to utilise social assistance in the cyclone recovery will presumably create a stronger shift towards social protection information management and delivery systems, which will require adequate support to take on the increased responsibilities. The resources and capacities required to start and expand social assistance programmes cannot be underestimated, and time is of the essence when supporting disaster-affected people. There is a risk of directing cyclone recovery social assistance towards those who can be most readily reached rather than those in the greatest need.

The advantages and trade-offs of linking with social protection and separating functions are inherently tied to how these approaches are taken forward and the dynamic policy and operational context of disaster response and social protection in Mozambique. The capacities, systems and normative frameworks of those involved also played significant roles in shaping implementation. Government, donors and aid organisations should consistently consider the added value and trade-offs of different approaches to partnership and linkages to social protection.

The below table identifies recommendations for each of the two aspects, when they are deemed appropriate.

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LINKING WITH SOCIAL PROTECTION

- 1. Identify and mitigate risks of providing disaster or recovery aid through or linked to social protection** – notably related to potential delays, inadequate transfer values or exclusion of disaster-affected people not already in social assistance schemes.
- 2. Closely coordinate assistance provided through or linked to social protection** with other assistance provided through DRM and humanitarian channels.
- 3. Provide adequate capacity-building support to government agencies leading the provision of social assistance emergency/recovery support and complement with support humanitarian and development partners as needed** -particularly if government capacity alone cannot ensure timely delivery of assistance.
- 4. Anticipate and mitigate technical and political challenges of linking disaster response and social protection** – including recognising who may benefit or lose resources as a result of working with and through social protection systems. Measures and incentives should be put in place for responsible data-sharing to facilitate for the registration and delivery of assistance to disaster-affected households.
- 5. Do not exclude social assistance beneficiaries from humanitarian assistance. When emergency and recovery responses are implemented through social protection systems, ensure that affected people not previously benefiting from social assistance are helped too.** In the latter scenario, this means ensuring adequate resources and processes to identify and assist people not already part of social assistance. It may take the form of temporarily expanding an emergency social assistance programme to reach new people and/or providing complementary assistance through DRM and humanitarian channels (if, for example, resources through social protection were insufficient or administratively challenging to register/reach new households in the needed timeframe).
- 6. Ensure that household targeting of lean season responses always includes food security and livelihood related criteria.** It
- 7. Look ahead to how responses linked to social protection will be triggered, financed and coordinated with DRM and humanitarian assistance.**

SEPARATION OF FUNCTIONS

- 8. Clearly define responsibilities, coordination and communication channels among partners.** This may include developing an MOU delineating roles and coordination, while allowing flexibility to adapt processes given that unforeseen issues may arise.
- 9. Recognise the inter-dependence of programme functions and how information management and delivery systems influence implementation.** All actors involved in implementation and accountability should be cognisant of how their individual systems could impact the arrangement. This includes how the delivery systems may influence registration and vice versa.
- 10. Ensure a strong feedback loop between accountability functions that raise challenges and operational efforts to resolve them.** When accountability is supported through an organisation not directly involved in other aspects of implementation, mechanisms need to be in place for problems raised through their channels to be resolved – otherwise accountability risks becoming delinked from problem-solving. Measures should be outlined in advance how particularly sensitive cases (e.g. related to corruption, sexual exploitation) will be handled.
- 11. Consider organisations' added values when establishing their roles and involve them in determining how roles relate to one another.** Potential added values include capacities, systems, past experience, government relationships and community presence.

1. Introduction

Mozambique faced a severe El Nino-induced drought in 2015-16 and below average agricultural yields in 2017-18. With predictions that more than 800,000 people would face severe food insecurity in the 2018-19 lean season, DFID funded the World Food Programme (WFP) and HelpAge to provide cash transfers or commodity vouchers in Tete province. The objective was to mitigate the predicted acute food insecurity in the lean season through assistance to drought-affected households. The project reached 24,354 recipient households as of May 2019, of which 20,799 (85%) received commodity vouchers and 3,555 (15%) cash transfers. Two notable features were introduced in the intervention – linkages to national social protection systems and separation of functions between different aid agencies.

The first was the alignment of some programme design features with social protection. The intervention prioritised households assisted by the Basic Social Subsidy Programme (PSSB), which is the largest social assistance programme in Mozambique. It also targeted drought-affected households that met PSSB selection criteria. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action (MGCAS) and the National Institute of Social Action (INAS), which respectively are responsible for policy and implementation of non-contributory social protection, were involved in some elements of the programme design and implementation. The cash transfer value was 2,500 MZN per household per month, which aligned with the PASD-PE – a planned post-emergency social assistance programme conceived in 2016 that has faced delays in implementation. These linkages are part of broader thinking on ‘shock responsive social protection’ and ‘adaptive social protection’, which concern the role of social protection in responding to and reducing vulnerability to major shocks such as drought and floods.¹

The second unique feature was providing transfers through a ‘separation of functions’ approach, with programme implementation and accountability roles divided between WFP and HelpAge (which worked in partnership with the national non-governmental organisation (NGO) APITE). WFP and HelpAge held separate grants with DFID for the following functions:

management system (SCOPE) by HelpAge/APITE/WFP and INAS local representatives based in the delegations of Tete and Moatize.

- Delivery of cash transfers (via mobile money) and commodity vouchers by WFP, with the choice of modality dependent on market conditions.
- Household-level monitoring by HelpAge and WFP (e.g. transfer receipt, food security outcomes).
- Accountability and grievance redressal mechanism by HelpAge/APITE, with WFP collecting feedback through a hotline already in place.

There was also a third aspect new to humanitarian efforts in Mozambique – the provision of unconditional cash transfers. Unlike many countries in the region, unconditional cash transfers have not been used in any previous response to disaster or acute food insecurity. Vouchers were only used for the first time in 2016-17 in response to El Nino-induced drought. While some donors and aid agencies have been interested in providing cash transfers given other experiences in the region, the government of Mozambique has not allowed their use in response to major drought, floods or anything other than social assistance. The government has expressed concerns related to dependency, access to markets, risks that people would not spend the money wisely, price-gouging by traders and worries that people would expect the cash assistance to continue (Bailey, 2016).

Substantial advocacy efforts have been undertaken by international agencies to enable the use of cash transfers in emergencies. WFP also piloted a cash-for-assets intervention in Cahora Bassa in 2018-19. However, at the time the project was implemented, the provision of unconditional cash transfers was only possible by working in collaboration with MGCAS and INAS. Cash transfers accounted for 15% of the project assistance based on market analysis finding that commodity vouchers were more appropriate in most areas.

1.1 LEARNING ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

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