



Evaluation of The Cash Component of the Oxfam Zambia Flood Response 2007

Executive Summary

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oxfam Zambia responded to the flooding in Western Province by providing unconditional cash grants to 2100 households over a four month period (May – August 2007) in two wards of Mongu District – Ushaa and Lumbo. The grant was designed to prevent malnutrition and harmful levels of asset depletion and the undertaking of negative coping strategies. The cash distribution targeted the poorest and most affected 2100 flood affected households and was valued at 100,000Kw (£12) per month, the value of a household food aid ration.

This evaluation has determined that cash assistance was an appropriate response despite households travelling long distances to the main market in Mongu.

The team has worked in difficult conditions, with flood waters remaining on the ground during the early project period. This limited access to some project areas and was a major challenge for the team. Partly as a result, the team has faced considerable difficulties with beneficiary targeting. In addition, **communities felt that all households were equally affected and had difficulties determining who should be on the beneficiary lists.** In some areas **households have taken advantage of cash being provided and have split themselves into smaller units in order to receive more.** Also, some of the community committees responsible for beneficiary registration have ignored selection criteria in favour of registering their friends and relatives.

The majority of the project staff was new to cash programming and unfortunately have not effectively utilized the experience of the previous cash project staff members. Some of these targeting problems may have been avoided if previous experience was utilized as some of the same problems were highlighted in the evaluation of the previous Oxfam cash response in 2005.

The payment process used in this response has also caused some problems. In order to get the cash to the beneficiaries, the team has contracted the services of Standard Chartered Bank, as they did for the previous cash response in 2005. However, the payment process has been problematic for a number of reasons including a decision taken to decrease the number of pay points to reduce transaction costs and as a security precaution. There were also significant delays in the cash arriving at the pay points. As a result, **beneficiaries have walked long distances and waited long periods at the pay points in order to receive their grant.** The agreement between Oxfam and the Standard Chartered Bank therefore needs to be re-examined and possible alternative payment processes be examined. However, **at the pay points, the actual cash distribution process and the formal accountability mechanisms have been strongly appreciated by the community and could be replicated in future projects.** No security incidents occurred during the project.

The cash grant has had a positive impact for the beneficiaries as it allowed them to purchase their staple foods (maize and cassava) at a time when food supplies were low. The value of the cash transfer was based on households' food needs alone and households have indeed spent more than 80% of the grant on food items. However, they have also prioritised the purchase of non-food items such as blankets, clothes, paraffin and soap. As a result, the food items purchased with the cash grant provided only 75% of households' daily energy requirements. However, **the cash grant has enabled the household to improve their dietary diversity and has prevented the use of negative coping strategies during the project period.**

The project also had a strong gender aspect and much effort was put into community sensitization messages around intra-household decision making, HIV prevention and prevention of sexual exploitation. **It is clear that these messages have helped improve gender awareness within the communities.**

1 The value of the grant was based on the cost of a typical food aid basket plus soap, and transport and milling costs.

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