



For children and
equality for girls



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION REPORT

CORONAVIRUS PROGRAMME IN SOMALILAND SUMMARY

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By Ruth W. Muthoni, Independent Consultant

ACCRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CDC	Community Distribution Committees
CEFM	Child Early and Forced Marriages
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
CIDP	Country Integrated Development Plan
CLA	Cluster Level Associations
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CWC	Community Welfare Committees
CWDs	Children with Disabilities
DEC	Disaster Emergency Committee
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FSNU	Food Security and nutritional Analysis Unit
GBP	Great Britain Pounds
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
KIs	Key Informant Interviews
MESAF	Ministry of Employment Social Affairs and Family
MOH	Ministry of Health
MPCA	multipurpose cash transfer assistance
MSCS	Most Significant Change Stories
NDRA	National Disaster Relief Agency
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODK	Open Data Kit
OEDC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPEs	Personal Protective Equipment
PWDs	People with Disabilities
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SGHs	Self-Help Groups
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USD	United States Dollar
WHO	World Health Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The DEC programme, funded by the 2019 Coronavirus Appeal was implemented in two phases: DEC Phase 1: August 1st 2020 to January 31st 2021 and DEC Phase 2: 31st January 2021 to August 30th 2022. The programme was implemented in Somaliland region, and specifically in Hargeysa and Burao districts. The programme had three expected outcomes. Of interest to this final evaluation was Outcome A: Most vulnerable families in IDP camps supported to address their basic needs including food, water for drinking and cleaning and hygiene product. A1.1.1. 592 Households (4518 individuals) benefit from multipurpose cash for their livelihood needs.

The purpose of the final evaluation was to analyse the specific multipurpose cash assistance activities and results of the DEC funded programme and make technical and operational suggestions for adjustment, recommend areas for improvement in programme delivery, particularly by capturing the current needs and gaps in humanitarian assistance in a devastating hunger crisis context, and finally to support the DEC on programme specific collective learning interventions.

Survey research method complemented by mixed methods for data collection was applied to assess the outcomes of the cash assistance component of the DEC programme. Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered from different sources to enable triangulation and comparison of views and facts. Qualitative data was gathered using key informant interviews and focus group discussions, while quantitative data was collected electronically using Open Data Kit (ODK) software. The study was also complemented by desk review of literature relevant to the evaluation.

The success of the cash transfer intervention was attributed to the clarity of the selection criteria, its fairness and the community driven approach that was used in the identification and selection of the recipients. A multi-level verification of the proposed list of potential recipients also ensured that no recipient would receive a cash grant from more than one source. This was made possible by involving the ministry of employment social affairs and family (MESAF), and the national disaster relief agency (NDRA), that manages cash transfer data base in the region.

Most recipients 227(97%) knew the reasons that they were selected to receive the cash transfers. Most also 228(97%) perceived the selection criteria as fair.

CHS 1 – Is humanitarian response appropriate and relevant?

The cash transfer approach was hailed as the most appropriate and strategic response that delivered immediate relief to the most vulnerable households in the IDP communities. In this regard, a total of 231(99%) of the respondents rated the approach as very appropriate. Primarily, it was very complementary to the ministry of health (MOH) covid-19 containment measures that restricted/limited population movements, prescribed observance of social distancing and use of personal protective equipment (PPEs). In this regard, cash transfers were made through mobile money to the recipient's mobile phones This therefore protected them from the risk of exposure to the covid-19 virus.

Findings showed that the approach helped to meet the most pressing immediate needs of the recipient households. The households were able to immediately purchase food, water, medicine, PPEs and pay for psychosocial support services. The recipients were also able to buy play items for their children, pay school fees after the schools had reopened and purchased learning materials for the children. According to the business grant recipients, the cash grants helped to restore their failed small businesses. This enabled them to immediately restore their incomes and hence their livelihoods. The approach was also hailed as

appropriate as it targeted empowering women, most of whom were heads of households among the most vulnerable families. In this regard, about 60% of the recipients were women.

According to the director of planning and national development at MESAF, the intervention was appropriate in that it targeted the informal settlements where majority of the poor and internally displaced people lived, with most being women and children. This view was similar to that of the Director for IDPs at the National Disaster Relief Agency (NDRA), who noted that the most vulnerable people were the most affected hence it made sense to target them. The director further noted that most of the targeted recipients did not have a source of income and resorted to using negative coping methods such as selling of family assets, giving up their daughters for child marriage in exchange for financial support, sending children to beg on the streets especially boys (noted the number of children on the streets remained high since), and family members in general reduced the number of meals taken per day.

The cash transfers were also appropriate in influencing gender and cultural dynamics. Available studies indicate that traditionally, in Somaliland, women are the primary caregivers with men being 90% of the time away from home¹. Women took care of the elderly, the sick and those living with disability. The patriarchal nature of the Somali community excluded women from key decision-making structures including at the household level. The project therefore was designed in a way that prioritized women either as direct recipients of cash or targeting female headed households. In this way, it gave women more grounds for effectively engaging with household decision making processes. It also laid a basis for participatory decision-making approaches in the households. Despite some men feeling albeit left out by not being selected as the recipients, most reported acceptance of the choice of women being the recipients.

The approach was also appropriate in that it took cognizance of existence of local markets within the communities hence the recipients didn't have to travel for long distance to purchase what they needed. This contributed to the observance of the MOH containment measures. The local markets were accessible and had diverse food and non-food commodities that the households required. In this regard, all 234(100%) of the surveyed recipients confirmed that the markets were accessible while another 229(98%) confirmed that food and other essential commodities were available in the markets.

CHS 2 – Is humanitarian response effective and timely?

With regards to the effectiveness of the cash transfer approach, a total of 234(100%) surveyed respondents confirmed to have received a cash transfer since the beginning of 2020. These included 80% women and 20% men. The recipients confirmed to have received the transfers from either Taakulo 164(70%) or from Nafis 70(30%). These translated to 180 women reached by Nafis with cash transfers for business restoration, and another 521 reached by Takuulo with unconditional cash transfers. Nafis recipients reported having received the transfer once with those that received from Takuulo having received multiple times. All the recipients 234(100%) received the full amount expected from Nafis or Takuulo. All 234(100%) received the cash through a mobile money transfer. No commission was charged on the transfers to the recipients. A total of 232(99%) of the recipients reported having safely received the cash transfer, while another 233(100%) reported having spent the cash grant safely. A total of 219(94%) of the recipients said the cash grant was sufficient to meet the most pressing basic needs of their households.

Containment measures introduced locally and internationally imposed significant challenges in the way the vulnerable households managed their income and households pre-existing vulnerabilities. There was great risk of exposure of the households to additional risk of a

¹ Save the Children, 2018

widening gap in food consumption. During the containment restrictions, households reported rapidly increasing needs that could have escalated to increased negative coping mechanisms. Timely cash assistance enabled the households to close this gap.

Key among the items purchased from the grant included food for all household members, water, education for children, health care, clothes and shoes, soap, sanitary pads and underwear. Some recipients paid electricity bills with only a small number spending some money on rent.

Findings indicated that the cash transfers were effective in improving the livelihood status of the recipient households. In this regard, 88% of the recipient households afforded quality and adequate meals. Examples were given of how each member of the household benefitted from the cash transfers. Reduced household stress resulted in improved safeguarding and reduction of violence against children and the adolescent girls including delayed and or complete absence of incidences of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and child labour. This was confirmed by the adolescent girls in Hargeysa who reported that during the entire duration of the cash transfers, none of their siblings under the age of 18 years got married off or engaged in child labour. 98(42%) respondents reported having been able to have their girl children continued attending school.

According to the adolescent boys, the cash transfers prevented them from being involved in harmful child labour, the risk of joining militia groups in the neighboring countries as a source of income. This further averted the risk of separation of young boys with their families in search of better life opportunities.

The cash transfers helped to reduce desperation and fear among the elderly and people living with disability. In this regard, the elderly people and people living with disabilities met their nutritional needs, sanitation kits as well as medicine. This reduced their fear of death from starvation and infections.

Cash grants also helped to improve the hygiene and sanitation of the recipient households as families were able to purchase water, soap and other necessary items for household use. The cash grants were reported to influence intra-household relations. The fact that men were no longer controlling the cash, they had to cultivate an attitude of mutual cooperation and trust towards their spouses to jointly make the right choices. This resulted in reduced stress levels that also brought with it reduced intimate partner violence and violence amongst the siblings. In return, this contributed to restoration of dignity and return to normalcy of the recipient households.

CHS 3 - Is humanitarian response strengthening local capacity and avoiding negative effects?

The cash transfers impacted local capacities. In this regard, views from the project team and further supported by the FGD participants indicated that from the support provided, women developed decision making skills. The cash transfers also led to women empowerment through the flexible cash transfers for business. The grants also enabled to create opportunities for women and girls to attend trainings in life skills, positive parenting, child safeguarding and peer to peer sessions (for the adolescent girls). Views expressed by the community leader in Burao indicated that the cash transfers helped to improve the financial management skills of the recipient families. It helped to develop prioritization and negotiation skills amongst the family members. It also contributed to strengthening resilience at the household level, particularly for the households that received conditional grants for business restoration.

The cash transfers also impacted the local markets. In this regard, there was increased purchasing power. New traders started businesses. Traders in general increased their stocks

and diversified commodities - the most significant effect of the cash transfers on the markets was availability of diverse food types as reported by 147(63%) of the survey respondents. This was followed by more small food businesses being started accounting for 63(27%) responses. Findings also indicated that the cash transfers did not affect the food prices, as 34(15%) respondents reported that normal food prices were maintained.

Whereas the evaluation findings from the focus group discussion participants indicated that the intervention had strengthened the intra-household decision making processes, and that there were no tensions at the household level, (a view also upheld by 100% survey respondents from the post distribution monitoring assessment (by Takuulo between October, 25 and November, 14 2020), the evaluation findings indicated that close to half 110(48%) of the respondents reported some tensions related to the cash transfers in their homes. The most significant cause was the woman being the recipient of the cash transfer as reported by 108(98%) respondents. Competing priority expenses came in second being mentioned by 32(29%) respondents, expenditure on unbudgeted items reported by 18(16%) respondents and needs surpassing the cash grant as reported by 8(7%) respondents. In few households, conflicts were due to absence of shared decisions between the spouses. Some men believed that the cash grant should have been transferred through them since they were the heads of the family. These contradictions may require further review.

Findings also indicated that some families were stigmatized and associated with covid-19. Some were assigned demeaning tags as '*Mrs covid-19*' because they were assisted by the covid-19 project. On the other hand, some adolescent girls and boys threatened to get married arguing that their caregivers had enough cash that would support them in the transition. This created tensions in the affected families. On the other hand, traditionally, its women and girls who take on the unpaid labour of looking after the sick, the elderly and people living with disability. After women received the cash grants and revived their small businesses, it was hard for them to fully provide this support. The role was delegated to others or at least was only partially provided.

CHS 4 - Is humanitarian response based on communication, participation and feedback?

Community-based structures were utilized in communicating and or providing feedback about the response. Recipients communicated more through the community distribution committees (CDCs), camp leaders, or through their self-help groups (SHGs)², whose officials in return directly communicated and or provided feedback to the project team. The same was reported about the complaint mechanisms. The recipients reported that the project designated mechanisms were not known to them but they used the CDCs as an avenue for communicating any complaints to the project teams. Regardless of the avenue used to communicate feedback or make a complaint, feedback was provided. The recipients and other stakeholders found the mechanisms to be appropriate and safe to use in the context of covid-19 (a hotline was provided to the CDCs). The involvement of MESAF and the NDRA officials in the verification of the recipient list was done to validate the selection criteria.

CH5-Are complaints welcomed and addressed?

Findings indicated that the feedback mechanism existed (hot line and email) but it was not known to all relevant stakeholders particularly the recipients of the cash transfers. Despite this, at least community coordination structures existed through which the recipients were able

²<https://www.candlelightsomal.org/?p=2174>: The SHG Approach was initiated by Nafis Network in Somaliland in 2013 and was piloted in small groups. After a successful pilot, it was fully launched in 2014 in Somaliland and particularly in Hargeysa and Burao. A total of 12, 116 people are members of the SHGs. A total of 7, 895 small businesses have been started by the members. By 2022, an estimated total savings of \$996, 500 were recorded. The SHG cluster comprises of 11 SHG promoting organizations working in the two districts under the leadership of Nafis Network. In the DEC programme, the SHGs played part in the identification and selection of the cash transfer recipients.

to raise any concerns, as confirmed by the community distribution committees. Once feedback was received by the community-based mechanisms, they escalated it to the respective project teams. In this regard therefore, the recipients reported that their feedback was taken into consideration and acted upon. Feedback was provided in real-time. Feedback obtained helped to initiate follow up and monitoring of the recipients. The recipients (women, men including those with disability) reported that they felt safe using the available feedback mechanisms. The feedback was termed as safe and appropriate in the context of covid-19 in that the recipients didn't have to visit the project teams in their offices but rather approached the community coordination structures, or made a telephone call (for those that had access to it).

CHS 6 - Is humanitarian response coordinated and complementary?

The response team coordinated well with other emergency coordination structures. These included the humanitarian clusters, child protection working group (convened by MESAF), self-help group approach cluster (SHG), cash working group (chaired by CARE Somalia), food security cluster (chaired by World Vision & co-chaired by the ministry of agriculture), the cash working group (CWG) and the multi sectoral coordination group (convened monthly by UN OCHA & NDRA). At the programme level, monthly partners update meetings were held with the DEC team whose agenda included providing updates, challenges, changes realized and successes. The coordination was successful and relevant. According to the project team, the intervention was very complementary to the government emergency response efforts. This view was similar to that of the government officials and other respondents that the project helped to advance adherence to the MOH containment measures through the target households.

CHS7-Humanitarian actors continuously learning and improving

Findings indicated that valuable lessons were learnt by the intervention stakeholders. Of great emphasis was the observance of the conflict sensitivity and the do no harm principles exercised particularly at the beneficiary selection stage. These approach, that was community driven, and further verified by the government, helped to mitigate the risk of tensions and conflicts at the community level. In addition, findings also showed that new ways of working that were technologically aided were hailed as good lessons as effective coordination was reported to have taken place virtually.

CHS8-Are staffs supported to do their job effectively, treated fairly & equitably?

From the findings, despite two positions remaining unfilled at Plan level (full time project M&E officer and Project Coordinator), Plan team used the available human resources to effectively coordinate with the partners to deliver a successful response. Teams from the three partners reported to have been earlier trained in cash programming even though no refreshers were provided during the project period. Such refreshers would have helped to strengthen the team further. The teams also reported having received adequate technical support from the Plan UK team, which helped to improve the quality of the response.

CHS 9 – Are resources managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose?

Concerning management and responsible use of project resources for their intended purpose, findings indicated that efficiency was observed with 233(100%) of the recipients confirming having received their transfers according to the schedule agreed with the project team. Cash transfers were very timely and efficient (no commissions were charged on the recipients including when expending the money received). Transfers were made in full. The mobile money company took responsibility for accuracy of the recipient details including the mobile numbers. No cases of wrong transfers or fraud were reported.

The most critical current needs of the recipients were explored. This was meant to inform future response and to understand changing needs due to deteriorating hunger crisis. In this regard therefore, the most pressing current needs include food, water, education, health care

and soap and sanitary pads. Adolescent girls face the risk of CEFM while children with disabilities (physical, mental) have limited access to education opportunities. Adolescent boys may also be at risk of drugs abuse. According to the adolescent girls in Hargeysa, the most affected people include adolescent girls living with disabilities (physical, mental) and young mothers. Others mentioned by MESAF are the children working and living on the streets, most of whom were pushed out of their homes by the effects of covid-19.

Among the most preferred approach for addressing the current most pressing needs is food voucher, cash transfers or support for services including education and health. Others include cash grants for business, seed vouchers, distribution of non-food items including dignity kits identified mostly by adolescent girls. Men also identified skills and jobs creation, while women and adolescent girls identified trauma counselling.

Recommendations

	Key findings	Recommendations
1	The community approach used in the beneficiary selection proved very effective and embraced the do no harm principles by ensuring all was done transparently hence any potential conflicts were pre-empted.	It is recommended to continue implementing this approach in the future interventions with some adjustments-to involve more divers self-help groups during the development of the selection criteria. This will ensure it is exhaustive of the various vulnerabilities at the community level at the time.
2	Key stakeholders like the relevant government line ministries (NDRA and MESAF) confirmed to have participated in the review of the selection criteria as well as in the verification of the final cash recipients. They provided their feedback directly to the project team in this regard. On the other hand, they were not involved in the initial development of the selection criteria.	It is recommended that Plan International and other actors should continue to involve the government stakeholders in beneficiary selection. This should be embraced as a good practice. It should also be integrated as a requirement in any frameworks developed to guide selection and targeting of cash grants beneficiaries. One further step to take would be exploring different ways to strengthen the involvement of the government stakeholders at an earlier stage.
3	Although this finding is not directly associated with the project itself, it is worth highlighting that some recipients reported incidences of stigmatization for having received support from the project. Some were labeled 'Mrs. covid-19'	It's recommended that the project should continue supporting community education on the concept of cash programming to mitigate potential stigma associated with responses like Covid-19. Relevant messages should be integrated in the other awareness campaigns on the same or different agendas. It is also recommended that further risk assessments to be conducted in order to mitigate any harm.

4	<p>The recipients who received business grant reported that their businesses were still operational at the time of the evaluation. This will sustain them beyond the project period by providing more sustainable source of livelihood. Further linked to the flexible cash transfers, local traders reported that with the cessation of the cash transfers, businesses had started to decline as purchasing power had reduced and fewer items were purchased per customer.</p>	<p>It's recommended that the programmes continue to integrate business grants in the future emergency responses as they hold a promise to sustainable household livelihoods. Longer term measures would ensure market stability than when seasonal cash transfers are given. The pyramid should be inverted to have more beneficiaries receive conditional business grants than flexible cash transfers. This will ensure more recipients transition to sustainable livelihoods post emergencies. It is recommended that Plan International adopts a cohort system to graduate those fully established and stable households to create space for new intake.</p>
5	<p>One key recommendation of NDRA was planning a joint impact assessment involving the government line ministries and other key stakeholders.</p>	<p>As recommended by NDRA inclusion of, and allocation of resources for joint impact assessment in future responses should be considered. This should also include periodical joint monitoring activities to ensure the government appraises the progress of the response, and that the response benefits from government feedback.</p>
6	<p>The protracted nature of emergencies in Somaliland including drought, cyclones, flood, desert locusts, clan conflicts and now covid-19 requires that budgeting takes into account the fluidity and fluctuation of the foreign currency (USD), which is the alternative currency used in local purchases and other transactions in Somaliland. High inflation was reported to have significantly influenced the cost of food and non-food commodities and negatively affected the stability of the small businesses supported through the conditional cash grants.</p>	<p>It is recommended that the future cash transfer responses consider inflation in the food basket determination. The food basket size should also be based on the household size.</p>
7	<p>Although findings confirmed that the feedback mechanism existed (hot line and email) it was reported that they were not known to all relevant stakeholders particularly the recipients of the conditional cash grants.</p>	<p>It is recommended that at the intervention design stage, it's important to consult with the affected populations to clarify the feedback mechanisms through which they would prefer to give and receive feedback. If other structures such as the community-based coordination committees are preferable, this should be clarified at that stage to ensure all recipients had similar information from the beginning. A hotline should be installed and communicated to all the beneficiaries from the beginning to ensure they can get rapid support whenever it's needed. This will ensure effective</p>

		communication and feedback between the recipients and the project team.
8	Results of the past assessments ³ linked the increasing cases of violence against children including SGBV and marginalization of PWDs to the effects of protracted emergencies including drought and effects of covid-19 pandemic.	<p>It's recommended that Plan International should continue ensuring that cash-based programmes integrate protection, GBV and inclusion topics targeting particularly the recipients. Also, to include topics on positive parenting sessions particularly to raise awareness on child/youth rights (right to participate) as well as enhance communication skills for caregivers of PWDs.</p> <p>In addition, clear mitigation measures against risks associated with protection and SGBV should continue to be integrated in the design, implementation and reporting of future cash interventions. In this regard, PDM questions should include questions to monitor women and girls and other vulnerable group's participation, access to and safety of coordination, communication and feedback mechanisms. Protection specialists should be attached to cash programmes to ensure all safeguarding issues are well documented and acted upon.</p>
9	Findings showed that the only gap in terms of coordination was with the nutrition working group.	It's recommended that future cash programmes should also coordinate with the nutrition working group to facilitate referrals of cases relevant to the working group.
10	The covid-19 response coordination structures provided a strategic platform for learning what other actors were doing, as well as communicating progress and successes.	It's recommended that continuation of active participation in the existing community and national level coordination structures in future responses as well.
11	Most pressing current needs were similar to those that the intervention had been addressing.	It's recommended that despite the similarity in the current most pressing needs to those that the intervention addressed, it might be good to explore other alternative forms of cash programming to respond to the needs. For instance, more sustainable approaches like giving conditional business grants accompanied by skills training and close technical supervision and monitoring might deliver more sustainable livelihoods options than flexible unconditional cash transfers. Seed vouchers for those that can practice agriculture may also be a more sustainable option. These approaches may also be accompanied with mobilizing and encouraging women, men and

³ Food Security and nutritional Analysis (FSNU) briefing of 3rd February 2020; post-distribution monitoring assessment undertaken by Plan International and its partners in July 2020; Child Protection & Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Baseline Assessment, Final Report, June 2020 (Plan International).

		youths to either form or join the existing community-based savings and credit schemes to enable them to build household savings. This would enable them to secure family livelihoods.
12	MESAF reported that it is contemplating reviving the women economic forum through which sustainable livelihood support initiative is being negotiated.	It's recommended that Plan International follows up with MESAF to establish how the future interventions could align with this upcoming initiative.
13	. Although, the PDM findings were used to inform relevant adaptation/adjustment of the implementation, PDMs were not conducted after each cycle of cash transfer.	Post distribution monitoring (PDM) should continue to be included in the future interventions to continually track the performance of the programme. It is also recommended that PDMs are conducted every end of a cash transfer cycle. Findings should be used to inform relevant adaptation/adjustment of the approach in implementation. For objectivity and quality assurance, its recommended that PDMs are conducted by external competent specialists (to the extent possible)to ensure feedback obtained is comprehensive and meets quality threshold to inform the programme.
14	<p>According to the community members participated in this evaluation , the following areas should be considered in the design of future replication or scale up of future interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Increase the number of beneficiaries. ii. Increase the size of cash grants. iii. Provision of vocational training skills iv. Water trucking intervention during emergencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Support more sustainable livelihoods options for the IDP communities such as conditional business grants. ii. There is need to increase the number of beneficiaries in the next phase iii. Increase the size of the cash grant by factoring in the inflation rate and household size (There may be need to negotiate this adjustment with the Cash Working Group) v. Equip the young people and men with vocational skills for self-reliance vi. vi. WASH interventions should be included in the response i.e., water tankering or as water for enterprise (IGAs).