
Influence of Cash Transfer Program on Social Networks of Households in Bungoma County: Lessons for Use of Social Safety-Nets for Disaster Vulnerability Reduction

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Abstract

Impact of disasters on vulnerable populations remain a concern world over which has created the need to reduce vulnerabilities to disasters a key focus at different global fora on disaster reduction. While Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 underscore the need for implementation of social safety-net mechanisms to assist vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by disasters, there is scanty information on how social safety-nets implemented in different parts of Kenya have impacted the socio-economic wellbeing of households. This study evaluated the influence of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Cash Transfer (OVC-CT) program on social networks of households, social engagement of beneficiary households, and assessed beneficiaries' perception of community members' feelings about their benefiting from OVC-CT program. The study, based on Putman's 1995 theory of Social Capital, adopted a descriptive research design. The study involved 75 caregivers selected through multistage sampling. Data, collected using questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and Focus Group Discussions, was analyzed descriptively. While the study revealed positive influence of OVC-CT on social engagement of beneficiary households, it also showed that the program had contributed to perceived deep jealousy against beneficiary households. Although the OVC-CT program had enhanced social engagement of beneficiary households, it could weaken social capital in areas where it was implemented. It is recommended that for social safety-net programs to contribute to reducing vulnerability in communities, their implementation should as a policy entail strong element of community sensitization and community-based targeting processes in selecting beneficiaries to reduce hostility against beneficiary households.

Keywords: Social safety-nets, disaster vulnerability reduction

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INTRODUCTION

Globally disasters remain one of the greatest challenges to socio-economic progress and human security. Between 1990 and 2015, 1.6 million people died in disasters, averaging 65,000 deaths per year, with economic losses steadily growing to reach in 2015 an annual average of US\$200 billion (United Nation

Strategy for Disaster Reduction, 2015). In 2015 alone, 346 natural disasters were reported in which 22,773 people died, 98.6 million were affected, and an estimated US\$66.5 billion loss reported in economic damages (Guha-Sapir, Hoyois and Below, 2015).

Africa like other world regions has been

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affected by many disasters. In 2014 alone, Africa suffered from 39 natural disasters, with hydrological disasters representing 61.5% of occurrence, followed by meteorological disasters (15.4%) as noted by Guha-Sapir, Hoyois and Below (2015). As reported by Guha-Sapir, Hoyois and Below (2015), in terms of disaster victims as a proportion of total population size, Africa dominated the list, with seven of its countries appearing in the top 10 list due of major droughts and consecutive famine that affected parts of the continent.

Kenya has over the years suffered from hydrometeorological disasters which have had adverse effects on the socio-economic wellbeing of the citizens. The Kenya Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) undertaken following the 2008-2011 drought estimated the impact of the drought at Ksh 968.6 billion (US\$12.1 billion), which included Ksh 64.4 billion (US\$805.6 million) arising from destruction of physical and durable assets, and Ksh 904.1 billion (US\$11.3 billion) due to disruption of economic activities (Republic of Kenya, 2012). The assessment found livestock to be the most affected sector, followed by arable agriculture, with the highest values of per capita damage and losses occurring in regions where Human Development Index was lowest.

Since the proclamation by United Nations Organization of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) beginning January 1990, the international community held three World Conferences on Disaster Reduction. Each of them placed special emphasis on the need for countries to reduce vulnerabilities to achieve disaster risk reduction. At the 1st World Conference held in Yokohama in May 1994, the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World was adopted, which called on countries to put emphasis on programs that promote community-based approaches to vulnerability reduction (United Nations, 1994). The 2nd World Conference on Disasters held in Hyogo, Japan in 2005

adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 which in its 4th Priority for Action called for strengthening the implementation of social safety-net mechanisms to assist the poor, the elderly and the disabled, and other populations affected by disasters (United Nations, 2005). The 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Sendai, Japan in March 2015 adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015-2030 which in its 3rd priority for action called for strengthening the design and implementation of social safety-net mechanisms to find durable solutions in the post-disaster phase and to empower and assist people disproportionately affected by disasters (United Nations, 2015).

While the Sendai Framework for Action advocates for strengthening design of social safety-nets for reduction of vulnerability to disasters, there are no studies carried out in Kenya to evaluate the impact of social safety-nets on wellbeing of households enrolled on social safety-net programs upon which strengthening of design of social safety-nets in post disaster recovery can be based. This research evaluated the influence of cash transfer program on social networks of beneficiary households in Bungoma County of Kenya so as to draw lesson to guide implementation of social safety-nets to reduce vulnerability, build resilient communities, and contribute to achievement of sustainable social development in disaster prone areas of Kenya.

The **objectives** of the study were: (1) To evaluate the influence of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Cash Transfer program on social engagement of beneficiary households in Bungoma County; and, (2) To assess feelings of members of communities towards beneficiary households on Orphans and Vulnerable Children Cash Transfer program in Bungoma County. Two specific **research questions** were drawn, namely, how has the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Cash Transfer program influenced social engagement of beneficiary households in Bungoma County?, and how has

enrollment on Orphans and Vulnerable Children Cash Transfer program influenced feelings of members of communities towards beneficiary households?

Evolution of Cash Transfer in Social Protection

The idea of giving special consideration about the poor and the vulnerable that forms the basis of social protection policy and cash transfer started in the 16th Century in England by government's accepting collective responsibility for ensuring subsistence for all (Hanlon, Hulme and Barrientos 2010, p. 15-26). This was followed by implementation of old age insurance and sickness benefits in Europe in late 19th Century. In the 20th Century, United Nations helped shape development of the idea of social protection by making provision of adequate standards of living a human right. Pearson and Alviar (n.d.) noted that in the early years of twentieth century, several countries in Europe started complementing forms of social assistance that were by then in existence by cash transfers. The use of cash transfers in Europe went a level higher after Second World War when birth grants were offered in parts of Europe conditional on birth registration (Fajth and Vinay, 2010).

According to Pearson and Alviar (n.d.), use of cash transfers slowed greatly until the 1990s when a wave of new programs started in several countries in Latin America, including the *Progresas* program in Mexico, *Familias en Accion* in Colombia and *Bolsa Familia* in Brazil. The excellent impact of new model of cash transfer programs in Latin America contributed to increased adoption of cash transfers as instruments of social protection in different parts of the world. Basset (2008) noted that the success of cash transfer programs in Mexico and Brazil as central elements of their countries' social protection and poverty reduction strategies made cash transfer programs to emerged in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and begun to take on new forms of conditionalities in

response to the specific needs of poor people in each country.

Impact Cash Transfer in Social Protection

Studies carried out on effects of cash transfer programs on social networks of beneficiary households have had inconsistent findings. Adato (2000) reported positive impact of PROGRESA program on the social networks of women beneficiaries. As noted by Adato, PROGRESA program involved activities which enabled women to gather in groups, affording them an opportunity to communicate with each other, which together with the trips the women made to pick up their cash transfers, enabled women to leave their homes and their communities without their spouses. Schubert and Huijbregts (2006) reported that beneficiaries in Mcinji social cash transfer perceived community leaders and relatives to be positive towards beneficiaries of the scheme. The community leaders and relatives of the beneficiaries welcomed the Mcinji social cash transfer scheme because it reduced the overwhelming burden of social obligations on them (Schubert and Huijbregts, 2006). Likewise, Attanasio, Pellerano and Polania (2008), in their study comparing 28 groups in two similar neighborhoods in Cartagena, Colombia found much higher social capital in the neighborhood where the cash transfer program *Familias en Accion* had operated for over two years than in a similar neighborhood where it had not yet started.

Miller (2009) in a study carried out in Malawi, concluded that cash transfer contributed to enhancement of social networks. Using a social network analysis of beneficiaries of Malawian Social Cash Transfer, Miller found substantial sharing of inputs from social cash transfer households to households that were not benefiting from the cash transfer program. Contrary, Rawlings and Rubio (2005) noted distribution of cash grants to household-level targeting to have the potential of affecting community relations when not all members of a community received program benefits.

The current study therefore seeks to determine how OVC-CT had influenced social engagement of beneficiary households, and the feelings of community members not benefiting from the program in Bungoma County.

Theoretical framework: The study uses Robert D. Putnam's (1995) theory of social capital. Putnam (1995) used the concept of social capital to mean features of social life networks, social connections and the attendant norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. Putnam noted norms of reciprocity, which are central to social capital to have value for the people who are in them, and in some instances to have demonstrable externalities. The theory of social capital presumes that the more people connect with others, the more they trust them and vice versa. Putnam observed endemic economic pressures to influence social capital. He noted the possibility of financial pressures to cause erosion of social capital, arguing that people with lower incomes and those who feel financially strapped to be less engaged in community life and to be less trusting than those who are better off, even holding education constant. Putnam's social capital theory of 1995 is used in this study to help organize various aspects of the study into a single explanatory framework. The theory is appropriate considering Putnam's observation that economic pressures erode social capital. The key question asked is, has the OVC-CT contributed to enhance social capital of beneficiaries as a result of injection of CT money in beneficiary households.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey research design, guided by the observation by Mugenda (2008) that descriptive research designs are commonly used when examining social issues that exist in communities.

Target population: The target population for the study were 250 caregivers from 250 households enrolled into OVC-CT

program in Bungoma County in 2006 and Children's Officers in the County. The study focused on caregivers from five locations: Namubila location; Misikhu location; Township location; Township Location; and South Bukusu Location.

Sampling strategy: A sample of 75 caregivers from households benefiting from OVC-CT program from the five locations was selected. An additional 20 participants participated in two Focus Group Discussions. The sample was based on 30% of the 250 beneficiary households who were benefiting from OVC-CT in Bungoma County in 2006. Mulusa (1990) avers that a sample size of 30% of the population studied is representative of the population.

Research instruments: Data collection involved use of questionnaires—to elicit data from the caregivers; interview schedule—to elicit data from the Children's Officer in charge of implementing the OVC-CT program; while Focus Group Discussions guideline was used to collect data from caregivers from beneficiary households in two groups which consisted of ten members each.

Validity of the instruments: Expert judgment of content validity was employed, through which, opinions of other research experts were sought to assess the relevance of the content in the research tools against the objectives of the study. The decision to use expert judgement in determining validity of instruments was guided by observation by Kothari (1990) that the determination of content validity is primarily judgmental and intuitive, and can be determined using a panel of persons who judge how well the instrument meets standards.

Reliability of the instruments: A test-retest method of estimating reliability of the instruments was used. In applying test-retest to estimate the reliability of the instruments, the researcher computed the Karl Pearson coefficient of correlation between the data obtained from the first set of administration, and that obtained from the second session of administration of the questionnaire, and

obtained an overall correlation coefficient of 0.79. This correlation coefficient between the two sets of data was considered to be acceptable for this study, because it was very close to 0.80, which Mugenda (2008) notes to be indicative of a high degree of reliability of data obtained by the instruments.

Data analysis procedures: After entering the data onto a display sheet, descriptive statistics including means, percentages, and standard deviations were computed for quantitative data. Analysis of qualitative data entailed development and application of codes to data from interviews and FGDs; identification of themes and patterns in the qualitative data per research objective; followed by summarizing the data in line with objectives of the study.

FINDINGS

The Influence of Cash Transfer on Social Engagement of Households

The first objective of this study was to determine the influence of OVC-CT program on the social engagement of the beneficiary households. Social engagement was conceptualized as the features of social connections, and reciprocity between the beneficiary households and neighbors and relatives. The overall mean score on social engagement of beneficiary households before enrollment on OVC-CT was 6.8, while the mean score after enrollment was 7.1 (Table 1). Thus, the social engagement of OVC-CT beneficiary households improved after the households were enrolled on the

program, with a positive deviation of 0.3. There was a positive deviation on mean score of respondents on paying tithe in church (0.3), making contributions in funerals (0.4), and lending food to neighbors (0.4). The mean score on the item of helping relatives did not change after enrollment on the program. On the other hand, the mean score on the item of borrowing food from neighbors had negative deviation (-0.5), and that for being helped by relatives (-0.3).

The positive deviation on the respondents' mean scores on items of paying tithe, making contributions at funerals and lending food was interpreted to mean that OVC-CT beneficiary households were using part of the money from the program to participate in activities that could enhance their connectedness and reciprocity, thus bolstering their social engagement. The OVC-CT had enhanced the household's ability to engage more in the social relation of giving and receiving and not being a one end receiver in the social network. These finding of enhanced social engagement of the beneficiary households concur with Ressler (2008) who notes that additional resources enable recipients to participate in community events, share food and borrow when in need because they had a capacity to repay. The finding also concurs with Slater and Mphale (2008) who in their study in Lesotho reported cash transfers had enabled both men and women beneficiaries to 'do the right thing' in their community, being able to take a contribution to a feast or community

Table 1: Influence of OVC-CT on Social Engagement of Households

Social Network	Before Enrollment		After Enrollment		Deviation
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Paying tithe	1.1	0.88	1.4	0.83	0.3
Funeral contributions	1.5	0.67	1.9	0.36	0.4
Lending food	1.2	0.68	1.6	0.55	0.4
Borrowing food	1.3	0.61	0.8	0.65	-0.5
Help relatives	0.9	0.82	0.9	0.62	0
Helped by relatives	0.8	0.77	0.5	0.69	-0.3
Overall social Network	6.8	2.22	7.1	1.55	0.3

celebration. The finding of negative deviations on the mean score of respondents on items of borrowing food and being helped by relatives was interpreted to mean the money received from OVC-CT had reduced the need for beneficiary households to seek help, or borrow food or items from neighbors or relatives, thus reducing strain on social networks of the households. The finding of OVC-CT contributing to improvement of social engagement of beneficiary households supported Putnam’s (1995) theory of social capital. In his theory Putnam noted the possibility of financial pressures to cause erosion of social capital, arguing that people with lower incomes and those who feel financially strapped to be less engaged in community life and are less trusting than those who are better off.

Feelings of Members of the Community About Beneficiary Households

The second objective of the study was to assess feelings of members of communities towards beneficiary households on OVC-CT program in Bungoma County. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Feelings of Members of the Community towards Beneficiary Households (n=75)

Feeling	Number	Percent
Jealousy	43	57.3
Happy	20	26.7
Don’t know	8	10.7
Not told them	3	4.0
Indifferent	1	1.3

Out of the 75 respondents, 43 (57.3%) reported that their neighbors were jealous about their households benefiting from OVC-CT program (see Table 2). Only 20 (26.7%) respondents indicated that their neighbors were happy for them benefiting from the program. Thus, the majority of beneficiaries of OVC-CT in Bungoma County perceived their neighbors to have ill feelings against them for benefiting from

OVC-CT. Data from the two FGDs supports this conclusion that majority of neighbors were jealous towards households benefiting from OVC-CT. The sub-County Children’s Officer of Bungoma South noted that generally neighbors of OVC-CT beneficiary households feel that they should also be included on the program.

The findings of the current study of ill feelings against beneficiaries of OVC-CT were supportive of Moore (2009) who noted a negative attitude towards cash transfer program in Nicaragua. However, the reasons for negative attitude to the cash transfer program in the current study differed from the reason for negative attitude of the Nicaraguan public towards cash transfer. As noted by Moore, the reason for negative feelings among some citizens of Nicaragua towards cash transfers was because they were supported by certain capitalist countries while others were mistrustful of cash transfers because they appeared to be *asistencialist*, which encouraged reliance on the state. As noted by Moore, it was claimed that RPS encouraged reliance on the government’s social services while keeping beneficiaries trapped in poverty. Unlike Nicaraguan public, the negative feelings towards OVC-CT program beneficiaries as reported by respondents in the current study were because the neighbors of the respondents wished to benefit from the program. In the current study, the negative feelings towards the program were out of jealousy for being left out of the program.

Perhaps the negative feelings of neighbors towards OVCT program were because some community members were not benefiting from the program in any way. Most of respondents in this study indicated that members of their community did not benefit from the money they received from OVC-CT program. Miller (2009) in a study using a social network analysis of beneficiaries of Malawian Social Cash Transfer found positive feelings of members of the community towards cash transfer. The

beneficiaries in Malawian Social Cash Transfer engaged in substantial sharing of inputs from social cash transfer households to households that were not benefiting from the transfer program, unlike the beneficiaries of OVC-CT in Bungoma County. Perhaps the lack of interaction with community and sharing of benefits from OVC-CT beneficiary households to non-beneficiary households found among respondents in Bungoma County explains the reason for negative feelings of neighbors towards households benefiting from OVC-CT.

Findings from this study are inconsistent with those of the evaluation of the Kalomo Pilot Social Cash Transfer Scheme which found the community members who were not beneficiaries – especially the Community Welfare Assistance Committees members, the headmen and the teachers to be welcoming and supportive of the Scheme (Schubert, 2005). Perhaps the positive feelings towards Kalomo Pilot Social Cash Transfer Scheme by members of the community was because the scheme afforded opportunities for members of the community to participate widely in the scheme through voluntarism which was well-established and accepted in the Public Welfare Assistance Scheme structures. As noted by Schubert, the decision to integrate headmen into the Community Welfare Assistance Committees training had positive effects. Most headmen played a constructive role in assisting the Community Welfare Assistance Committees, especially regarding holding community meetings.

Feelings of Relatives About Beneficiaries of Cash Transfer

Feelings of relatives of beneficiaries of OVC-CT towards households benefiting from OVC-CT were also explored. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Feelings of Relatives Towards Beneficiary Households (n=75)

Feeling	Number	Percent
Happy	50	66.7
Jealousy	14	18.7
Don't know	6	8.0
Not told them	3	4.0
Bitter	2	2.7

Majority of respondents (66.7%) indicated their relatives were happy for them benefiting from OVC-CT (Table 3). Fourteen (18.7%) respondents indicated their relatives were jealous, while six (8%) indicated they were not aware of how their relatives felt about them benefiting from OVC-CT. On the other hand, three respondents indicated they had never told their relatives that they were beneficiaries of OVC-CT program, because they were not sure how the relatives would feel. Two respondents indicated their relatives were bitter. They noted that when relatives knew they were benefiting from OVC-CT they stopped helping them. This result was interpreted to mean majority of respondents perceived their relatives to be happy with them for benefiting from OVC-CT program. The Children Officer indicated that the OVC-CT program had a positive effect on the relationship between beneficiary households and their relatives, perhaps because as noted the officer, the OVC-CT had reduced dependency of beneficiary households on relatives for support.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the finding of improvement on items of social engagement, it is concluded that OVC-CT contributed in improving social engagement of the beneficiary households, which could improve their social networks. However, on the basis of the findings of the study of deep jealousy against beneficiary households by neighboring households, it is concluded that although OVC-CT has contributed to

improvement of social engagement of beneficiary households, it has a potential of weakening the social networks of beneficiary households, which would isolate and disadvantage them when they exit the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequently, it is recommended that for social safety to be effectively used in post disaster recovery without weakening further the social networks that communities have tapped on to survive impacts of disasters for time immemorial, the following should be done: (i) The communities be sensitized on the program, including objectives, and enrollment criteria to reduce ill feelings against beneficiaries; and, (ii) Opportunities for community participation in the program implementation and evaluation be provided to ensure open and transparent enrollment of beneficiaries to reduce ill feelings.

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