Global Humanitarian Assistance

Tracking spending on cash transfer programming in a humanitarian context

Briefing

March 2012
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Tracking spending on cash transfer programming

Background
Cash transfer programming (CTP) has been used for development purposes for a number of decades, particularly within social protection interventions. Large programmes began in middle-income countries such as Brazil and Mexico in the nineties and have spread more recently to low-income countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya.

In the last few years the humanitarian community has begun to replicate CTPs that were used in development contexts, and applied them to emergency settings, with shorter timeframes. As a result more and more organisations, donors and governments have started to use this type of intervention in crisis situations to meet basic needs.

In some circumstances CTPs have been used as a replacement for food aid, such as the provision of vouchers to enable recipients to purchase food items. This type of programming can also be applied to non-food items such as cash grants to assist in the building of temporary or permanent housing, or to help with access to basic services (such as education or health care).

Types of cash transfer programmes
They are several types of CTP which suit different contexts. In order to identify the appropriate type of intervention, a full understanding of the situation in which it will be applied is essential.

- **Unconditional cash transfers**: People are given money as a direct grant with no conditions or work requirements. There is no requirement to repay any money, and people are entitled to use the money however they wish.

- **Conditional cash transfers**: The agency puts conditions on how the cash is spent such as reconstructing a home. Alternatively, cash might be given after recipients have met a condition, such as enrolling children in school or having them vaccinated. This type of conditionality is rare in humanitarian settings.

- **Vouchers**: A voucher is a paper, token or electronic card that can be exchanged for a set quantity or value of goods, denominated either as a cash value or as predetermined commodities or services. Vouchers are redeemable with preselected vendors or at ‘voucher fairs’ set up by the implementing agency.

- **Cash for work**: Payment (in cash or vouchers) is provided as a wage for work, usually in public or community programmes.

Figure 1: Cash transfer programming in emergencies.
Source: Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Good Practice Review
How cash transfer programming can support emergency response to recovery

In recent years there has been a great deal of research into the use of CTPs in emergency situations as well as a need for practitioners to fully understand the purpose they can serve. The rationale for using CTPs in humanitarian response is:

- that they can address the immediate consequences of humanitarian crisis - the overriding humanitarian imperative – and meet basic needs
- that they can be planned in the short term (usually up to six months beforehand, but maybe longer in complex emergencies)
- that they can target those most affected by the crisis
- that they are flexible and can be adapted to suit the situation.¹

There is also evidence of how CTPs can be used to link response to recovery, for example:

- by addressing needs that go beyond saving lives (e.g. factors which underlie the emergency, such as providing cash grants to rebuild sustainable livelihoods)
- by using them in a way that contributes to rebuilding society, the State, the economy
- by planning in the short- to medium-term (up to one or two years)
- by supporting households' livelihoods, and the recovery of former livelihoods
- by supporting local trade and the provision of basic services
- by targeting families facing specific vulnerabilities who were hit by the emergency
- by targeting people who are vulnerable to crises in the long term.

As with any intervention there are also risks associated with the use of CTPs which must be taken into consideration during the identification and planning phases. These include:

- the anti-social use of cash
- security risks for staff or beneficiaries
- inflation
- diversion by authorities, elites, factions
- short-term costs
- gender bias and exclusion
- distortions of the local wage market.

¹ Taken from a presentation by the Cash Learning Partnership
The use of technology in cash transfers

Advances in technology have made the transfer of cash increasingly available and the use of mobile phones in particular has improved accessibility for beneficiaries. However the use of this technology is still limited in the humanitarian context. Despite providing the opportunity for scale and speed in humanitarian response, electronic payment can be costly, especially if used over short time periods.²

Mobile phone technology was first used in Kenya to transfer cash using a service called M-PESA. This service was launched by Saricom, a leading telecommunications company in Kenya. M-PESA has been used by several organisations, including Concern Worldwide, who used the service for bulk cash transfers during the post-election emergency in early 2008 in order to avoid the security dangers posed by distributing food aid.³

Tracking spending

For the purpose of this paper we are using data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA)’s Financial Tracking Service (FTS). This briefing paper provides a brief overview of cash transfers by situating them within official development assistance (ODA) analysis. However the core of our analysis concentrates on tracking cash transfer programme spending in humanitarian aid. For our analysis of cash transfer spending in crisis situations we rely on the FTS as it only captures humanitarian aid and the data is reported in real-time. For a more detailed methodology please see Annex 1. It is important to note that figures for partial cash transfer programmes include the cost for the full project or programme and not only the cash transfer element, as it is impossible to extract this information from that which is reported.

Official development assistance spent on cash transfer programming

Development aid spending on full cash transfer programmes (CTP) has increased steadily since 2007 from US$23 million to US$150 million in 2010, due mainly to an increase in donors funding this type of intervention. Over the same period humanitarian aid spent on CTPs, as well as its share of ODA, has also risen from US$1.8 million (0.7%) to US$52 million (25.9%). Money spent on programmes with an element of cash transfer interventions has been less consistent and the proportion of ODA that is humanitarian aid only reached 7.2% in 2010.

Figure 2: ODA spent on cash transfer programmes, 2007-2010 (constant 2009 prices).
Source: Development Initiatives based on OECD CRS data

Cash transfer programming in humanitarian emergencies

Funding for CTPs in humanitarian emergencies shows an upward trend with a peak in spending in 2010, US$188.2 million. This is in part due to significant funding from the United States (US) as well as a number of mega disasters which occurred that year – most notably Pakistan and Haiti. In 2007 funding dropped to US$5.6 million.

Figure 3: Spending on cash transfer programming in humanitarian emergencies.
Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS data
Partial cash transfer programmes (programmes that have been reported as both cash transfer projects as well as other projects) have grown from US$2.0 million in 2006 to US$47.4 million in 2010.

Types of cash transfer programmes in humanitarian emergencies

Between 2006 and 2011 the largest proportion of cash transfer financing for humanitarian emergencies was spent on cash for work, 70% or US$390.4 million, with a peak in contributions in 2009, US$136.0 million (90%). The second largest type of cash transfer funding in this period was for vouchers, 26% or US$146.5 million, peaking at US$82.5 million in 2010.

![Figure 4: Types of cash transfer funding for full programmes, 2006-2011.](Image)

Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS data

Funding for partial cash transfer programmes (which is categorised as funding that includes both cash transfers and non-cash transfer activities) has increased significantly since 2006, however this could be down to improved reporting. The largest proportion of spending was for cash transfers, peaking at US$40.9 million in 2011.
Top donors: cash transfer programmes in humanitarian emergencies

Over the last six years the number of donors funding cash transfer programmes in humanitarian emergencies has increased from 6 in 2006 to 21 in 2011, peaking at 41 donors in 2010 in response to the emergencies in Haiti and Pakistan. In 2006 UNRWA was the largest donor, giving US$52.9 million for cash for work programmes in Palestine/OPT.

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Figure 5: Types of cash transfer funding for partial programmes, 2006-2011.
Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS

Figure 6: Top donors to cash transfer programmes, 2006-2011.
Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS (US$ million). Note: funding from the EC includes the European Commission and ECHO in the FTS and OFID is an abbreviation for OPEC Fund for International Development
United States
The United States (US) is the largest government donor to give to cash transfer programmes, having given US$199.2 million between 2006 and 2011, which equalled around 36% of total contributions in that period – peaking at US$97.7 million in 2010. The largest proportion of this funding was for voucher programmes, 52% (US$104.1 million), followed by cash for work schemes, 46% (US$91.2 million). Between 2007 and 2011 the US’s funding to cash transfer programming as a proportion of its total humanitarian aid, as reported to the FTS, was fairly low at 1.3%.

In 2008 and 2010 the majority of the US’s cash transfer financing was spent on voucher programmes. In 2008 this included US$30 million for Afghanistan and in 2010 included US$58.7 million for Pakistan and US$12.6 million for Haiti. The majority of spending for cash for work programmes in 2009 and 2011 was for Palestine/OPT, US$22.8 million and US$23.9 million respectively. Between 2007 and 2011 the US has spent 43% (US$85.3 million) of cash transfer funding in Palestine/OPT, 30% (US$60.3 million) in Pakistan and 16% (US$30.9 million) in Afghanistan.

Figure 7: Types of cash transfer programming, United States, 2007-2011 (US$ million).
Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS

European Commission
The European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) department outlines seven sectoral priorities in its humanitarian aid policy, one of which is cash and vouchers. Between 2006 and 2011 the EC was the second largest donor giving US$100.7 million in this period. Spending on cash transfers is a relatively new priority for the EC with funding in this area significantly increasing between 2007 and 2011, from US$4.6 million to US$21.4 million (nearly tripling its contributions) – peaking at US$41.8 million in 2009.

The fastest-growing types of cash transfer assistance used by ECHO are unconditional cash transfers, cash for work, programmes and voucher projects for commodity distribution. Between 2006 and

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4 For more detail on the EC’s sectoral priorities see [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/sectoral/cash_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/sectoral/cash_en.htm)
2011 cash for work made up 83% (US$83.9 million) of the EC’s cash transfer programmes compared to 10% (US$10.5 million) for voucher programmes. Between 2006 and 2011 a large proportion of the EC’s funding (76%) went to Palestine/OPT, US$74.3 million – the majority of which (98%) was for cash for work programmes.

Figure 8: EC’s top recipients of cash transfer programming, 2006-2011 (US$ million).
Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom (UK) only featured as a top ten donor of humanitarian cash transfer programmes in 2009, contributing US$10.6 million, equating to 7% of the total for that year. The majority, US$10 million, went towards cash for work programmes in Palestine/OPT whilst the remainder was spent on voucher schemes in Indonesia. In 2010 the UK did channel US$2.8 million which ranked them as the 11th largest donor. This funding was split between cash for work programmes in Haiti and voucher schemes in Niger.

Figure 9: DFID recipients of humanitarian cash transfer spending, 2007-2010 (US$ million).
Source: Development Initiatives based on OECD CRS data
Whilst the amount of humanitarian aid the UK spends on cash transfer programming is minimal, it contributes larger volumes of its development aid to such interventions. In 2010 in particular the UK spent US$41.5 million on cash transfer programmes, with the majority, 73.3%, channelled to Kenya for a project that began in 2007. This project aims ‘to establish a government-led national system for long-term and guaranteed cash transfers to the poorest and most vulnerable 10% of households in Kenya’.\(^5\)

![Figure 10: DFID recipients of development aid cash transfer spending, 2007-2010 (US$ million). Source: Development Initiatives based on OECD CRS data](image)

Following the Department for International Development’s (DFID) Bilateral Aid Review in 2011, the UK has expanded its commitments to cash transfers and other social protection programmes to 16 countries. DFID will develop proposals for each of the countries to enable increased support with particularly large contributions provisionally planned in four countries (Kenya, Pakistan, Ethiopia and Bangladesh).\(^6\)

\(^5\) For more details of the project see: [projects.dfid.gov.uk/project.aspx?Project=103548](http://projects.dfid.gov.uk/project.aspx?Project=103548)

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Non-DAC donors

Funding levels for cash transfer programmes reported by non-DAC donors through the FTS are fairly low, although Kuwait and Brazil featured in the top ten in 2009 and 2010, giving US$6.5 million and US$3.1 million respectively. Kuwait’s contribution was for cash for work programmes in Palestine/OPT and Brazil’s contribution was for cash for work programmes in Haiti. At the national level Brazil implements and supports cash transfer projects such as Bolsa Familia, established in 2003, which has reached 11 million families and 46 million people. Each family on the scheme receives around BRL70 (equivalent to US$35) in direct cash transfers on the basis that they send their children to school or give them regular health checks.

Top recipients: cash transfer programmes in humanitarian emergencies

As in the case of donors, the number of recipient countries where humanitarian cash transfer programmes are being carried out has increased since 2006, rising from 3 to 13 in 2011.

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<th>2006</th>
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Figure 12: Top 10 recipients, cash transfer programmes 2006-2011, US$ million.
Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS data

For more details see: World Bank
Palestine/OPT
Palestine/OPT has been either the largest or second largest recipient of humanitarian cash transfer financing every year since 2006 (excluding 2007), receiving a total US$334.7 million in this period. In 2009 Palestine/OPT received US$139.8 million, its largest contribution to date, of which US$130.3 million was for cash for work programmes. In 2009 the US, the EC and the UK were the largest donors, giving US$38.5 million, US$37.9 million and US$10.0 million respectively.

Pakistan
Pakistan was the second largest recipient of cash transfer programmes between 2006 and 2011, receiving US$66.7 million. The majority, US$60.3 million, was received in 2010 in response to the devastating floods that affected over 20 million people. The US was the top donor to Pakistan in this year contributing US$58.7 million towards vouchers schemes, of which US$45.8 million was outside of the consolidated appeals process (CAP).

The emergency response fund (ERF) in Pakistan, a country-level humanitarian pooled fund, channelled US$0.2 million to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for a cash for work programme and US$0.3 million to Oxfam GB for a cash and voucher for work scheme. Both projects fell within the Pakistan Floods Relief and Early Recovery Response Plan.

Channel of delivery: cash transfer programmes in humanitarian emergencies
The largest proportion of financing for cash transfer programmes is channelled through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), although a number of different delivery agencies featured in the top 10 between 2006 and 2011. Unsurprisingly, Oxfam GB, Save the Children, Action Against Hunger/ACF International and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) feature quite regularly as they are members of the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) steering committee. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) also feature in the top ten delivery agencies table; for example in 2010 UNDP received US$26.9 million for cash for work programmes in Haiti, which consisted of the removal of rubble after the earthquake.
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Figure 14: Channel of delivery 2006-2011, US$ million. Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS data

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA)
UNRWA’s work comprises of six programmes - education, health, relief and social services, microfinance, infrastructure and camp improvement and emergencies. Cash transfer programming sits under relief and social services and provides “selective cash assistance, one-off cash grants for basic household needs or in family emergencies”.

In an attempt to shift its focus from emergency relief to longer-term development strategies, UNRWA sees cash transfer programming as playing an important role in this transition. Unsurprisingly, with Palestine/OPT as the top recipient of cash transfer funding between 2006 and 2011, UNRWA was the channel that received the largest volume of funding, US$284.5 million, featuring as the top channel in 2006 and 2009-2011. In 2009 it received its largest contribution to date, US$127.4 million, of which 30% came from the US and 25% from the EC.

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8 For more details see [http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=30](http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=30)
9 For more details see [http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/201201154647.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/201201154647.pdf)
Humanitarian pooled funds

Pooled funds have also been used to channel funding to cash transfer programmes. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), a global humanitarian pooled fund, disbursed US$2 million to cash for work schemes and a further US$1.5 million to cash transfers between 2006 and 2011. The country-level emergency response funds (ERFs) have channelled the largest amount, over US$10 million, to cash transfer programmes. A significant proportion, 79.9%, was spent in Haiti in 2010 in response to the earthquake. Only the Somalia Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) has funded cash transfer programmes in 2010 and 2011.

Figure 15: Funding to cash transfer programmes through humanitarian pooled funds.
Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS data

Sectors: cash transfer programmes in humanitarian emergencies

The largest proportion of cash transfer programmes are within the economic recovery and infrastructure sector, which is demonstrated by the amount of funds spent on cash for work projects. Between 2006 and 2011 US$382.0 million or 69% of cash transfer programmes were spent on the economic recovery and infrastructure sector with a peak in 2009 of US$135.8 million, of which the majority (96%) was for cash for work programmes in Palestine/OPT.

Figure 16: Sectors 2006-2011, US$ million.
Source: UN OCHA FTS
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The second largest sector is agriculture, making up over 70% of contributions in 2007 and 2008. In 2007 this comprised of the EC giving US$3.8 million to Burundi for cash for work and seed programmes and US$4.2 million to Uganda to improve seed availability and infrastructure for internally displaced persons (IDPs) through private sector seed voucher schemes. In 2008 agriculture again featured as the largest sector due mainly to the US giving US$30 million to Afghanistan for a voucher scheme to increase agricultural production.

Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP)
The Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) was established in response to lessons learnt in the aftermath of the tsunami in 2005 and was originally a shared initiative between Oxfam GB, Save the Children and the British Red Cross. By 2010 the CaLP steering committee consisted of two additional members – Action Against Hunger/ACF International and the Norwegian Refugee Council as well as partnerships with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies (IFRC). By 2011 it was undertaking joint activities with ECHO.

The purpose of CaLP is to “improve the quality of emergency cash transfer and voucher programming across the humanitarian sector”, to enable cash transfers to be an effective and appropriate tool for affected communities in humanitarian crisis situations\(^{10}\). It works in the Horn of Africa and six countries - Côte D’Ivoire, Kenya, Niger, Pakistan, Philippines and Zimbabwe - and has two main donors, ECHO and Visa. The purpose of the partnership with Visa is “to increase preparedness for disasters by reducing the time and resources required to distribute relief funds to people impacted by emergencies”, and is to be piloted in the Philippines.\(^ {11}\)

Better information better aid
It is important to note that there are limitations with the data used for this report. This is mainly due to the lack of consistent and disaggregated data available on cash transfer programming.

It is not possible to discern exactly what proportion of funding was spent on cash transfer programmes that fall with a wider project or programme (partial cash transfer programmes). Many projects fall within a wider social protection and safety net programme and therefore the amount spent on them cannot be separated out. These projects have had to remain outside of the main analysis leading to an underestimation of the amount spent on cash transfer programmes.

There is a need for the reporting of cash transfer programming to be more consistent across donor’s contributions to enable comparisons. In order to improve the tracking of this type of funding a separate code within both the FTS and OECD DAC databases could be developed.

\(^{10}\) http://www.cashlearning.org/about-us/overview
Annex 1: Methodology

Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ (UN OCHA) Financial Tracking Service (FTS) database was used for this analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>DAC statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of flows within a country/crisis</td>
<td>Measuring ODA trends to specific countries, sectors and from donors, as well as ODA performance against targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid management – since data is real-time</td>
<td>Comparisons over time on like with like basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capturing flows from non-DAC donors and private contributors</td>
<td>Comparisons between donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries with a CAP – data more complete and better validated</td>
<td>Comparisons between recipient countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project-level data</td>
<td>Mandatory reporting by DAC donors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons over time</td>
<td>A lot of international resources such as remittances, voluntary giving from the public, funds from governments that don’t count as ODA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like with like comparisons of donor countries</td>
<td>DAC data is slow to be published – limited preliminary data is published in April for the preceding year, but full datasets are not published until December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like with like comparisons of recipient countries – particularly CAP and non-CAP</td>
<td>Matching inputs with outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent reporting – frequency and between donors</td>
<td>Aid management in recipient countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of definitions/reporting codes (especially outside CAP)</td>
<td>Tracking aid beyond recipient government level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of contributions (pledges and commitments)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary reporting by donors</td>
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<tr>
<th>Risks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under/over/double-counting flows</td>
<td>Treatment of ODA flowing through multilateral agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omissions of key financial flows</td>
<td>Omissions of key financial flows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misinterpreting inconsistencies in reporting to the FTS and FTS processing of data as ‘trends’</td>
<td>Differentiation between humanitarian and development assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to extract funding to cash transfer programmes from the OECD DAC and UN OCHA FTS, individual project descriptions had to be manually searched for. These included:

- cash
- cash transfer
- cash grant
- voucher
- Cash for work (CfW)

Projects were coded according to whether they were completely focused on CTP or only had a partial focus.