

Camacho, Luis A.; Kreibaum, Merle

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Cash transfers, food security and resilience in fragile contexts: general evidence and the German experience

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9/2017

Cash Transfers, Food Security and Resilience in Fragile Contexts

General Evidence and the German Experience

Luis A. Camacho
Merle Kreibaum

Cash transfers, food security and resilience in
fragile contexts

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Dr Luis A. Camacho is a research scientist at the NORC at the University of Chicago. Before joining NORC, he was a researcher at the Governance, Statehood, Security department of the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE).

E-mail: Camacho-Luis@norc.org

Dr Merle Kreibaum is an affiliated researcher at the Governance, Statehood, Security department of the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE).

E-mail: merle.kreibaum@die-gdi.de

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© Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik gGmbH
Tulpenfeld 6, 53113 Bonn
☎ +49 (0)228 94927-0
☎ +49 (0)228 94927-130
E-mail: die@die-gdi.de
www.die-gdi.de



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February 2017

Luis A. Camacho and Merle Kreibaum

Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the evidence on the impact of cash-based interventions (CBIs) on the immediate, underlying and basic causes of food and nutrition security. Using a theoretical framework developed by the United Nations Children's Fund, we stress the high potential of CBIs for humanitarian and transitional assistance. In particular, given their great adaptability to contexts and needs as well as their ability to link short and long-term outcomes, it is clear that CBIs should form part of every response analysis. This holds despite challenges such as the need for markets and the difficulty of influencing the exact livelihood sector on which beneficiaries spend the cash.

The German experience has so far focused more or less exclusively on one specific form of CBIs, i.e. cash-for-work programmes. These have been given a sharp boost by the recent refugee crisis in Syria and the neighbouring countries. While cash-for-work programmes provide participants with short-term, immediate income, it is more difficult to identify their longer-term effects. A greater willingness to make use of other types of CBI and thus the option of adapting more to contexts is a desirable next step for German development cooperation.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Abbreviations

1	Introduction	1
2	Theory of change	3
3	Evidence of the effects of cash-based interventions	5
3.1	Cash used to repay debts, save and make productive investments	6
3.2	Immediate improvement in livelihoods and opportunity to build resilience	6
3.3	Rise in food intake and greater dietary diversity	7
3.4	Improvement in nutritional outcomes, especially when supported by training	7
3.5	Lifting of financial barriers to education and healthcare services	8
3.6	Benefit to communities through spill-over effects	8
3.7	Possible empowerment of women if gender relations are carefully considered	9
3.8	Possible strengthening of local state institutions	9
3.9	Manageable challenges in terms of security, corruption and misappropriation	10
4	The use of CBIs in German development cooperation	11
5	Conclusions and policy recommendations	15
	References	17

Tables and Figures

Table 1:	Examples of cash-based interventions implemented by German government agencies	13
Figure 1:	Adjusted UNICEF framework for food and nutrition security	3

Abbreviations

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
CBI	Cash-based intervention
CfW	Cash-for-work
CT	Cash transfer
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FfW	Food-for-work
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
IDP	Internally displaced person
KfW	KfW Entwicklungsbank (German Development Bank)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute (UK)
SEWOH	One World, No Hunger initiative of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

1 Introduction

Recent years have seen an increase in the number of protracted crises. The term describes situations in which emergency-like conditions such as violence and extreme state fragility last many years rather than being transitory. States in protracted crisis are unable or unwilling to provide for all or part of their population for extended periods. This is reflected by the duration of humanitarian aid: 49 out of 58 countries that received humanitarian assistance in 2014 had received such aid for the past five years and 40 had received it for the past ten years (ALNAP, 2015, p. 33). In 2013, 66% of humanitarian assistance was allocated to countries that had received an above-average share of their overseas development assistance in the form of humanitarian assistance for eight years or more. An additional 23% went to countries that had met this criterion for three to seven years (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2015, p. 98).

At the same time, fragile states are about three times more likely to be food-insecure as developing countries overall (FAO, 2010). In states with weak institutions, weak state capacity or even open violence, immediate causes of malnutrition such as insufficient calorie intake and illness are elevated. Moreover, the underlying drivers of food insecurity are more common: weak health services and child care, poor health and hygiene knowledge as well as interrupted access to income and thus a higher incidence of poverty. Tackling the challenge of food insecurity in fragile states and states in protracted crisis will be one of the key pathways to reaching Sustainable Development Goal 2, i.e. end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

As was acknowledged during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016, the main issue in fragile states and states in protracted crisis is the need to link relief, rehabilitation and development. In other words, the problem is how to help the affected population meet their basic needs in the short term while at the same time helping them build their resilience and become self-reliant. Social protection systems, in general, and cash-based interventions (CBIs) more specifically, are promising instruments for attaining these objectives.

CBIs comprise cash, mobile money or vouchers in contrast to in-kind aid such as food or goods. They tend to be set up as small-scale projects targeting populations affected by crisis or state fragility for a limited period of time and in a limited geographical area. Domestic ownership of these interventions is limited, as the recipient states are generally either weak or in crisis, so that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) take charge of their implementation, with financial support from donors. Some CBIs are also implemented as part of wider humanitarian programmes that are usually coordinated by specialised international agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP).¹

1 This paper does not look at long-term cash transfer programmes in non-fragile states which are often embedded in social protection systems and provide predictable, extended support to poor, vulnerable or elderly people. In the developing world, these kinds of transfers have famously been implemented since the 1990s in Latin American countries such as Mexico and Brazil, where payment is linked to compliance with conditions such as school attendance or health checkups for children (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009).

Cash and vouchers differ in terms of flexibility, i.e. in terms of what they can be spent on. Cash is at the free disposal of beneficiaries, while vouchers are usually restricted to specific goods or shops. Despite this, however, beneficiaries have been observed to re-sell certain goods that they could obtain with vouchers, in order to purchase other items (Aker, 2016).

Since the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, there has been a shift among the international humanitarian community away from food aid and towards food assistance, in which food and other in-kind aid is replaced by cash transfers and vouchers. This trend was given a fresh impetus at the World Humanitarian Summit. The move springs from evidence showing that, given the presence of a functioning market and certain other implementation preconditions (e.g., reliable and safe delivery mechanisms and a desire on the part of beneficiaries to receive cash rather than in-kind aid), CBIs can be less costly, timelier and better able to meet people's diverse needs than in-kind support (Alinovi, Hemrich, & Russo, 2008; Cabot Venton, Bailey, & Pongracz, 2015). Contrary to what one might suspect, local markets function well in many situations of fragile statehood. For example, Somalia has been one of the pioneers of CBIs. Technological innovations such as mobile money also help to boost efficiency and enhance the speed of reaction (Aker, Boumnijel, McClelland, & Tierney, 2016; Devereux & Vincent, 2010).

Instead of simply addressing the direct channel of a lack of food, giving households a higher level of income can enable them to cope better with indirect causes such as limited access to education and healthcare.² Even though the successful experience with CBIs to date has aroused enthusiasm among various international cooperation actors, the share of CBIs in total humanitarian aid remains low at an estimated 6%. However, it is more than likely to rise in the future (see High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015).

One specific form of CBI is cash-for-work (CfW) interventions, in which beneficiaries are paid for performing short-term, labour-intensive tasks such as building essential parts of the rural infrastructure. There is a double dividend here, in that CfWs provide short-term, immediate relief to beneficiaries while at the same time creating an infrastructure that can, for example, enhance agricultural production, strengthen linkages with markets and contribute to disaster prevention. The transfer is paid over a limited period of time (often between one and three months), so that sustainable effects on employment are rare and depend on the provision of additional services together with the intervention (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). The longer-term impact of the activity thus usually depends on the quality and maintenance of the infrastructure.

This paper reviews the growing literature on how to best use CBIs to improve livelihoods and increase beneficiaries' resilience in humanitarian and fragile contexts. This applies not only to open violence and conflict, but also to weak state capacity and weak state institutions. The paper also examines the experience of German development cooperation with CBIs.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. The next section presents the theory of change, and discusses how receiving support in the form of cash or vouchers can affect food security both directly and indirectly. The third section summarises the evidence on the effect of CBIs on the direct and indirect causes of food insecurity, underlining the

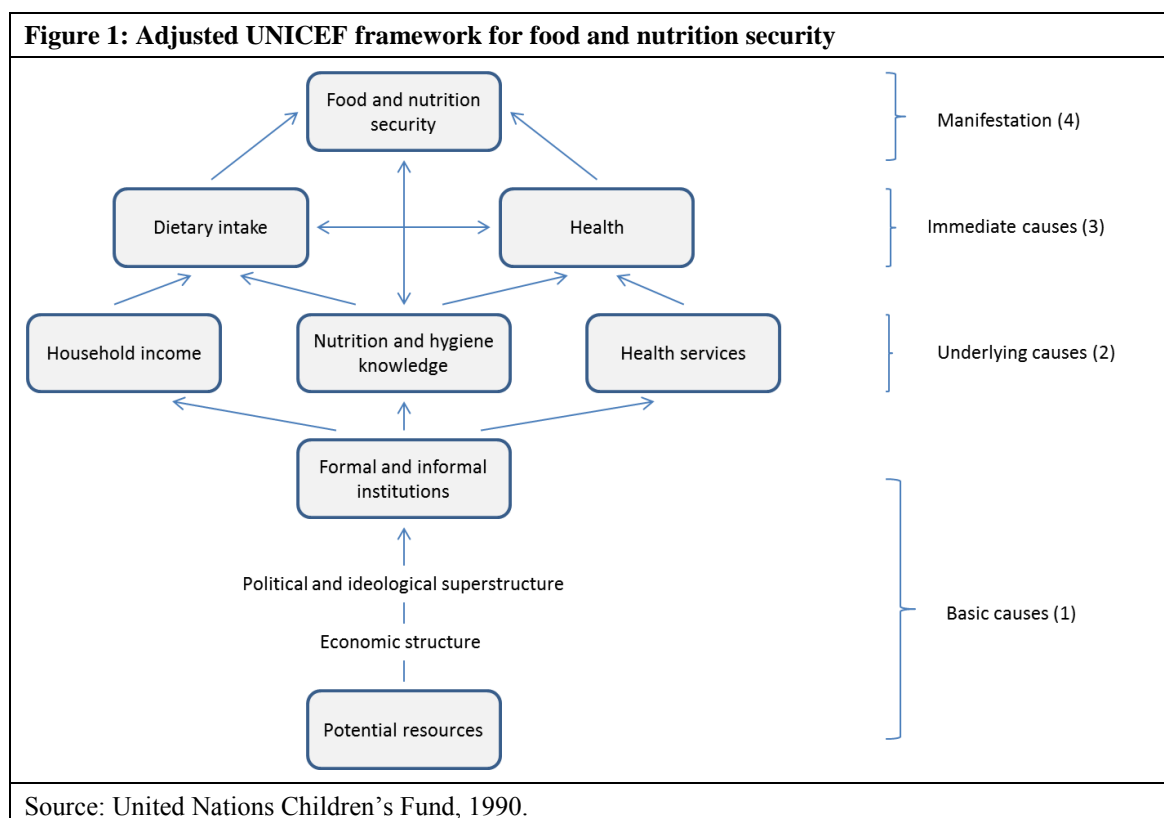
² For a recent literature review of food assistance, see Bailey and Hedlund (2012) and Fenn et al. (2015).

generally positive experiences with this tool and its potential. We go on to examine German experiences with the tool, based on interviews with actors in the field and reports published by them. The final section concludes by giving preliminary policy advice.

2 Theory of change

Food and nutrition security does not depend only on dietary intake, i.e. the availability of sufficient, affordable food. Rather, a range of factors affect food and nutrition security at different levels (see Figure 1). The basic causes (level 1) comprise the broader context such as a state's or a society's general potential resources, as well as the formal and informal institutions. For example, certain ethnic or other groups might be systematically marginalised, and thus experience structural difficulty in providing for themselves and their families or in gaining access to education and knowledge.

The underlying causes (level 2) operate at the household level. They consist of issues such as the household income, nutrition and hygiene knowledge (particularly among women and mothers) as well as access to health care and other health-related services such as water and sanitation. These underlying factors either directly affect the food and nutritional status of household members or feed into its immediate causes (level 3), namely health and dietary intake. All of these factors manifest themselves as food and nutrition security (level 4), i.e. the degree to which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to a sufficient quantity of safe and nutritious food in order to lead a healthy and active life (FAO, 1996).



Importantly, while this framework applies in principle to both fragile and non-fragile states, the influencing factors at all three levels are less favourable in the former. At level 1, the basic political and economic setting is fragile, state resources are inexistent or not exploited to the population's benefit, and institutions are weak. At the same time, basic services such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation are not provided or are of very poor quality. Income opportunities are usually also scarcer (level 2). Dietary intake is lower and health status is poorer (level 3). Finally, food and nutrition security (level 4) in fragile states is, on average, lower than in stable states, as suggested by the descriptive statistics in the introduction.

It is important to be clear about possible causal channels when hypothesising about the impact of CBIs on food and nutrition security. CBIs can influence a number of the factors depicted in Figure 1. Most intuitively, transfers in the form of cash or vouchers increase household incomes (level 2) and hence the dietary intake of household members (level 3). At the same time, greater prosperity leads to better access to healthcare services (level 2) and has also been shown to boost the social status of minorities, i.e. to result in the formation of informal institutions to their benefit (level 1). If this greater prosperity also raises school attendance (especially of girls), this has the effect of extending children's nutritional and hygiene knowledge (level 2), both for the children in question and also for the next generation. In addition, many CBIs are accompanied by training courses, for example on food and nutrition, which can have a more immediate impact on this type of knowledge than school attendance. In these cases, the transfer can represent both an incentive to attend training courses and a means of putting the knowledge thus acquired into practice (Bailey & Hedlund, 2012).

Cash differs notably from food aid and in-kind support because it can influence food security through multiple channels. The latter generally aim at providing immediate relief and focus on beneficiaries' dietary intake (i.e. level 3). Since cash can potentially address more than just an immediate lack of food, it offers an opportunity to lay the foundations for a longer-term improvement in livelihoods. Ideally, beneficiaries will cross the threshold of food security, thus "graduating" from the need to receive external support. Cash has the potential to solve the market failure of access to credit for the poor, thus allowing them to use their assets more productively and to achieve a lasting increase in their level of income (de Janvry & Sadoulet, 2001). While direct comparisons and cost-benefit analyses should focus on whether cash can achieve the same outcome as food more efficiently, the political objective in a second step should be to capitalise on the additional benefits that cash can bring (Cabot Venton et al., 2015).

3 Evidence of the effects of cash-based interventions

This section summarises the evidence of the effectiveness and short-term and longer-term impacts of CBIs.³ As the theory of change basically applies in both fragile and non-fragile contexts, some of the findings reported here are from evaluations of cash transfer programmes in non-fragile states as these are more numerous and rigorous than those pertaining to CBIs. The limited time and financial resources available during times of crisis make evaluations particularly difficult. Moreover, ethical considerations mean that rigorous experimental designs cannot generally be employed in humanitarian contexts. Thus, while a large number of project reports and anecdotal studies indicate that CBIs indeed address a range of direct and indirect causes of food insecurity, the reality is that there is more rigorous evidence about cash transfer programmes in non-fragile contexts. Yet, both bodies of evidence point toward similar results.

Given functioning markets with sufficient food availability and workable means of transfer, CBIs have been shown to be immediately effective in improving access to food in various contexts and using differing project designs. Some evidence also suggests that they improve nutrition outcomes, especially when coupled with additional interventions, such as food supplementation and nutritional training. In rural areas in particular, CBIs can also help to improve underlying causes such as food availability and access by enhancing and protecting recipients' agricultural productive capacities and other livelihoods. CBIs have also been shown to facilitate access to education and health services in certain contexts. Finally, the evidence suggests that CBIs can affect basic causes of food and nutrition security. This could be by empowering women and easing tensions between husbands and wives about financial difficulties or by influencing local statehood, i.e. by improving state authority, state capacity and, especially, state legitimacy in local settings. Due to the limited scope of this paper, each area of possible impact is touched upon only briefly. In doing so, we refer to a selection of sources so that interested readers can go into more depth if desired. Interested readers should also review other recent reviews with a similar focus to this one. These include Bailey (2013), Bailey and Harvey (2015), Bailey and Hedlund (2012), Harvey and Bailey (2011), and Fenn et al. (2015).

Probably as a consequence of these generally positive outcomes, beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance usually prefer cash to in-kind aid. Cash allows beneficiaries to buy what they believe they need most at any given time. In addition, there is an intrinsic value in the dignity associated with being able to decide for oneself what one needs most and not having to queue for in-kind support. By contrast, the reasons why people in need might prefer in-kind aid to cash include concerns about price volatility and security, as well as familiarity with in-kind assistance. Another reason is to avoid debt repayment demands from creditors (Harvey, 2007).

3 The phrase 'short-term' is used here to refer to the immediate effect during the implementation of the intervention and immediately after it has been completed. Impacts lasting beyond implementation (for example, into the next harvesting cycle) are considered to be longer-term.

3.1 Cash used to repay debts, save and make productive investments

The most immediate impact of cash transfers is an increase in household income, one of the underlying causes of food and nutritional security (level 2 in Figure 1). The effect of this increase in means depends on the way in which it is used. In sum, beneficiaries spend income on the goods and services they need most and this varies across contexts and over time. Buying food and paying for the cost of education and healthcare services are common uses. Securing temporary shelter and rebuilding dwellings are common spending patterns in the wake of natural disasters. Cash transfers are also frequently used as a means of repaying debts (Bailey & Hedlund, 2012). This could be beneficial if it helps to preserve social capital and future access to credit. However, in contexts where beneficiaries are heavily indebted and have pressing consumption needs, the beneficiaries themselves might prefer in-kind aid (Harvey, 2007).

Where the transfer exceeds the value of unmet needs, it is also used for saving and making productive investments. Whether this happens in practice depends on the size and duration of transfers, as well as on whether CBIs are accompanied by additional interventions (such as microfinance or business training interventions). It is also worth noting that, by supporting immediate consumption needs, cash grants can also help to prevent beneficiaries from adopting bad coping strategies, such as selling cattle or other assets to cope with transitory income shocks (High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015; Mattinen & Ogden, 2006). This in turn can help to raise future household income and make households more resilient (FAO, 2010; Skoufias, 2003).

A frequently raised concern with cash payments is their potential to be used for undesirable purposes such as buying alcohol or gambling. The evidence suggests that the misuse of cash is very limited (Blattman, Jamison, & Sheridan, 2015; Evans & Popova, 2014). Conclusive evidence of this type of use is hard to collect, though, as it is likely to be underreported by beneficiaries and also because cash grants can free up other unmonitored income for these purposes (Bailey & Hedlund, 2012).

3.2 Immediate improvement in livelihoods and opportunity to build resilience

The existing evidence indicates that CBIs are effective in addressing short-term relief needs and that they can also help to prevent bad coping strategies (see also High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, 2015; Mattinen & Ogden, 2006). During both protracted crises and emergencies, however, it is important to go beyond relief and consider how broader social protection approaches can support longer-term livelihoods and make beneficiaries more resilient (FAO, 2010; Skoufias, 2003).

CBIs have been shown to be able to help improve livelihoods and resilience, especially where they are embedded into a wider set of interventions. As we have just mentioned, cash transfers (CTs) are saved and used for productive investments where unmet needs are not acute. This is especially the case if the CTs are large and provide a stable source of income (i.e. in the case of a long-running programme). Savings can allow families to smooth out their pattern of consumption (Hidrobo, Hoddinott, Margolies, Moreira, & Peterman, 2012). Some long-term programmes are targeted directly at child poverty and

have been found to lift children out of poverty, thus preventing lifelong detrimental impacts (Barrientos & DeJong, 2006).

Better access to a regular source of income can lift credit constraints and facilitate the purchase of agricultural inputs as well as encourage riskier investments in cash crops. Payments that are relatively large compared with immediate consumption needs, and especially the lump sums provided under some programmes, are often used as start-up capital for new business ventures. Yet the context matters here: the question is whether the beneficiaries are financially knowledgeable enough to invest such a large sum. For example, if the main aim of households is to replace lost assets after a disaster, they will be quite sure what to invest in. Very poor households receiving a lump-sum payment as a booster to their livelihoods could feel overstrained and require additional assistance in order to become entrepreneurial (Blattman, Fiala, & Martinez, 2013; Farrington & Slater, 2009).

3.3 Rise in food intake and greater dietary diversity

As is suggested by the theory of change and the evidence on spending and livelihoods, the available evidence on the impact of CBIs on food intake and dietary diversity (i.e. the immediate causes and manifestation of food and nutritional security, levels 3 and 4 in Figure 1) is overall positive.

The amount of evidence varies, however, depending on the measures actually used to gauge these outcomes. There is compelling evidence that cash grants result in increases in expenditure on food, in the amount of food purchased, and in household dietary diversity. There is less evidence of effects in terms of kilocalorie consumption, micronutrient intake and individual dietary diversity, but the evidence that does exist indicates that these indicators improve following transfers. The diets of the children in the household have also been found to improve. If food and cash distributions are compared, we see that there is sometimes a greater increase in calorie intakes when families receive food whereas dietary diversity responds more strongly to cash transfers, possibly because these can be spent more freely (e.g., Bailey & Hedlund, 2012; Devereux & Jere, 2008; Gilligan, Margolies, Quiñones, & Roy, 2013; Hidrobo et al., 2012).

3.4 Improvement in nutritional outcomes, especially when supported by training

CBIs alone are not in themselves an effective means of addressing acute malnutrition. This said, they can help address or prevent this problem if they are combined with additional interventions such as micronutrient supplementation, courses in good nutritional practices or disease prevention (Gilligan et al., 2013; Langendorf et al., 2014). The evidence suggests that improvements in nutritional status are more likely the larger the transfers and the longer the duration of the intervention, as well as the more families with young children that are targeted. There is some evidence to suggest that CBIs are associated with declines in malnutrition, especially where this is a direct consequence of insufficient food access (Bailey & Hedlund, 2012).

3.5 Lifting of financial barriers to education and healthcare services

As we have already mentioned, CTs are usually employed to pay for the cost of education and healthcare services, which implies that they address the underlying causes of food and nutritional security (level 2 in Figure 1). They are used to pay for access and user fees, as well as school supplies, uniforms, medicines, transport and other expenses. CBIs are capable of improving education and health outcomes if the uptake of these services is constrained by financial barriers rather than their insufficient availability, for example. Education and healthcare services of adequate quality are not readily available in fragile contexts, however, which means that CBIs are unlikely to make a difference. In this case, supply-side interventions are also required.

Knowledge and education, in particular in relation to health practices, play an important role as indirect channels of malnutrition and food insecurity. Combining cash or voucher interventions with training can thus serve the triple purpose of providing an incentive to attend meetings, extending the participants' knowledge and providing a means of implementing the newly acquired information (Save the Children UK, 2005, 2009, 2011).

The potential adverse effects on child-caring practices are an issue that needs to be taken into consideration whenever children's nutritional indicators are part of the targeting strategy or if they could be inadvertently affected by programme activities. Specifically, there is a risk that children might be neglected to ensure programme eligibility, that breastfeeding might be discontinued at a relatively early stage due to increased food availability, and that mothers might spend more time away from home collecting or using transfers. However, the opposite might also be the case, since resources might reduce mothers' workload or their need to work away from home. As only a small number of evaluations include questions on time use, the evidence so far is thin but appears to point towards the latter case (Devereux, Mthinda, Power, Sakala, & Suka, 2007; Harvey & Savage, 2006; Save the Children UK, 2009).

3.6 Benefit to communities through spill-over effects

Looking beyond the group of beneficiaries, the increase in their income boosts the local demand for goods and services and thus has wider effects on local markets (Devereux, 2015). One set of studies examined the spill-over effects of a number of small cash transfers in Africa (Taylor, 2015). The evaluations found that each dollar transferred to an eligible household generated additional real income in the community of between USD 0.08 in Kenya and USD 0.84 in Ethiopia. In a study focusing on an emergency CBI in Malawi, Davies and Davey (2008) estimated multiplier effects of between 2.02 and 2.45. Small traders and businesses were found to benefit in particular, as poor beneficiaries were more likely to spend their transfers on them. In a study looking at the impact of a cash transfer in Mexico on non-eligibles in the community, Angelucci and De Giorgi (2009) found an average increase of 10 per cent in consumption among those not eligible for the transfer. This effect sprung mainly from better opportunities for borrowing from beneficiaries.

The impact on local prices depends on local markets and the design of the transfer. For example, livestock has a high economic and cultural value in Northern Uganda. When a

large proportion of the community received a big lump-sum transfer, the majority spent it on animals; in turn, the market proved insufficiently flexible and livestock prices rose (Creti, 2010). By contrast, Cunha, De Giorgi, and Jayachandran (2011) found that, in poor, rural and geographically remote villages in Mexico, cash produced mild price rises whereas in-kind transfers resulted in very substantial price falls. The price effects were larger in the most isolated villages with limited access to outside markets, however. In both cases, the welfare effects of the price changes depended on whether households were net consumers or producers, with net producers being able to benefit from higher prices.

3.7 Possible empowerment of women if gender relations are carefully considered

The evidence suggests that CTs can empower women and, by making them more equal participants in intra-household decision-making processes, can address the basic causes of food and nutritional security (level 1 in Figure 1). This applies in contexts where structural gender-based discrimination is prevalent (Devereux & Jere, 2008; Nuwakora, 2014; Wasilkowska, 2012). It is an accepted stylised fact in development economics that women tend to spend money differently from men, namely for the benefit of their children and relatives rather than on “selfish goods” such as alcohol or gambling (Haddad, Hoddinott, & Alderman, 1997). Thus, it is valid to assume that CBIs targeted at women not only empower them directly, but can also have a stronger impact on the living standards of children in general and girls in particular, than those targeting men (Barrientos & DeJong, 2006; Duflo, 2003).

Other studies have found that CTs targeting women help to ease tensions between husbands and wives arising from financial difficulties (Devereux & Jere, 2008; Nuwakora, 2014; Wasilkowska, 2012). However, there is also evidence that there might be a correlation with the size of the transfer, with smaller CTs reducing violence and larger CTs increasing the likelihood of a husband turning against his wife. The possible reason for the latter is that a large CT disbursed to a wife could be perceived as challenging traditional views on gender roles and on the utility of the husband in the household (Angelucci, 2008). A sound analysis of local gender relations in households and communities can help to determine whether or not women are the appropriate target group (Harvey & Bailey, 2011; Slater & Mphale, 2008).

3.8 Possible strengthening of local state institutions

Going beyond the household level, CBIs can contribute to state-building from the bottom up. In other words, they can alleviate different dimensions of (local) state fragility and thus address the basic causes of crises rather than merely their symptoms (and also the basic cause of food and nutritional security, i.e. level 1 in Figure 1).⁴ Although statehood

4 Following DIE’s definition, and in line with BMZ’s 2013 Strategy Paper entitled “Development for Peace and Security” (BMZ, 2013), state fragility is defined as a situation in which a state lacks at least one of the following dimensions of statehood: authority, i.e. the state’s ability to control violence; capacity, i.e. the ability of the state to provide the population with basic services such as education, healthcare and the fundamental structures of civilian administration; and legitimacy, i.e. the willingness of the society to accept the state’s rule (Grävingholt, Ziaja, & Kreibaum, 2015, pp. 1286-1288). Given that states can have deficits in one or more of these dimensions and to different extents, fragility is

is not a target of humanitarian projects, which are usually small in scale, changes in the livelihoods of the population can reasonably be hypothesised to affect institutions at least at a local, if not at a national, level.

For example, gaps in government capacity could be improved by means of cooperation between local government structures and international actors in project implementation, including the construction and maintenance of items of public infrastructure remaining after the end of the crisis (e.g., Kreibaum, 2016; Maystadt & Verwimp, 2014). With regard to state legitimacy, the scarce evidence indicates that project aid that improves public access to basic services (such as the construction of roads and bridges, the refurbishment of schools and hospitals and the improvement of piped water supply) can increase citizens' perceptions of state responsiveness when local state actors are involved (Böhnke & Zürcher, 2013). This might also apply to CBIs as, at the very least, they help individuals to satisfy their basic needs.

However, an alternative hypothesis is that CBIs undermine state legitimacy as individuals become aware of the state's inability to provide for them. Whether host governments are involved is likely to play a key role. Moreover, targeting can further complicate things: studies of cash transfer programmes with a high degree of national government ownership indicate that those included in the programmes are more trusting of certain government institutions, while those who are excluded are less trusting (Camacho, 2014).

When it comes to state authority, the willingness of or need for the population to take up arms could be reduced if their needs can be met peaceably (Do & Lakshmi, 2006; Miguel, Satyanath, & Sergenti, 2004). Similarly, counterinsurgency activities could be more effective if the aid increased popular support for the government and its allies (Berman, Kapstein, Shapiro, & Felter, 2011). However, aid can also exacerbate conflict by creating incentives for looting and retaliation (Crost, Felter, & Johnston, 2014). Cash transfers in particular have been extensively used in programmes for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants. Knight and Özerdem argued in a comprehensive review (2004) that using cash in the disarmament stage of 'weapons-for-cash' programmes has many drawbacks, but can provide an effective safety net during reintegration. The authors pointed out, however, that this safety net serves only to provide necessary assistance at this critical phase, but does not seem to make a difference in the actual reintegration of former combatants into the workforce. Lastly, conditional cash transfers have been found to reduce crime by raising household incomes and changing the peer groups of adolescents (Chioda, de Mello, & Soares, 2012) as well as to reduce civil conflict by weakening the influence of insurgents (Crost, Felter, & Johnston, 2016).

3.9 Manageable challenges in terms of security, corruption and misappropriation

While both cash and in-kind transfers can be diverted and misused, cash is likely to be more attractive than in-kind aid for political elites and others to get hold of. The evidence suggests that the actual levels of misappropriation of the two types of assistance are similar, however (Bailey & Harvey, 2015). Getting the targeting right is important here,

conceived of as a matter of type. "Severe fragile statehood" is a type characterised by substantial deficits in all three dimensions. Furthermore, fragility can vary within countries, with states faring differently in terms of the dimensions of statehood across their territories.

with categorical targeting and community targeting (i.e. programmes targeted at communities at large as opposed to only their representatives) providing the least opportunities for wrongdoings.

In addition, most if not all CBIs go to great lengths to set up transparent distribution systems and include mechanisms for monitoring whether transfers reach their intended beneficiaries and address exclusion and leakage problems. This is even more important in areas where the state is either absent or highly dysfunctional. Indeed, electronic cash transfers are likely to be less susceptible to capture since they are easier to track than, say, food aid, where fraud can occur during every stage, i.e. procurement, storage, and transport (Ewins, Harvey, Savage, & Jacobs, 2006). Farrington and Slater (2009, pp. 11-15) noted that it is more difficult to address these issues where single, lump-sum payments are used than where small, regular payments are involved, and identified evidence indicating that the former type of payment attracts more corruption in the form of the diversion of funds for political purposes.

The use of banks or mobile money can help to make transfers more discreet and obviate the need for physical transport. This reduces the security risk, of assault for example, for both beneficiaries and agency staff. Electronic transfers, in particular, have proved to be a means of delivering assistance in instances in which the use of food aid, and even physical cash, was not feasible (Gordon, 2015).

4 The use of CBIs in German development cooperation

As we have already mentioned, there is increasing evidence of the potential value of CBIs, coupled with growing policy interest, as signified by the World Humanitarian Summit. We now discuss whether these developments are reflected by the practice of German development cooperation, i.e. where Germany stands with regard to designing and implementing CBIs and what could be a good way forward. In doing so, we focus on activities performed by the government through its implementing agencies, i.e. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the KfW Development Bank. This focus excludes a growing number of relief-oriented, short-term CBIs financed by the government and implemented by NGOs.

German development cooperation agencies have not gained very broad experience with CBIs. In line with international practice, German contributions, for example to the WFP, have until recently tended to consist of food aid rather than more diverse types of support. Globally, awareness of the existence of a broader range of tools has been symbolised by the WFP's decision in 2013 to move from the *Food Aid Convention* to the *Food Assistance Convention*. It also widened the scope of its interventions to include livelihoods and nutrition.⁵

As can be seen from Table 1, the first interventions were already made by German government agencies in the early 2000s. The first transition assistance intervention by the GIZ that involved the use of cash-based transfers on a relatively large scale was a project in Afghanistan. Another large intervention was made in Nepal, where both cash-for-work

⁵ For more background information, see <http://www.foodassistanceconvention.org/about.aspx>.

(CfW) and food-for-work (FfW) programmes were implemented variably, depending on the season and the availability of foodstuffs on the market.

KfW has been active in the field of labour-intensive construction for some time now, often in developing or reconstruction contexts or to compensate the poor population for structural adjustment measures.⁶ As described above, CfW interventions link the payment of a transfer to the performance of certain (usually labour-intensive) tasks, such as building or rehabilitating infrastructure. For this reason, they provide an immediate (though normally relatively short-term) income to the beneficiaries and an additional benefit to the whole community in the form of better agricultural production opportunities and links to markets.

In line with their specific areas of expertise, GIZ's reports tend to focus on livelihoods effects, the targeting of transfers, etc. whereas KfW's monitoring is concerned more with the infrastructure created as a result of the transfers. This might explain why GIZ's reports are generally positive about CfW as a tool, whereas KfW's ratings are mostly in the range of 3 to 4 (i.e. between generally adequate and slightly inadequate). This is in line with the general findings that there are usually employment effects and thus also impacts on incomes and livelihoods (albeit generally only temporary), but that infrastructure construction often lacks funding and the expertise required for maintaining and repairing it, thus undermining the long-term benefits for communities.

According to our interviewees, a small number of factors as well as global trends determined whether and where cash came into use at an early stage. One important driver was the individuals in charge, who believed in this relatively new tool and also lobbied for it both internally and within the WFP, as is confirmed by early studies. Furthermore, the direct implementing partners of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Federal Foreign Office often work in a demand-driven manner and thus depend on political interests and the budget allocated to their focal areas.

Consequently, the current refugee crisis, which has received a lot of political attention combined with large funding, has worked as a trigger. The Federal Foreign Office organised a cash learning event in October 2015, as a result of which four NGOs began to cooperate and coordinate more closely in terms of learning and sharing experiences in the area of cash. The four NGOs in question, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Welthungerhilfe, Caritas International and Plan International, contacted the global leader in expertise on cash-based interventions, the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP). Together, they underwent a capacity assessment and are currently drafting guidelines for the implementation of CBIs, as well as a glossary to facilitate communications. The NGOs have developed training courses that have already been held in Germany and in the field (Turkey, for example) and are also open to GIZ staff. While cash, especially CfW, is not a new tool for humanitarian aid, the willingness to consider the use of multi-purpose cash transfers is a rather recent trend. This heightened attention is also illustrated by the fact that the above NGOs very recently appointed experts and advisors who have been given the explicit task of working on CBIs.

6 It is not always clear from evaluation reports whether the activity in question involved the distribution of cash or food in exchange for public works.

Table 1: Examples of cash-based interventions implemented by German government agencies			
Country	Year	Brief description	Agency
Northern Iraq (Kurdish regions)	2015-present	CfW as transition from humanitarian aid to development assistance supporting vulnerable IDPs and refugees	GIZ, KfW
Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey	2015-present	“Partnership for Prospects”, labour-intensive infrastructure construction/ rehabilitation, CfW	GIZ, KfW
Chad	2013-present	CfW with mobile money; prevention of famine	GIZ
Uganda (Karamoja)	2010-2011	Transition assistance in a post-conflict context, CfW	GIZ
Ethiopia	2008-2014	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation by WFP, drought and food security, FfW and CTs (in the same context: Djibouti, 2011-2012)	KfW
South Sudan	2008-2010	Transition assistance, comparing FfW and CfW	GIZ
Afghanistan	2004-2009	Transition assistance, food insecurity and poverty, CfW	GTZ
Chad	2003-2005	Road construction, improved transport, CfW	KfW
Ethiopia	2003	Food security, drought, CfW	GTZ
Palestinian Territories	2002-2003	Employment, social cohesion and peace-building with the aid of CfW	KfW
Nepal	2002-2009	Food-insecure districts, FfW and CfW, seasonally adjusted	GTZ
Macedonia	2000-2006	Poverty alleviation and creation of social infrastructure with the aid of CfW	KfW
Egypt	1998-2003 ⁷	Social Fund for Development: poverty reduction, crisis prevention through various waves of CfW	KfW
Source: The respective programmes’ monitoring reports, see list of references, as well as the KfW project database, see https://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/Internationale-Finanzierung/KfW-Entwicklungsbank/Projekte/Projektdatenbank/index.jsp .			

CBIs were also in prominent use by German development cooperation agencies in February 2016, when CfW interventions were declared to be among the main tools of transitional

⁷ The report refers to previous waves under the Social Fund for Development starting as early as 1994, but does not state whether CfW was used throughout.

development assistance in the Syria crisis.⁸ The aim here is to enhance employment opportunities for refugees in the countries neighbouring Syria, i.e. Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq, in order to improve refugees' livelihoods and reduce their need to migrate further, for example to Europe.⁹ In order to achieve these aims and to learn from these and previous experiences, the Methods Departments are screening evidence, undertaking feasibility study trips, and carrying out pilot interventions. Studies (such as those reviewed for this paper) indicate that enthusiasm for CBIs – including unconditional transfers – is running fairly high. However, for the moment, most interventions are in the form of CfW due to political considerations.¹⁰

These German CfW interventions are open to both refugees and host communities so as to relieve social tensions between these groups. A total of €200,000 is available for this programme, which is intended to create 50,000 jobs during the period until the end of 2016, thus supporting 250,000 people in the region (if beneficiaries' families are also included). Both the BMZ's implementing agencies are involved in this programme: whereas the GIZ is responsible for technical cooperation and implements projects either on its own or together with NGOs, the KfW works on the financial side, mostly providing funds to specialised UN agencies.

While it is still too early to draw any final conclusions as activities only started in March 2016, some initial lessons have already been learnt and were indeed reported during interviews with representatives of the implementing agencies. While all interviewees supported the move towards more CBIs in the German portfolio, most of them cautioned against political moves that might be too fast and might consequently miss some context specificities and the chance to have a sustainable impact.

First of all, they suggested that CfW interventions might not be the most appropriate approach in all situations. Where disabled, old or traumatised populations prevail who are unable to work, unconditional cash transfers could be better suited as a means of supporting the neediest. Also, cash injections in the local economy might work as a goal in themselves without any need for building infrastructure, so that work interventions could be omitted (a programme in Northern Iraq recently provided one of the few examples of unconditional cash transfers in German development cooperation). Where markets are weak or during the lean season, when food is not available, food-for-work interventions might be preferable.

Secondly, they pointed out that CfW can have different objectives. It is important to be clear about this, since interventions geared towards social security, employment or livelihoods have different potentials and require different approaches. Transitional assistance usually focuses on livelihoods, with preference being given to reaching a large number of people. This means accepting a shorter intervention term. In current German practice, beneficiaries can participate for up to three months. While this approach may

8 In addition to implementing transitional assistance projects (often funded by BMZ), the GIZ has some experience in providing technical advice to governments, for example in Malawi and Zambia, wishing to find out how to build a social safety net.

9 For more details on the programme, see the website of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ): http://www.bmz.de/de/themen/Sonderinitiative-Fluchtursachen-bekaempfen-Fluechtlinge-reintegrieren/cash_for_work/index.jsp.

10 For example, it may be easier to justify money allocated as a salary rather than “just being handed out”.

prevent negative coping strategies and help for three to six months, it is not well-suited to a social protection or employment objective, which needs more commitment and a longer project lifespan.

Thirdly, when designing a CfW intervention – especially a large-scale one – it helps to be able to build on a foundation from the past and to plan as much as possible in advance. Interventions that connect with existing activities, such as garbage collection and recycling in Jordan, have proven to be particularly valuable. Similarly, when the response time is short, it helps to be able to build on previous experiences and networks, such as in the exchange with national partners.

Lastly, one activity that should be undertaken during the preparatory stage is an analysis of the local labour market and the general context. It is important not to crowd out local initiatives and distort wages. At the same time, funding with a relatively short time span reduces the range of interventions that can reasonably be expected to be made during the period in question and makes it much more difficult to design programmes with a lasting benefit.

5 Conclusions and policy recommendations

This paper focuses on CBIs in fragile contexts, which are generally short-term activities limited to a certain period and geographical area. As is demonstrated by the wide range of possible outcomes already included in this theoretical and empirical paper with a limited focus on food and nutritional security, cash has a great deal of potential as a flexible tool. It should thus be included more commonly in a broader response analysis. CBIs are less appropriate where markets do not exist or where food is not available for purchasing.

When compared with other measures addressing immediate needs, such as food or other in-kind distributions, CBIs are essentially about enabling beneficiaries to access food and services. Giving beneficiaries cash means giving them an opportunity to decide what they need most. In other words, it means allowing them to adjust the support to their individual needs and to preserve their dignity as self-reliant actors. It also allows them to make choices that they feel improve their and their children's future lives. While the main objective of transitional assistance is the temporary stabilisation of livelihoods, using the interventions to lay the foundations for a longer-term recovery is worth bearing in mind as a secondary objective.

CBIs are essentially a multi-sectoral approach. Unconditional cash transfers are thus difficult to include in the relatively sector-driven environment of crisis and development interventions and might require a new aid architecture. Yet if actors feel for some reason that they would like to limit the choice available to beneficiaries for employing the cash received and focus instead on a particular outcome, vouchers or cash transfers accompanied by further components are likely the better choice. For example, the findings on dietary diversity and calorie intake imply that, while cash gives beneficiaries a wider choice and agency, distributing food items (or vouchers that can be exchanged for them) may be a more direct route if the consumption of specific nutrients (such as iodine) is the target of the intervention.

The German practice thus far has focused on CfW interventions rather than on unconditional transfers. The former can enhance incomes and thus also spending on food and other items, at least temporarily. They have been particularly successful when embedded in national development strategies and can be scaled up more promptly if existing structures and contacts can be used. However, in many cases in which evidence is available, not enough attention has been given to the longer-term benefits created by the infrastructure built with the aid of CfW programmes. Both German and other interventions often suffer from a lack of funding for maintenance beyond the immediate implementation stage of the project.

Another drawback of CfW projects is that they exclude labour-constrained households, such as single disabled or elderly people (Ludi, Levine, & McCord, 2016; McCord, 2012). In the light of this problem and the high degree of context-specificity, particularly in fragile states, a very rigid political focus on a specific tool is not necessarily the best option. A greater degree of openness to other CBIs rather than just CfW programmes would be desirable in order to be able to adjust to local contexts. Furthermore, linking different actors both between and within organisations (i.e. BMZ, the Foreign Office, GIZ, KfW and NGOs in the German case) could institutionalise learning and increase the efficiency of interventions as well as the degree of transparency about the success factors.

Debates in academic and political circles already point to an interesting way forward. In the increasingly protracted crises around the globe, the current practice of limited, piecemeal interventions may not be able to meet the long-term needs of the population. Even in fragile contexts, long-term reliable systems are possible and could, for example, consist of a single approach, some kind of management or supervisory agent, and basket funding in order to ensure harmonisation among agencies (Harvey & Holmes, 2007).

This paper demonstrates that, while there is ample evidence that CBIs can work in protracted crises, there are also situations in which they are not the best choice. Based on this, the take-up by German actors is clearly supportable. The new openness to cash transfers under the condition of performing public works could translate into an openness to unconditional transfers. As a major donor, Germany certainly has a role to play in this respect.

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