

East Africa food crisis

Oxfam's response in Somalia



18 October 2011

Last week Oxfam continued to provide water to over 700,000 people in need in South and Central Somalia, as well as reaching people through our nutrition program in Mogadishu and distributing cash to households in Lower & Middle Juba, Gedo & Mogadishu. Through local partners Oxfam has now helped approx. one million people in Somalia with some form of assistance since its food crisis response started on 1st July 2011.

This week we take a look at our *cash transfer program* in more detail...

Oxfam's cash program

In areas where there is some food production or the possibility of importing food, Oxfam advocates cash-based interventions (accompanied by market support where necessary), to increase people's access to food. Cash programming has proved to be more appropriate than handing out food in a context such as Somalia, where the security situation is volatile. Cash also helps to enhance coping mechanisms and reduce vulnerability.

Cash support can either be in the form of direct cash relief, where money is given out to vulnerable groups without something in return, or, when appropriate, through cash-for-work schemes. Direct cash grants allow vulnerable households to access food and prioritise their needs. Through cash-for-work, community members are paid to carry out work within the community, which provides vital employment and income to the individuals, as well as the obvious long-term benefit the activity has on the community.



A woman receiving cash equivalent to \$80, Gedo
Photo credit: SADO



Cash-for-work in action – excavation of water catchment, Lower Shabelle

Photo credit: HARDO

This project to rehabilitate five water catchments for rain water harvesting had the dual benefit of providing a livelihood source for beneficiaries as well as enhancing water access for the populations in these locations, saving the women long hours of trekking for water.

Who receives the money?

Oxfam's partners on the ground work with local communities to identify the most vulnerable, using pre-defined criteria, such as households with malnourished children, pregnant and lactating mothers, female-headed households and other vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and most marginalized.

Community sensitization is conducted by our partners to ensure that people are aware of the criteria being used to identify beneficiaries, the amount of the grants, when payment will take place and the duration of the project. Oxfam's approach is based on community participation, transparency on the entitlements and rights of beneficiaries, feedback systems and regular needs assessments.

Last week cash was distributed to 1,956 households in Gedo, 2,660 households in Middle Juba, 748 households in Lower Juba and 150 households in Mogadishu. So far nearly 17,000 households (benefitting approximately 106,500 people*) have received cash relief since our food crisis response began at the start of July.

*based on average household size of 7 in Mogadishu; 6 in other areas



A vulnerable household receives their cash registration card in an IDP camp in Mogadishu

Photo credit: HIJRA

How much is given out and what is it used for?

Households receive the equivalent of between \$75 and \$100 depending on their location and the intervention package they are receiving (for example, some farmers are receiving additional support, such as agriculture inputs to increase food availability). This amount is designed to cover the household's monthly food expenses and is based on results of a FSNAU survey to determine the food basket prices in the target areas.

Households receiving cash use it to purchase life-saving food for their families and other essential household items, such as medicine or hygiene products.

"We now have 'SOOR' (cooked maize flour) in our homes and our children can laugh and play well. 'Waan dheregnay' (I have eaten well this morning). We call WASDA/Oxfam 'Dejiya', which means 'one who prevents people migrating due to lack of basic needs'. We are very happy"

Asha Ahmed Sharif – speaking on behalf of women who have benefitted from one of our cash transfer projects in Middle Juba

Risk mitigation and monitoring

Cash is delivered to the recipients through remittance companies (*hawala*), using a tightly regulated system, which is closely supervised and monitored. Experience has shown these firms to be reliable and to appropriately facilitate money transfer across south central Somalia, even in remote and insecure areas.

We have set up a feedback mechanism whereby beneficiaries can contact Oxfam to give feedback on the cash transfer process. A telephone number is included on cash registration cards, which enables the cash recipient to leave a message and then be called back by an Oxfam monitoring officer. This ensures we are accountable to those we are assisting and means any issues or complaints can be dealt with quickly.

Limiting negative impacts on markets

We are constantly evaluating and revising our program response as the situation in Somalia evolves, and cash is only distributed where we feel it will have a positive impact.

To mitigate the risk of inflation we conduct weekly market price monitoring to assess how our cash program is impacting on markets. We also assess the capacity of traders to respond to commodity demand. Rather than fuelling inflation, in some areas we have witnessed a multiplier effect on local business from the injection of cash.

A recent interim evaluation conducted by Oxfam partner, SADO, showed that cash distribution carried out in Gedo and Middle Juba from July to September this year stimulated the local market and increased supply of basic commodities in respective markets.



Cash provided can be used to purchase provisions from markets and small businesses, such as this one in an IDP camp in Mogadishu – this means the cash buys essential items for the household whilst supporting the livelihood of the trader

Photo credit: Caroline Gluck / Oxfam