

BRIEFING PAPER

Cash Transfers and Public Works in Chad: Building blocks of a national social protection system

Chad has recently experienced a period of sustained economic growth, political stability and poverty reduction. But growth has not benefited everyone equally, employment opportunities are still limited, and food insecurity remains a serious challenge. Social protection has an important role to play in this context, to alleviate poverty and hunger and to facilitate access to basic needs and essential services.

The *Stratégie Nationale de Protection Sociale* (SNPS), adopted in July 2015, is a central pillar in Chad's fight against poverty and vulnerability, also for building household resilience and national cohesion.¹ The SNPS aims to establish a comprehensive social protection system in Chad that will: (1) deliver social assistance to vulnerable groups and promote social inclusion; (2) extend access to employment and social security, to ensure decent work and a minimum income for the working age population; (3) enhance food security and nutrition; and (4) facilitate access to basic social services, notably education and health.

As part of its support to the Government of Chad in implementing the National Social Protection Strategy, UNICEF commissioned reviews of experiences with two popular social protection instruments – cash transfers and public works programmes – globally and in Chad. The cash transfers and public works case studies combined secondary research (reviews of academic literature and policy documents) and primary research (qualitative fieldwork in Chad).

For both studies, key informants from government ministries and development partners in N'Djamena were interviewed. For cash transfers, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and field observations were conducted in rural Wadi Fira in eastern Chad, focusing on seasonal cash transfer projects implemented by CARE. For public works, key informants involved with the Mayor of N'Djamena's 'N'Djamena Nadif' urban public works project were interviewed, demographic profiles of 65 women were compiled and several focus group discussions and individual interviews were held with current and former project participants, as well as some non-participants, for their observations about the project.



Photograph: IDS/BERDES field research team

Cash transfers in Chad ⁱⁱ

Cash transfers have become the dominant form of social protection in many countries around the world. Impact evaluations confirm that cash transfers reduce poverty and food insecurity, build resilience, improve access to education and health care services, and create local income multipliers. These impacts are greater when transfer payments are sizeable, predictable, targeted at working adults, and linked to other forms of support (e.g. access to microfinance, asset transfers, and livelihood training).

Cash transfers are mentioned in Chad's SNPS as a form of social assistance for the most vulnerable groups, such as older people, orphans and vulnerable children, and women with disabilities. Cash transfers are also mentioned, along with other social protection mechanisms, as an appropriate response to seasonal food insecurity and for managing risk. Most cash transfers implemented in Chad, until recently, have been small-scale temporary projects rather than national government-run programmes. They have typically implemented by NGOs with financial and technical support from donor agencies. This is currently changing, however, as the government puts in place its pilot national social safety net project, with assistance from the World Bank.

A recent assessment found that social safety nets in Chad – cash, food and vouchers – are mainly oriented towards humanitarian or emergency response, and most target the transitory food insecure during the 'lean season' rather than chronically poor individuals or households all year round.ⁱⁱⁱ Almost all safety net programmes are located in the most food insecure Sahelian regions, while very few programmes target chronically poor households in other parts of Chad. The value of cash transfers varies greatly, between \$24 and \$80 per household for 2–6 months, with an average amount of \$169 per annum. Vouchers are sometimes used instead of cash.

An evaluation of unconditional emergency cash transfers implemented by Action Contre la Faim (ACF) in Kanem region in 2014 found that the project met 50% of the food needs of 8,000 households and stimulated community solidarity mechanisms through partial redistribution of benefits by clan structures. However, it had little impact on poverty reduction or the local economy because the transfer value was very low. Similarly, an evaluation of Oxfam's cash transfer programmes in Guera, Bahr el Gazal and Sila regions between 2012 and 2014 found that they had positive impacts on household food security and allowed beneficiaries to avoid negative coping strategies such as de-stocking and indebtedness. However, the small transfers covered only survival needs, and some authorities were concerned that free cash transfers undermined resilience and promoted 'dependency syndrome' among beneficiaries. An important finding was that cash transfers alone are insufficient to move beneficiaries out of extreme poverty; sustainable impacts on poverty were associated with packages that combined cash transfers with support for livelihood activities.

Case study: CARE's cash transfers in Wadi Fira

Wadi Fira, located on Chad's eastern border with Sudan, is a sparsely populated pastoral and agro-pastoral area with limited infrastructure, markets and government services (insufficient schools, teachers, health clinics, water-points, agricultural outreach officers and veterinarians). Vulnerability and food insecurity are high due to poverty, conflicts between farmers and herders, droughts, epidemics and seasonal hunger.

CARE delivered seasonal cash transfers, with funding from the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), to over 33,000 households in Wadi Fira between 2012 and 2015, with the objective of reinforcing the food and nutritional security of households affected by chronic food insecurity and recurrent food crises. Targeted beneficiaries were very poor households who faced 'livelihood deficits' and were at risk of falling into 'survival deficits' during the hungry season months.

CARE's cash transfers (or vouchers depending on local market capacity) were designed to cover 100% of the food needs of beneficiary households during the hungry season, and were complemented by food supplements to young children in these households, nutrition and hygiene information and sensitisation sessions, and screening and referrals of malnourished children. This integrated approach contributed to a reduction in prevalence of global acute malnutrition in Wadi Fira from 21% in 2012 to 11% in 2014.

Post-distribution monitoring of a cohort of seasonal cash transfer beneficiaries over three years found that almost half (47%) had moved from a 'survival deficit' situation (where they could not meet even their basic food needs) to a more resilient situation of caloric adequacy plus investment in productive assets (chickens, goats, seeds and tools) which allowed them to steadily strengthen their livelihoods. However, over half (53%) of beneficiaries remained in a precarious position, and concern about the sustainability of gains made by the programme led to the design of a follow-up intervention that was focused more on building resilience and not only on securing basic needs.

The FACER^{iv} resilience project, launched in 2015, aims to enable 7,000 households that previously benefited from unconditional cash transfers and have achieved the 'livelihood protection threshold' to further secure their livelihoods through a number of interventions that will enhance food **availability** by increasing and diversifying agricultural and pastoral production, enhance **access** to food by increasing household income and strengthening resilience in the face of food shocks and climate change, and enhance biological **utilisation** of food by improving hygiene and sanitation practices.

Project activities include cash-for-work (on natural resource management projects, among others), cash-for learning (for women's functional literacy), distribution of productive assets (improved seeds, tools, water pumps and small ruminants), creation of community grain stores and village savings and loans

associations (VSLA), training (on improved cultivation techniques, collection and conservation of animal fodder, good hygiene and sanitation practices), and community-based nutritional surveillance.

The project is implemented by a partnership between international and local NGOs, led by CARE, and decentralised government structures, with funding from the European Union and ECHO.

The way forward for cash transfers in Chad

Cash transfers are being used in at least three different ways in Chad:

- as a short-term **safety net** to individuals and households suffering from seasonal or acute food insecurity, sometimes in combination with nutritional supplements;
- as a form of long-term **social welfare** assistance to chronically poor people who are unable to work and achieve self-reliant livelihoods (such as older persons or persons with disability);
- increasingly, as part of a **developmental** effort to strengthen household resilience and support their efforts to move beyond survival towards securing sustainable independent livelihoods, often in combination with other support (asset transfers, training, access to savings and credit).

All three forms of cash transfers should continue, while being clear about precisely which target groups each intervention is addressing and with what objectives. At present, most of these programmes are implemented by NGOs and are funded by external donors, with a limited role by government. Over time, government engagement, financing and ownership should increase, as the national social protection system develops.

Labour-intensive public works in Chad ^v

Labour-intensive public works programmes are a popular social protection instrument throughout Africa and South Asia. They offer temporary employment on community infrastructure activities, such as constructing rural roads or irrigation canals. They are popular with policy-makers because of several benefits, including: (1) providing cash or in-kind wages (cash/food-for-work) to poor people; (2) improving infrastructure and creating useful assets for poor communities; (3) being self-targeting by offering low wages; and (4) avoiding dependency on 'handouts' because of the work requirement.

Most public works projects are located in rural areas, where infrastructure deficits are high and there is more potential for generating large-scale employment than in towns and cities. Rural public works activities in Africa are often timed to operate during the non-farming months, to counteract seasonal unemployment and provide income and food security to agricultural families during the annual *soudure*.

Examples of urban public works projects are relatively rare. In Liberia, the Youth, Employment, Skills (YES) project included urban-based activities such as cleaning streets, school-yards and markets, painting public buildings, clearing drains and filling potholes. Unlike large-scale rural infrastructure projects, services such as street-sweeping require constant repetition so they can generate full-time employment, but they tend to create fewer workplaces. For example, on South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), Infrastructure Sector projects created 94% of workplaces in 2005 at an average of 88 jobs per project, but Social Sector projects (e.g. home- or community-based care for people living with HIV/AIDS) created only 1% of total workplaces at just 8 jobs per project.

In Chad, labour-intensive public works (*activités à haute intensité de main d'œuvre*) have been identified as an appropriate mechanism to generate employment opportunities by the National Development Plan (PND), the National Employment Policy (PNEFPT), and the National Social Protection Strategy (SNPS). Under strategic axis 2 of the SNPS – 'social security and employment' – one operational objective is to "ensure a minimum revenue for people of working age by promoting employment creation for the most vulnerable groups". Under strategic axis 3 – 'food security and nutrition' – cash-for-work is identified as an appropriate response to chronic and transitory food insecurity and a mechanism to strengthen resilience. Labour-intensive public works pilot projects identified in the SNPS include one in rural areas – preparation of lands for rice cultivation – and one in urban areas – a sanitation project in N'Djamena – that would create decent work opportunities for poor women and young people.

Chad's experience with public works goes back at least to the 1990s, when the World Bank supported the large-scale AGETIP programme that included the construction of schools, health centres, public latrines and government buildings. The project completion report in 2000 concluded that AGETIP had only limited poverty reduction impacts and the sustainability of the assets created was questioned. More recently, the World Food Programme included 'food-for-assets' in its Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) of 2012–2014 in food insecure Sahelian communities and parts of eastern and southern Chad with large numbers of refugees. Activities included road repairs, water management and erosion control measures. One WFP food-for-work project constructed 228,000 metres of stone barriers during the hungry season and paid 500 tons of food to 17,000 beneficiaries.

Other development partners that support the implementation of labour-intensive public works in Chad include the African Development Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Swiss Cooperation, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Most of these activities were undertaken in rural areas – for instance, planting a 'Green Wall' across the Sahel to prevent desertification – but UNDP's programme of support to the commune of Goz Beida in the eastern Sila region focused on improving urban roads and drainage systems.

Concerns raised in evaluations of public works projects in Chad are shared by experiences in other countries, and include: limited coverage and short duration of projects leads to little impact on poverty; poor quality of construction and inadequate maintenance budgets causes many infrastructure assets to deteriorate; and since these donor-funded projects are not integrated into government plans, there are no nationally agreed guidelines, objectives or implementation modalities for such activities. From a social protection perspective, the focus on objectives such as infrastructure construction and environmental conservation means that considerations such as reaching everyone who needs social assistance, gender equity and decent work principles have received inadequate attention to date – though this is changing, with the National Employment Policy stating that decent working conditions will be applied on public works projects, and the ILO planning a gender-sensitive public works project.

Case study of 'N'djamena Nadif'

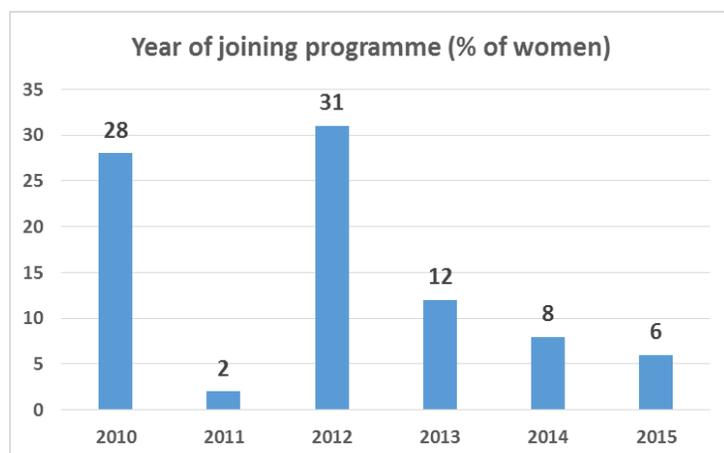
N'Djamena Nadif ('Clean N'Djamena') is a labour-intensive public works programme initiated by the mayor's office in 2010, which employs mainly women as 'surface technicians' to clean the capital city's streets and markets. The inspiration for the project came from the first woman mayor of N'Djamena, who observed many destitute women in the city in need of work; the current governor of N'Djamena, who argued that women "do all the work of maintaining cleanliness in their own homes"; and the First Lady of Chad, who called for action to deal with the large numbers of women on the streets.

Initially 850 women were recruited, but by 2015 the number employed had fallen substantially, partly due to the decentralisation of governance in N'Djamena to separate communes, which left the decision to continue – and responsibility for financing – the street sweepers' work up to the communes, rather than the central mayor's office. Employment is much less than demand: women on the waiting list feel the selection process for *N'Djamena Nadif* is unfair because it leaves out many others, who are equally vulnerable.

The monthly payment started at 40,000 CFA francs (US\$ 68) and was later raised to the minimum wage of 60,000 CFA francs (US\$ 103). This income helps destitute women meet basic living costs, which are high in N'Djamena, including food (50–60,000 CFA francs for 100kg of rice), housing (rents of 25,000 CFA francs per month), school fees (3,000 CFA francs per child at public school) and transport ("*I only earn 2,000 CFA francs a day and must spend 750 on transport*").

Surface technicians work six days a week, Monday to Saturday. Street sweepers work from 6am to noon, while market cleaners work before and after market opening times, from 6 to 8am and from 5 to 7pm. The work itself is difficult, due to the heat and dust, risk of accidents involving motor vehicles, and low social status of the work ("*People in my neighbourhood mock me*").

Profiles were compiled of one-third (65 out of 200) of female workers. Their average age in 2015 was 43, all had children to support – 74% had more than three children – and over half (55%) were grandmothers. The vast majority of women profiled (82%) were household heads, being either divorced (45%) or widowed (37%). One-third (34%) had no education, but two in five (41%) had some primary education and one in five (20%) had some secondary schooling. More than a quarter of these women (28%) had been working on *N'Djamena Nadif* since it started in 2010, and almost one-third joined in 2012, when the programme was reorganised following the decentralisation process described above.



Source: IDS/BERDES field research: Demographic profiles (n=65)



Photograph: IDS/BERDES field research team

The positive impacts of the programme are significant and are appreciated by participants. *“Before, our husbands used to care for us; now N'Djamena Nadif does”* (divorced woman). Earnings are spent on household needs, including rent (*“Thanks to this job, I am not on the street with my family”*) and child care – food, clothing, schooling and medical expenses. Several women used their earnings to join revolving savings and loans groups (*tontines*), which enabled them to invest in their own education or alternative income-generating activities.

Several specific issues for further attention were identified in the fieldwork, including: health and safety (more provision of protective gear, training on first aid and traffic safety), social protection (paid sick leave, subsidised health care, disability compensation for injured workers), transport (collective transport or allowances), grievances (independent complaints mechanism), public perceptions (information and awareness campaigns to address negative attitudes), monitoring and evaluation (better documentation, monitoring of programme processes, and qualitative assessment of impacts), and symbolic support (e.g. monthly distributions of milk and soap).

The way forward for public works in Chad

Labour-intensive public works could be a more effective social protection mechanism if the following four principles are adopted:

- **Generate enough work opportunities to meet needs:** Ideally, workplaces would be available to everyone who needs work, when they need it. This ‘right to work’ is the basis of the Employment Guarantee Scheme in India, which offers 100 days of work as a right to all rural households.
- **Improve the sustainability and usefulness of assets created through public works:** This requires improving the quality of public works construction activities, and including maintenance budgets.
- **Strengthen the social protection impacts of public works,** by ensuring that ‘decent work’ standards are applied on all public works projects (work-sites should be close to communities, hours should be reasonable, gender-appropriate tasks should be identified, workers should be paid in full and on time, independent complaints mechanisms should be established, and skills training should be provided).
- **Explore ways to combine service provision activities with physical infrastructure creation** as parts of an overall portfolio of public works programmes, because service provision activities often appeal to women and this has significance for gender-sensitive social protection.

Conclusions

Cash transfers and public works have important complementary roles to play in the implementation of the SNPS and the future evolution of social protection in Chad. Long-term, predictable cash transfers to poor and vulnerable households can offer immediate relief to pressing issues of food insecurity, as is characteristic in much of the Sahel, and when coupled with additional support hold further promise of strengthening household resilience. Labour-intensive public works are only accessible to working-age adults who can perform manual work. But the poorest and most vulnerable individuals in any society are those who have no labour capacity (children, older persons, persons with disability).

For this reason, public works should be seen as one component of a comprehensive national social protection system that has many elements, including social assistance for poor people who cannot work (e.g. disability grants) and those who should not be expected to work (e.g. child benefits for children and social pensions for older persons). One starting point for this is the World Bank’s proposal that “the Government should pilot the establishment of a safety nets system that would test labour intensive public works and cash transfer interventions”.^{vi} Taken together, well-targeted predictable cash transfers plus well-designed labour-intensive public works projects can contribute to ensuring that all poor and vulnerable people in Chad have access to some form of social protection, throughout their lives.

UNICEF commissioned the Centre for Social Protection at the UK Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the Bureau of Economic and Social Research and Studies (BERDES) in Chad to provide technical support to the Government of Chad in the development of its National Social Protection Strategy. IDS and BERDES then provided further support in identifying and strengthening appropriate mechanisms for implementing the strategy. Two case studies were selected: cash transfer schemes, and public works programmes, which are summarised in this paper. This Briefing Paper was written by Stephen Devereux and Carol Watson, and draws on the case study reports: *Cash transfers and resilience in Chad* (Watson, Devereux and Abdoulaye, 2016) and *Labour-intensive public works in Chad* (Watson, Devereux and Nan-guer, 2016).

Although UNICEF supported these studies, all ideas, views and opinions expressed in the document are the full responsibility of the authors and do not reflect UNICEF's position.

Endnotes

- ii Government of Chad (July 2015), **National Social Protection Strategy (SNPS)**.
- ii Carol Watson, Stephen Devereux and Younous Abdoulaye (June 2016), **Cash transfers and resilience in Chad: overview of experiences and case study of CARE's interventions**. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and N'djamena: Bureau for Economic and Social Research and Study (BERDES).
- iii World Bank (December 2016), **Republic of Chad: Shaping adaptive safety nets to address vulnerability**, *Report no. 103560-TD*. Washington D.C: World Bank.
- iv FACER – *Femmes, Adaptation au Changement Climatique, Eau et Resilience* – means 'Women, Adaptation to Climate Change, Water and Resilience'.
- v Carol Watson, Stephen Devereux and Blandine Nan-guer (June 2016), **Labour-intensive public works in Chad: overview of experiences and case study of 'N'djamena Nadif'**. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and N'djamena: Bureau for Economic and Social Research and Study (BERDES).
- vi World Bank (December 2016), **Republic of Chad: Shaping adaptive safety nets to address vulnerability**, *Report no. 103560-TD*. Washington D.C: World Bank, page xiii.