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Poverty, changing political regimes, and social cash transfers in Zimbabwe, 1980–2016

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Abstract: Since 2000, Zimbabwe has been under some pressure to provide more fully for its children. It is not clear whether child poverty has worsened, although AIDS, drought, and economic mismanagement have all compromised poverty reduction. In any case, child poverty has come under increased scrutiny, in part because of the Millennium Development Goals and the growing interest in new kinds of intervention among international agencies and donors. Zimbabwe might have adopted the child-oriented cash transfer programmes or subsidies associated with one or other of the 'models' developed by its richer neighbours to the south (South Africa, Botswana, Namibia). It might also have adopted the models favoured, and promoted energetically, by the World Bank, UNICEF, and other external agencies. But ZANU-PF—which was in power until 2009 and after 2013, and shared power between those dates—resisted cash transfer programmes, favouring instead agricultural interventions (including land reform and farm input subsidy programmes). ZANU-PF's ambivalence towards cash transfer programmes represents political choices informed by the nature of Zimbabwean society and politics.

Keywords: poverty, child poverty, politics, social cash transfers, social protection, families
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1 Introduction

Welfare states provide social protection to families with children in different ways. 'Child welfare regimes' (CWRs), by which I mean the set of programmes affecting the welfare of children—primarily cash transfer and feeding programmes aimed at children or at families with children—vary by overall expenditure, the generosity of the benefits, the form and extent of targeting, and whether the programmes are rooted in legislation. Overall expenditure is the most easily measured of these. The ILO's *World Social Protection Report, 2014/15* (ILO 2014) asserts that countries in Africa, together with countries in Asia and the Pacific, spend a far smaller share of GDP on child benefits (about 0.2 per cent) than countries in Western Europe (about 0.4 per cent of GDP). The ILO concludes that 'existing social protection policies do not sufficiently address the income security needs of children and families, particularly in low- and middle-income countries with large child populations' (ILO 2014: 9). Most European countries offer generous benefits that are either universal or near universal, but there is considerable variation in the total volume of transfers (Gauthier 1996; Wennemo 1992), targeting, and generosity (Bradshaw 2012; Daly and Clavero 2002).

Studies of variations between CWRs in the industrialized democracies are of little assistance in understanding variation in Southern Africa because they focus on their relationship with gendered divisions of labour, not on provision for children per se. Welfare regime types in Southern Africa are less well researched and understood. This paper fills this gap by examining the state provision of social cash transfers to poor families with children in Zimbabwe in the context of changing political regimes. It will show that regimes vary in terms of the types of programme they favour, their targeting (which category of children gets what), the value and form of benefits, coverage, and the legal status of social assistance programmes in general. Zimbabwe's CWR consists of direct benefits, including school feeding programmes and school and medical fee waivers. Indirect social transfers that target poor households with children include cash transfers through the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) and Public Assistance (PA) programmes. Non-cash components include food aid, particularly during drought years, and agricultural farm inputs support. The CWR is distinctive in that, like welfare in general in the country, it is highly targeted at the poorest families with children, classically agrarian, and focused notionally on land reform, an idealized understanding of agrarian society, and emergency relief in times of drought, not on the 'modern' panoply of cash transfers.

Since 2000, Zimbabwe has been under some pressure to provide more fully for its children. Zimbabwe might have adopted the child-oriented cash transfer programmes or subsidies associated with one or other of the 'models' developed by its richer neighbours to the south (South Africa, Botswana, Namibia) or models favoured, and promoted energetically, by the World Bank, UNICEF, and other external agencies. Zimbabwean governments did implement modest reforms, especially under the Government of National Unity (GNU) between 2009 and 2013. But ZANU-PF, which governed alone before 2009 and after 2013, and shared power in between, resisted cash transfer programmes, favouring instead programmes that provided (generally modest) benefits in kind to families, rather than for the care of individual children, and that (except during periods of drought and drought recovery) were highly targeted at the very poor.

In some of these respects Zimbabwe's welfare regime during this period was similar to Botswana's, but there were crucial differences even between these two cases. Zimbabwe had neither a dedicated child grant nor old-age pension, whereas Botswana had universal cash transfers for orphans and the elderly. Botswana's welfare regime was also familial, but its feeding and public employment programmes had much wider coverage than Zimbabwe's. The reason for these differences lay in the Zimbabwean government's preference for an agrarian welfare regime—that is, one that addressed risks of poverty primarily through agricultural production. Zimbabwe's constitution revealingly imposes a duty on citizens to produce for themselves, whilst imposing vague obligations on the state to provide for the destitute. Whereas South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia were essentially post-agrarian societies, Zimbabwe retained a plausible agrarian option. This meant that the models provided by its regional neighbours were deemed less appropriate, and even the models advocated by international agencies were considered less important than programmes to support peasant agriculture.

The policy models favoured by ZANU-PF were not cash transfer programmes but farm input subsidy programmes. These were particularly appealing to ZANU-PF when it faced severe electoral challenges from the urban-based political opposition. The only major cash transfer programme that has been implemented—the HSCT—was introduced under the Government of National Unity (GNU). Although the post-2013 ZANU-PF government has not abolished it, it did rein it in, and has invested instead in small farmer support. An economic and fiscal crisis has constrained the scope for expensive interventions, but ZANU-PF's ambivalence towards cash transfer programmes represents political choices informed by the nature of Zimbabwean society and politics.

Whilst it is the post-agrarian societies that provide most or all of the models for cash transfer programmes, Zimbabwe (together with Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique) is different in that the agrarian society has survived: these are (outside of drought years) non-arid environments, with strong peasant sectors, in stark contrast to South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, and Namibia. Moyo (2011a, 2011b, 2013: 26) describes Zimbabwe as 'a largely agrarian society'. In Zimbabwe, agriculture provides livelihoods to 80 per cent of the population, accounts for 23 per cent of formal employment, and contributes about 18 per cent to GDP and approximately 33 per cent of foreign earnings.[1] Zimbabwe's CWR does not fit easily into either Esping-Andersen's 'three worlds of welfare capitalism' (Esping-Andersen 1990) nor typologies of CWRs in the North (Bradshaw 2012; Daly and Clavero 2002). It fits better Seekings' typology of social provision in the global South. Seekings distinguishes between *agrarian* regimes that promote kinship support and strengthen 'peasant agriculture through shaping access to land […] products markets […] and production systems' with a primary objective to reduce poverty, and *pauperist* regimes that target 'deserving categories of very poor people through highly targeted non-contributory social assistance (Seekings 2012: 18). In Zimbabwe, as in most of Africa until the late 20th century, states (at best) tried to build the capacity of families to produce more and be more self-reliant: 'The families were and are the main sources of support for the African poor, as much for the young unemployed of modern cities as for the orphans of the past' (Iliffe 1987: 7). Until recently, social assistance in Zimbabwe remained steeped in the tradition of the Poor Laws, targeted at the poorest of the poor (Kaseke 2011).

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 will examine the distinctive characteristics—targeting, value and form of benefits, coverage, and legal status—of Zimbabwe's CWR. Section 3 analyses the CWR's evolution between 1980 and 2016, focusing on four key moments of change and choice. I examine how reforms were effected and how these changes shaped the CWR's distinctive characteristics. Section 4 considers the key explanatory factors of these characteristics. As discussed later, the ruling ZANU-PF governments preferred in-kind social transfers to direct cash, particularly agricultural inputs and food aid, which allowed it to reward its voters and sanction opposition supporters. In a later, related paper, I shall examine more fully how

[1] http://www.moa.gov.zw/index.php/2-uncategorised/8-welcome-to-our-ministry.

and why Zimbabwe's CWR is different from that of its three Southern African neighbours—South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia.

2 Distinctive characteristics of Zimbabwe's child welfare regime

Zimbabwe's CWR is distinguished by cash and non-cash transfers primarily highly targeted at the poorest families and not children per se, very low coverage, principally low-value in-kind benefits, and a context of social provision primarily not guided by legislation. Beneficiary households receive more low-value non-cash transfers in the form of food aid and agricultural inputs in support of peasant farming than direct cash transfers.

2.1 Familialist targeting

Zimbabwe's CWR is located in the general agrarian regime; hence, social transfers are familialist—largely targeting the family. The government focuses on peasants and family, and kin are central to social provision. Seekings (2010: 27) describes such regimes as agrarian. Unlike most countries in Southern Africa, which have adopted child grants paid to caregivers of children—such as the Child Grant in Lesotho, Child Support Grant in South Africa, Vulnerable Grant in Namibia, and Orphan Care Programme in Botswana—Zimbabwe has not introduced a child-specific cash grant. In his presentation at the National Social Protection Policy Consultative Workshop, Togarepi Chinake, Director of the Department of Child Welfare and Probation Services in the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MPSLSW), said that social transfers in Zimbabwe aim to first address household poverty by increasing household consumption of goods and services and indirectly to reduce child poverty.[2]

As in Botswana, where there are familial safety nets, poor families with children in Zimbabwe receive family-based cash and in-kind benefits. But Zimbabwe is familial in a wider sense than Botswana. Botswana also targets families, in contrast to South Africa and Namibia, which provide grants for individual caregivers (often causing discord within families, as patriarchal relations are undermined). Botswana also provides for families in the event that a child is orphaned (as, in effect, do South Africa and Namibia). Zimbabwe does not even do this, or at least not directly. The presumption in Zimbabwe is that the extended family, in an agrarian society, will take care of children, even orphaned children.

2.2 Coverage

Social cash transfer coverage—the number of children reached by the transfers—in Zimbabwe is low: transfers reach at most 24 per cent of all children; on average, any given programme covers only 6 per cent of all children. Even Zimbabwe's flagship cash transfer programme, the Harmonized Cash Transfer Programme (HSCT), reached less than 1 per cent of children (in 25,598 households) in August 2016, down from about 2 per cent (in 55,509 households) in February 2016. Zimbabwe has lower coverage of transfers to families with children than most other countries in Southern Africa, including its neighbours to the south, South Africa (95 per cent), Botswana (85 per cent), and Namibia (67 per cent).

However, donor-supported in-kind benefits through food aid for poor children have been benefiting more children, reaching about half of all children in 2008—an increase from 26 per cent

[2] The author attended the workshop at the Fairmile Hotel in Gweru on 4 November 2015.

in 2006, emphasizing the ruling ZANU-PF party's efforts to combat child poverty through the agrarian route. The Agricultural Input Pack Support Programme has the highest coverage of the in-kind benefits programmes at 24 per cent of all children.

2.3 Value and form of benefits

Zimbabwe's CWR is characterized by low-value income support relative to the poverty line and GDP per capita ($885 in 2015—World Bank 2016). Cash transfers fall below both the Food Poverty Line (FPL)—consumption expenditure necessary to ensure that an individual can (if all expenditure is devoted to food) consume a food basket representing 2,100 calories at US$30/person, or US$151 for an average of five persons per household in July 2016—and the Total Consumption Poverty Line (TCPL)—the poverty level below which individuals are unable to purchase both non-food and food items, at US$96/person or US$480 for an average of five persons per household in July 2016 (ZIMSTAT 2016b: 2, 5). The HSCT offers US$10–25/month/family depending on family size, an amount below the FPL and much less than the TCPL in 2016.[3] Public Assistance beneficiaries receive US$20 per month per family, irrespective of household size. This amount constitutes 63 per cent of the FPL and 20 per cent of the TCPL for a single-member household, and 13 per cent of the FPL and 4 per cent of the TCPL for a family of five (World Bank 2014: 11).

In addition to these cash transfers, poor families with children receive non-cash transfers. It is difficult to ascertain the monetary value of non-cash benefits given that some transfers are not regular (e.g. monthly), while others are just one-off grants, such as agricultural inputs. Nonetheless, a limited number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) enjoy fee waivers for education, through the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), and for intermediate and tertiary health services, via Assisted Medical Treatment Orders (AMTOs). OVCs also benefit from in-kind transfers through school and Seasonal Targeted Assistance programmes, the Health and Nutrition Safety Net, and the Agricultural Input Pack Support Scheme. The inadequacy of both cash and non-cash social transfers, together with low coverage, partly accounts for the fact that 78 per cent of all children live in poverty (below the TCPL) in Zimbabwe (in 2016). Inadequate social transfers also contribute to general household poverty. The percentage of people below the TCPL remained at 61 per cent between 1995 and 1999, rose to 75 per cent in 2000, and remained at that level until 2003 before increasing to 80 per cent in 2013, though it fell to 72 per cent in 2016.[4]

2.4 Legal status of programmes

In Zimbabwe, social protection is a vague right under the constitution, but is not enshrined in legislation. Article 30 of the 2013 constitution provides for social welfare and requires the state to 'provide social security and social care to those who are in need'. Article 19(1) of the constitution requires the state to adopt policies and measures 'to ensure that in matters relating to children, the best interests of the children concerned are paramount'. The state first and foremost protects children by protecting the family, i.e. by providing care and assistance to caregivers (Article 25(a)). In terms of food security, the state must 'secure the establishment of adequate food reserves', but Section 15(a) of the constitution provides that it is the duty of people (families) 'to grow and store adequate food'; hence the strategic emphasis on social protection through agriculture, as will be

[3] http://www.zimdat.zimstat.co.zw/zimdat/libraries/aspx/dataview.aspx.

[4] http://www.zimdat.zimstat.co.zw/zimdat/libraries/aspx/dataview.aspx.

shown later. The constitution (Article 27(1)(a)) also compels the state to provide 'free and compulsory basic education for children'.

Nevertheless, the Social Welfare Assistance Act [Chapter 17:06] of 1988 (amended in 2001) legislates the provision of Public Assistance (PA) to persons in need and their dependants (including any child of the applicant or beneficiary, a step-child, legally adopted child, or child born posthumously who is under 18 years of age). This is a very narrow definition of dependant, as it does not include extended kin such as grandchildren. With the exception of PA, the various programmes are not written into law. There is no legislation comparable with the Social Assistance Act in South Africa, for example.

3 The evolution of Zimbabwe's child welfare regime: changes and choices, 1980–2016

State provision for poor families with children has gone through four key moments of change and choice between 1980 and 2016. The reforms happened as the ruling ZANU-PF's political security waxed and waned. In the first phase, between 1980 and the late 1990s, when the ruling ZANU-PF was politically secure—with no strong opposition—the government continued to provide for the indigent on the basis of poor laws, particularly through PA, land redistribution, and food aid.

In the second phase, between 2000 and 2008, after the rise of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition party in 1999, ZANU-PF became insecure and sought to consolidate its political power. ZANU-PF strengthened its land reform programme in 2000 and responded to the deepening economic crisis, largely due to its own economic mismanagement, by introducing BEAM for OVCs in 2001. The government responded to recurrent droughts by partnering with United Nations agencies and donors to provide expansive food aid programmes as well as promoting temporary public works programmes as part of drought relief in 2002 (and subsequent drought years). During the period leading to the 2009 election, Zimbabwe's economic crisis worsened, state capacity to provide for the poor weakened, and poverty escalated. In an attempt to foster self-reliance, ZANU-PF introduced a presidential farm input scheme for subsistence farmers, particularly in rural areas, in 2008.

In the third phase, between 2009 and mid-2013, during the Government of National Unity (GNU) between ZANU-PF and MDC formations, Zimbabwe introduced its highly poverty-targeted cash transfer programme, the HSCT, in 2010–2011—largely influenced by donors.

In the post-GNU phase, from mid-2013 to the present (2017), the new ZANU-PF government reverted to its ambivalence towards cash transfers, significantly downscaling the HSCT in preference to Command Agriculture (CA), providing inputs to support smallholder farmers, most of whom had benefited from the land redistribution programme. CA complemented the existing presidential input scheme. These reforms sustained the familial agrarian regime, largely offering non-cash benefits (food aid during drought and farm inputs), and modestly increased the coverage of social cash transfers (most of which continued to have no statutory basis).

3.1 Social cash transfers under a politically secure ZANU-PF, 1980–1999

Public Assistance provision

ZANU-PF's political security until the 2000s resulted in the party enjoying the comfort of majority support. Without electoral competition, ZANU-PF governments felt no need to expand social programmes. At independence, the ZANU-PF government had inherited an old-age pension scheme similar to South Africa's, but limited to white citizens, and a means-tested and parsimonious Public Assistance (PA) system along the lines of colonial Poor Laws. Before independence, PA had been limited to the aged, blind, and sick (Kaseke 1988). The new Zimbabwean government chose to abolish the pensions, rather than extend them to all Zimbabwean citizens. Continuing concerns over indigent families caring for children, however, meant that the PA survived; it was even expanded to cover all destitute citizens and their dependants, where destitution was 'due to old age, unemployment, sickness, disability, or death or desertion of a breadwinner' (Kanyenze et al. 2011: 380), but was limited to destitute individuals 'who are unable to get assistance from their families' (Kaseke 1988: 6). Child-headed households were also targeted by PA, since they were considered destitute families. Children benefit indirectly from PA as 'dependants of indigent persons' (Kaseke 2003: 35).[5]

PA has low coverage and small benefits because of poor funding, and often irregular and unpredictable payments. The number of beneficiaries declined from 69,308 in 1994 to 20,562 in 1998 (Munro 2003: 14). As of 2014, beneficiary households received parsimonious monthly benefits of US$20/household irrespective of household size. The benefits represent 20 per cent of the TCPL for a single-member household and 4 per cent of the TCPL for a family of five (World Bank 2014: 11). PA includes AMTOs for OVCs. AMTOs are 'fee waivers/vouchers issued to indigent persons to facilitate access to intermediate and tertiary health services, such as a provincial or national hospital or other specialist facility' (Kanyenze et al. 2011: 386). In 2011, AMTOs benefited 25,000 individuals (inclusive of children)—up from 9,625 in 2008 (Chikova 2013: 2; Chitambara 2012: 16).

Supporting peasant agriculture through land redistribution

Seekings' (2005: 16) analysis of 'Southern states' that 'promote income security through access to land' and where 'land reform programmes, and ensuing government support for small farmers, can provide poor families with the opportunity to produce for either their own consumption or for the market' aptly describes and distinguishes Zimbabwe's CWR. The ruling ZANU-PF party has sought to fight poverty through land redistribution since independence in 1980. At independence, a white minority continued to exploit 'varsity' land—individual farms averaging 2,000 ha—for large-scale commercial farming at the expense of the peasantry. Between 1980 and 1999, 'Zimbabwe pursued a market-based land reform programme' that did not result in the large-scale transfer of previously white-owned land to peasants (Moyo 2013: 201). Since 2000, ZANU-PF has redistributed previously white-owned land to small-farm families largely of rural origin and black commercial farmers' (Bratton 2014: 76; Moyo 2013: 42; Scoones et al. 2011a, 2011b).

Through land reform, ZANU-PF emphasized social protection through agriculture, promoting family provision. Section 15(a) of the constitution provides that it is the duty of people (families) 'to grow and store adequate food' (GoZ 2013: 25). Post-independence land reforms that earned president Mugabe popularity within Zimbabwe and internationally (Mamdani 2008) broadened 'access to land and promot[ed] peasant productivity' (Moyo 2013: 30) as well as improving beneficiaries' living standards (Hanlon 2013; Scoones et al. 2011a, 2011b). Low agricultural productivity has compelled ZANU-PF governments to rely heavily on food aid, largely from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), with less consideration for direct cash transfers for poor families with children.

[5] The programme is still running in all the 45 districts where the HSCT has not been rolled out, although the plan is that the HSCT will replace it (see Section 3.3).

Despite falling aggregate agricultural production after the fast-track land reform of the 2000s, for some small farmers, production and living standards have improved, particularly in the countryside, where some formerly very poor people are now more food secure. Although land reform is said to have largely benefited President Mugabe's cronies (Bond 2005; Moyo 2013: 37; Robertson 2011; Scoones 2014: 102), the government largely supports agriculture as the primary poverty reduction strategy.

Providing drought relief through food aid

Since 1982, Zimbabwe has experienced successive droughts, which have threatened agricultural productivity. Munemo (2012) writes that in the 1980s and 1990s President Mugabe was quick to respond to drought through 'expansive relief programmes' including employment creation programmes. These programmes earned Mugabe international recognition. Political insecurity subsequently weakened Mugabe's commitment to such programmes, however, and by the mid-1990s, he had 'progressively moved [away] from offering the broad programmes of relief' (Munemo 2012: 88). Political crisis in the late 1990s led him to revive food aid programmes as he 'politicized' relief in order to consolidate his power. As Munemo (2012: 88) explains: 'Mugabe's adoption of drought relief programmes reflected his own political strength or weakness, shifting as his standing changed'. When Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party 'faced insecure political environment […] they responded to droughts by adopting food aid programmes for adults'; when they were more secure, 'drought-relief programmes for adults shifted away from free food aid to cost-effective programmes that avoided dependency and limited waste, such as food for work' Munemo (2012: 88). As discussed later, ZANU-PF continued to rely on emergency food aid in drought years when its political insecurity intensified in the 2000s.

3.2 Social cash transfers under a politically insecure ZANU-PF, 2000–2008

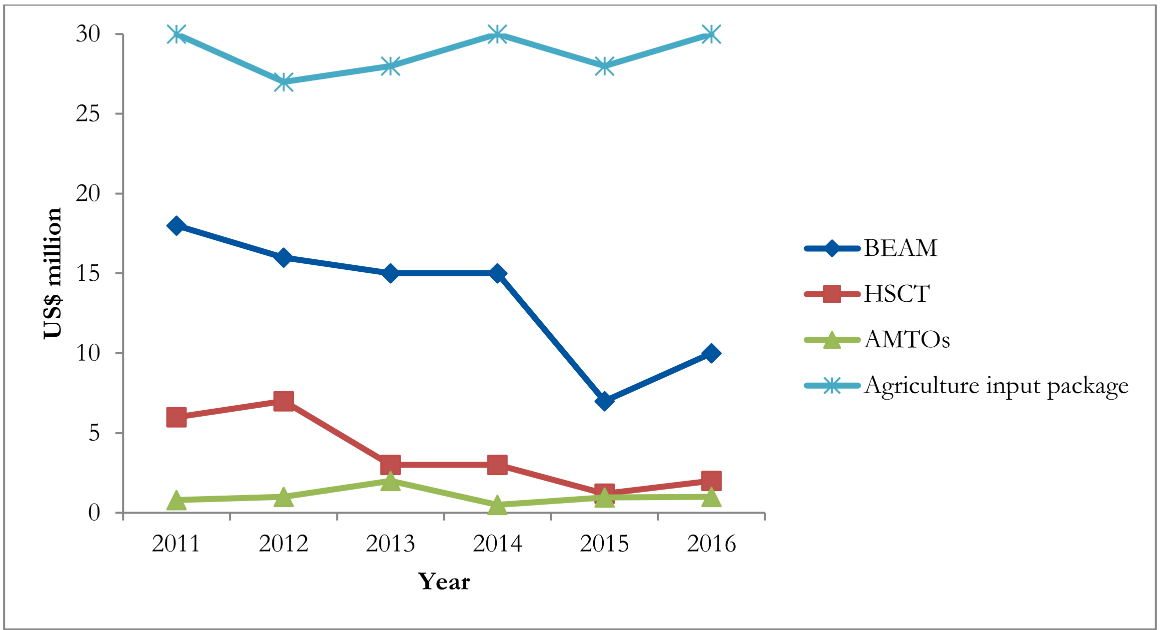
The rise of an effective political opposition—the MDC—caused considerable political discomfort to ZANU-PF (Bratton and Masunungure 2008). The labour-led MDC was the first opposition party to challenge ZANU-PF's domination of post-colonial politics in Zimbabwe (Raftopoulos 2000; Raftopoulos and Phimister 2004). The rise of the MDC was in part a response to ZANU-PF's policy reforms. The deteriorating economy meant that ZANU-PF had had to remove subsidies on basic social services (including education and health) as well as food under the 1991 Framework of Economic Reform Programme (FERP), drawn up as part of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, with technical assistance from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (Britz and Tshuma 2013: 174). This had contributed to an increase in poverty from 40 per cent in 1990/91 to 63 per cent in 1995/96 (CSO 1998). Faced not only with rising poverty but also with a new and energetic political opposition, ZANU-PF began to consider new reforms.

School fee waivers through the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)

Although the constitution requires the government to provide free basic education, ZANU-PF has not honoured such provisions but instead offered school fee waivers to a few OVCs. In 1995, the government had introduced a Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) programme to mitigate the effects of structural adjustment on vulnerable groups, including children (Mhone 1995; Mutasa 2015). As part of this programme, the government had introduced waivers of school and examination fees, particularly for poor urban households (Kanyenze et al. 2011: 381). These fee waivers had been discontinued in 1998, however, despite the continued increase in child poverty, due to HIV/AIDS and drought-induced low agricultural productivity as well as structural adjustment.

In 2001, the government and donors resuscitated the defunct fee waivers through BEAM. OVCs constituted 27 per cent of the 3.6 million or so pupils in school too poor to pay school fees and levies (MLSS 2012a). BEAM was one of government's largest pro-poor poverty alleviation strategies, aimed at reducing school dropouts and 'reach out to children who have never been to school due to economic hardships' (Mutasa 2015: 155). With a pool of donor funds managed by UNICEF for primary students and government funding for secondary students, the programme maintained coverage of about 80 per cent of needy children until 2006, but declining donor funding and government allocations in the face of increasing demand reduced BEAM coverage from 2007. Over the years, BEAM received more funding than other cash transfers (see Figure 1) but less than non-cash transfers (farm inputs), partly to honour the right to free education enshrined in Article 27(1)(a) of the constitution and to eliminate 'the risk of impairment of one's capacity to earn income through lack of basic education' (Chikova 2013: 2). By 2008, BEAM was dysfunctional, without any government disbursements. As discussed later, donors collaborated with the MDC-led Ministry of Education to resuscitate BEAM under the GNU.

Figure 1: BEAM funding compared with other social cash transfers, 2011–2016



Sources: Ministry of Finance annual budget; Ministry of Agriculture.

Provision of drought relief through Public Works and Feeding Programmes

Since the 2001/02 drought, ZANU-PF has sought to consolidate its waning political power by offering relief programmes, including Community Feeding, Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), the School Feeding Programme (SFP), and public works programmes in rural areas. Recurrent drought (due to increasingly erratic rainfall patterns), a series of poor harvests, high unemployment, restructuring of the agriculture sector, and high HIV/AIDS prevalence—about 15 per cent, the fifth highest in the world—have all contributed to increasing levels of vulnerability and acute food insecurity since 2000. Drought necessitated large-scale humanitarian food relief operations in the country (WFP 2016a, 2016b).

Community Feeding (and the Health and Nutrition Safety Net) for children under five years of age reached 200,000 women and children in 2012/13 (World Bank 2014: 8). Beneficiary households received monthly cash transfers of US$8 per person per month or in-kind food rations. Cash was limited to selected areas with better market supplies. This assistance was only for the lean season, usually November to March.

VGF, which largely distributes in-kind benefits, has been one of the programmes with the highest coverage among poor families with children. VGF reached 27 per cent of all children in 2006 and 42 per cent in 2008 as the economic crisis deepened and drought continued to hit hard. By 2009, almost half of Zimbabwe's population depended on international food aid (Bratton 2014: 85). Although food aid was at times perceived as creating a dependency syndrome and was publicly downplayed by the ZANU-PF government, particularly between 2006 and 2008, the government's incapacity to provide food aid forced it to accept food donations (WFP 2012: 16).

The SFP, also initiated and funded by the WFP in 2002 to respond to the 2001/02 drought, provides one meal to school-going pupils in selected schools in poor communities. Until 2008, the SFP (like VGF) remained solely a donor-funded 'emergency' programme under the ZANU-PF administration. As will be shown later, the GNU transformed the SFP into a permanent nutritional intervention.

In this period, the government also supported insecure rural households through public works programmes. In 2002, in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP), it started implementing temporary programmes for the duration of the drought and recovery period. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), funded by the World Bank, WFP, USAID, and DFID, now also implement short public works in selected districts. The government's Drought Relief Public Works Programme (also the Food-Cash for Assets/Community Works Programme or Food Mitigation Programme) targets food-insecure labour-endowed and labour-constrained households in geographically selected food-insecure districts (MLSS 2010). To be eligible, the able-bodied should 'participate in community projects for a 15-day working month', while labour-constrained households receive free food (Chikova 2013: 3; Kanyenze et al. 2011: 388). Public works programmes offer parsimonious benefits (US$20/month per household in cash or in-kind food rations of one 50 kg bag of maize meal per family per month) for a 15-day working month (Kanyenze et al. 2011: 388).

Children in participating households benefit from public works indirectly. Kanyenze et al. (2011) assert that cash benefits allow beneficiaries to buy inputs or food or to pay school fees for their children. Participating adults (caregivers) prioritize and invest their wages in the human capital development of children. The World Bank reported that the 2011/12 public works project, the Productive Community Works programme, benefited 5,580 labour-endowed people, who devoted more than half of their wages to children's education, using the rest to buy food and grain (World Bank 2014: 14). Together, public works programmes covered approximately 7 per cent of all children in 2016.

Agricultural Input Pack Support Programme

In the early 1980s, the ZANU-PF government had encouraged peasant production through land redistribution, improved marketing, and credit lines. Basking in the glory of its election victories, ZANU-PF had abandoned these schemes in the 1990s. In the period leading to the 2009 election, President Mugabe established the presidential Agricultural Input Pack Support Programme in support of the agrarian welfare regime. The programme revitalized agriculture following the collapse of financial schemes for farmers since the land reform programme in the 2000s. The programme had wide coverage, second only to food aid. It promoted self-reliance and discouraged donor and government dependency. Mugabe said that the programme 'empower[s] our farmers for greater crop production'.[6] Moses Moyo, ZANU-PF Umguza District Coordinator, said that

[6] Speech by President Robert Mugabe at the opening of the First Session of Zimbabwe's Seventh Parliament on 26 August 2008.

the programme teaches people 'not to depend on donors but to be self-reliant so that we work on the land so that we feed our families'.[7]

The Input Scheme now receives a higher budget allocation than any other social programme and largely covers households that benefited from the land reform programme from 2000.[8] The input package, valued at about US$127 per family, consists of 50 kg of compound D fertilizer, 50 kg of topdressing ammonium nitrate fertilizer, 50 kg of lime, and, depending on rainfall patterns, either 10 kg of maize seed or 10 kg of millet or sorghum seed. Most children indirectly benefit from the scheme. Approximately half (49 per cent) of all children benefited from the input scheme in 2014/15. This decreased to about a quarter (24 per cent) in 2016/17, but it is still the social programme with the highest national coverage. Given that 900,000 households are considered poor in Zimbabwe (MPSLSW 2016: 32; ZIMSTAT 2013), the input scheme covered all poor households in 2013/14 and 2014/15 but coverage fell to about 89 per cent in 2016/17.

The Input Scheme, which is supposedly a government programme, has remained discretionary, with no clear selection criteria. It is usually implemented by the president's office in collaboration with ZANU-PF councillors and traditional leaders including chiefs,[9] and at times with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Public Service and Social Welfare (MPSLSW), which is responsible for family and child welfare, is not involved in the implementation of the programme. Heal Zimbabwe, a Human Rights NGO in Zimbabwe, reported the exclusion of known MDC supporters and the partisan inclusion of ZANU-PF party loyalists. Individuals believed to have refused 'assisted voting'—where voters are coerced to feign illiteracy and choose ZANU-PF election agents to write voting preferences on ballot papers on their behalf—during elections are accused of supporting the political opposition and are denied the inputs.[10] At some distribution points, MDC supporters are allegedly asked to surrender party membership cards and regalia in order to receive the inputs.[11]

Thus, ZANU-PF preferred food aid and land reform to direct cash, favouring programmes that largely benefit the rural population, from whom ZANU-PF mainly draws its support (Britz and Tshuma 2013: 173). Indeed, food aid intensified ZANU-PF's patronage. During the 2000–2008 economic crisis, for example, 'Agricultural inputs and maize intended for food relief were sold by [ZANU-PF] party functionaries or were awarded to card-carrying acolytes of ZANU-PF, while these supplies were withheld from persons suspected of opposition sympathies' (Bratton 2014: 86).

3.3 Social cash transfers under the Government of National Unity (GNU), 2009–2013

Before the GNU was formed, in 2009, Zimbabwe had experienced a decade of socioeconomic meltdown and political instability, and weak and deteriorating social services and safety nets. As has been seen, government policies had been impromptu, inconsistent, and unpredictable. The new government crafted sound economic policies and immediately implemented them to restore macro-economic stability and put the economy on a path to recovery. Nevertheless, the economy

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[7] *Chronicle* newspaper, 17 January 2012. Available at: http://www.chronicle.co.zw/presidential-input-scheme-rolls-into-ntabazinduna/ (accessed 9 March 2017).

[8] http://www.herald.co.zw/zim-asset-in-line-with-sdgs/

[9] http://www.herald.co.zw/zim-asset-in-line-with-sdgs/

[10] http://thezimbabwean.co/2013/11/the-presidential-input-scheme-should/

[11] https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2013/10/25/bigwigs-hijack-inputs-distribution/

remained fragile, and constrained public revenues meant low levels of public investment in the social sectors and the persistence of poverty (GoZ 2013: 74).

Despite these financial constraints, however, the GNU made progress in social policy reforms that helped households with children better manage risks such as child poverty. The GNU resuscitated the defunct BEAM programme to provide fee waivers to the increasing number of OVCs, and the MDC-led Social Services Ministry introduced cash transfers the ZANU-PF government had not considered up to 2008. A key reform was the adoption and expansion of the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) programme.

The Harmonized Social Cash Transfer programme

The HSCT, which targeted poor households, not children per se, was introduced in 2010/11—later than most of Zimbabwe's neighbours in Southern Africa had introduced similar programmes—amidst strong pressure from international donors and agencies. The HSCT modestly expanded the coverage of social cash transfers, increased the value families received, and partially shifted Zimbabwe's child social protection mechanisms from non-cash to cash transfers. The HSCT provided benefits of between US$10 and US$25 per month, depending on household size. In districts where PA still existed, this was transformed into a more programmatic cash transfer intervention by transferring the monthly allowance paid under PA into the HSCT. The HSCT targeted 10 per cent of households in each district, an enormous increase over PA. However, many very poor households were still excluded (Chinyoka and Seekings 2016: 20).

Eligible households were identified through a targeting census conducted by ZIMSTAT (the national statistical agency) to avoid 'complications of community targeting and mitigate the potential for community politics' (Seidenfeld et al. 2016: 232)—i.e. partisan or government abuse of cash transfers. Eligible households had to be 'food poor' (i.e. living below the FPL and unable to meet urgent, basic needs) and 'labour constrained' (have high dependency due to age, disability, or chronic sickness) (MLSS 2012b: 12–13). These households were targeted because they contained all the vulnerable groups, including OVCs, that urgently required social protection. At the time of the design of the HSCT, 78 per cent of households in Zimbabwe were living below the TCPL and more than half (55 per cent) below the FPL. About 20 per cent of food-poor households were also labour-constrained, with approximately 750,000 children. As a child-sensitive programme (Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler 2012), HSCT Phase 1, targeting 10 districts, showed that most (85 per cent) of the targeted 10 per cent households had children (85 per cent). Forty-two per cent of the beneficiary children were orphans (MLSS 2012b: 8–9).

Targeting was also a result of the convergence of donor interests and the priorities of MDC ministers within the GNU on the provision of social protection to mitigate poverty and deprivation. In 2009, the MDC Finance Minister, Tendai Biti, had identified 'the elderly, orphans and child-headed families as well as the physically handicapped' as 'specially targeted vulnerable groups' requiring immediate social protection (GoZ 2009: 26). These groups constituted about 10 per cent of all households in Zimbabwe in 2009 (Schubert 2010c: 62).

The HSCT was partly based on 'lessons learned from the past and ongoing cash transfer programmes implemented by Government and Non-State-Actors' (Schubert 2011a: 6). Barrientos (2007: 9) asserts that 'deficiencies of anti-poverty programmes implemented in the past provide a strong motivation for considering potential alternatives'. Instead of targeting the individual, for example, the HSCT targeted the household on the basis that non-state cash transfers had not benefited the most vulnerable and were least likely to address the causes of poverty.

The familial design of the HSCT also reflects the policy transfer promoted by international donors, led by UNICEF. Before introducing the HSCT in Zimbabwe, UNICEF, in consultation with a renowned German cash transfer expert, Bernd Schubert, and his Team Consult, had trialled a familial model targeted at poor and labour-constrained households in Zambia (see Siachiwena 2016) and Malawi (Hamer 2016).

The HSCT was test run in one district (Goromonzi) in late 2010 and was set to expand through a phased approach (due to human and financial capacity limitations in the ministries of Social Services and Finance). By late 2011, under the first 'scale-up' phase, the HSCT had reached 10 districts to benefit 19,827 households. By the end of the GNU, the HSCT had reached 16 districts, benefiting 39,004 households.

However, the HSCT was introduced in a complex political context (two wards, for example, did not initially wish to distribute cash, as some political leaders claimed they had not been involved in the targeting process). To mitigate the risk of political manipulation, an independent targeting process and methodology were defined in the HSCT Operational Manual. Donor visibility was low to minimize any political challenges in the first phase but improved in the second phase, when donors adopted a targeting strategy that minimized inclusion and exclusion errors by monitoring the exclusion error rate and limiting the number of households benefiting from the programme during the first phase of the HSCT (DFID 2012: 5).

One particular individual within government played an important part in the introduction of the HSCT. Sydney Mhishi, then Acting Principal Director of the Department of Social Services (DSS) in the Ministry of Labour and Social Services (MLSS; later MPSLSW), became the HSCT champion. Schubert describes Mhishi's contribution as an 'important buy-in' by an influential bureaucrat who had the power and responsibility to sell the cash transfer programme to the government.[12] Mhishi had a long interest in social protection[13] and was quick to buy into Schubert's idea of cash transfers. However, Mhishi found it difficult to convince the government, which had several bureaucrats and politicians who were sceptical of cash transfers and regarded them as 'hand-outs' with the potential to create a dependency syndrome. For example, Lancaster Museka, then Permanent Secretary of the MLSS, appointed by the president, did not initially support the idea of cash transfers and preferred to continue with PA.[14] In contrast, the MDC's Paurina Mpariwa, then a minister in the MLSS, was in favour of the initiative, recognizing that transfers were a feasible way of assisting the poor, especially children and the elderly burdened with providing for themselves and OVCs under their care, in an economically challenging environment. Grounding his recommendations on positive evidence of cash transfers in the region, Schubert's UNICEF-commissioned study on *Child-Sensitive Social Protection in Zimbabwe* (2010c), and the transfer plan, Mhishi was able to convince the government[15] to approve a pilot programme.[16] Thus the interplay of donor influence, supportive bureaucrats, and GNU's open-door policy to technical ideas, coupled with improved donor relations, shaped the HSCT in this period.

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[12] Interview with Bernd Schubert, UNICEF Consultant, 28 January 2015.

[13] Interview with Sydney Mhishi, Acting Principal Director for the Department of Social Services in the MLSS, 4 December 2014.

[14] Interview with Sydney Mhishi, 4 December 2014.

[15] It seems that Mhishi reported to ZANU-PF political structures as well as following the normal policy-making process.

[16] Interview with Sydney Mhishi, 4 December 2014.

In sum, four factors influenced the introduction and success of the HSCT during the GNU, namely the dollarization of the economy, market liberalization, donor enthusiasm for cash transfers, and supportive political leadership. The MLSS was under the MDC portfolio and its development partners (mainly donors and civil society) worked together to reform the PA programme as the HSCT.[17] In a 2015 essay, Tendai Biti described the bad donor relations the GNU inherited:

> At the inception of the GNU, the Zimbabwean government had no relationship with international financial institutions (IFIs). The IMF had suspended Zimbabwe's voting rights in 2003, the African Development Bank (AfDB) had closed its office in Harare, and the World Bank maintained a skeletal presence. Zimbabwe had started defaulting on its debt obligations in 1999, and accumulated arrears prevented any further borrowing from IFIs and Western donors. It meant no access to concessional finance or to international capital markets (Biti 2015).

Thus, while political fragmentation may pose difficulties for scaling up programmes (Barrientos 2007: 9), the Zimbabwean case demonstrates how that can be an opportunity for programme introduction and expansion.

3.4 Social cash transfer reforms post-GNU, 2013–2016

Zimbabwe held 'harmonized' (i.e. simultaneous parliamentary and presidential) elections in July 2013. Mugabe was re-elected president, and ZANU-PF won a parliamentary majority, which it had not had for the preceding four years. Initially, the government seemed to intend to pursue the GNU's expansion plans. It rolled out the SFP and modestly expanded the HSCT. For the first time, the ZANU-PF government showed a rhetorical interest in cash transfers. The new government's economic blueprint, ZIMASSET, mentions cash transfers as part of its poverty-reduction strategy.

However, although ZANU-PF did not abolish the HSCT after winning the 2013 election, it reverted to emphasizing its agrarian components. Since mid-2013, donor pressure has been ineffective in urging the scaling-up of direct cash transfers in the face of conservatism, tight budget constraints, and the prioritization of other programmes, as well as a preoccupation with political issues. Consequently, the HSCT has been significantly downscaled. Instead, an agricultural input programme, Command Agriculture (CA), was introduced in 2016. This has modestly expanded the coverage of non-cash social transfers, but inputs are largely distributed on partisan lines, benefiting ZANU-PF and excluding suspected opposition supporters.

Institutionalizing nutrition in schools: The Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP)

Between 2002 and 2008, the WFP had solely funded the SFP as part of its emergency response to food insecurity in Zimbabwe. In 2009, the GNU took over the SFP and made it a 'permanent' programme—at least in poverty-stricken communities—but the GNU's efforts to expand the SFP to all public primary schools were curtailed by a lack of funding and a proper model that would ensure sustainability.

By the end of the GNU, in mid-2013, plans to embark on a study tour to Brazil by the MDC-led Ministries of Finance, Education, Health, and Social Services were at an advanced stage. In December 2013, the WFP funded a study visit under the auspices of the Brazil Centre of

[17] Interview with Amarakoon Bandara, UNDP Economic Advisor, 13 November 2015.

Excellence Against Hunger, a WFP/Government of Brazil initiative that helps countries to expand their food and nutritional security interventions, including school meal programmes, so as to improve the food security of children. The inter-ministerial team on this trip included Primary and Secondary Education Minister Lazarus Dokora and other officials from the ministries of education, agriculture, finance, health, and social welfare. Based on the Brazilian model of school feeding, where the government provides a budget that is decentralized to allow school feeding committees to take the lead in local food procurement, the Ministry of Education transformed the SFP into a Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP), which was launched in May 2014. Although the HGSFP was designed to be fully government-funded and -implemented, it is currently co-funded by the government and donors. In 2016, the HGSFP benefited approximately 10 per cent of all students.

Stagnation and downscaling of the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer programme

Since mid-2013, ZANU-PF has continued with the GNU-introduced cash transfers that it had avoided introducing before 2009. As will be discussed, however, the HSCT has been downscaled drastically, reducing the coverage of the major cash transfer programme for poor families with OVCs. Downscaling has also reduced the amount of cash families with children receive.

A change of governments has been associated with interest in and expansion of cash transfer programmes in some Southern African countries. Former Malawian President Joyce Banda expressed rhetorical interest in cash transfers, though without expanding the Social Cash Transfer programme, when she took over from Bingu Mutharika in 2012 (Hamer 2016). In Ghana, not only did the LEAP programme survive a change of government in 2008, but the incoming party expanded the programme's coverage and increased the 'proportion of government resources' allocated to LEAP (Ragno et al. 2016: 149). The new government in Zambia, under the presidency of Michael Sata from 2011 until 2014, took over financial responsibility from international donors and expanded Zambia's Social Cash Transfer programme to more than double the number of beneficiary households and districts (Siachiwena 2016). Zimbabwe is an unusual case in that, in practice, the Mugabe administration retrenched some of its welfare programmes, including the HSCT.

Between November 2013 and February 2014, the government seemed to be intending to pursue the GNU's HSCT expansion plans. The HSCT was rolled out in four new districts, bringing the total number to 20 out of the total of 65 districts. In the rest of 2014, and during 2015 and 2016, however, the programme was not expanded to any new districts, and between February and August 2016, HSCT beneficiaries did not receive transfers. Donor funding that was supposed to end with the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children Phase 2 in September 2015 had been extended to February 2016 but dried up. Then, in August 2016, partly on account of the enduring economic crisis, HSCT districts were reduced from 20 to 9, cutting the number of beneficiaries by more than half (25,598). As part of the 'transition', beneficiaries in the discontinued districts received a one-off double payment in September/October 2016. That was the end of the 'expansion plan'. These developments show that the sustainability of cash transfer programmes is doubtful when governments fail to implement plans to graduate from donor funding.

Six main factors explain the delayed expansion and downscaling of the HSCT. First, the GNU, through fiscal funding to the MPSLSW, had agreed to match donor funds 50/50 (AIR 2014a: 4), but it did not honour this commitment, leaving donors to contribute over 80 per cent of the HSCT budget since its inception. Second, despite bureaucrats within the MPSLSW and Ministry of Finance being supportive of the HSCT, pushing the ZANU-PF administration to prioritize social cash transfers, ZANU-PF ministers (first Nicholas Goche, succeeding Paurina Mpariwa, and currently Prisca Mupfumira) and Members of Parliament generally had a negative attitude towards the HSCT. Goche said 'Our party has no problem when donors give poor people money but we have a problem with donors when they want us to give our people money. What people need is food, which they should grow, so why not give them food and not money?'[18] Third, donors lacked trust in the new government to handle the finances of the HSCT programme equitably. Fourth, donors and government had conflicting social protection priorities. Whilst donors were pushing for HSCT expansion, the government was more worried about how to fund BEAM following the withdrawal of the EU and DFID, who were funding BEAM beneficiaries in primary schools. Also, as has been seen, the government preferred farm subsidies to direct cash transfers, giving the Agricultural Input Scheme more budget support. Fifth, the government lacked fiscal space for social spending due to the deepening economic crisis. Finally, post-GNU, the HSCT and other social protection programmes were affected by a lack of consistent political and bureaucratic leadership in the MPSLSW. Nicholas Goche and Tongai Muzenda, who were appointed as Minister and Deputy, respectively, within the new ZANU-PF government in September 2013, were expelled from the government in December 2014 on allegations of supporting a faction led by Vice-President Mujuru that was plotting to oust Mugabe. They were replaced by Prisca Mupfumira (in December 2014) and Tapiwanashe Matangaidze (in September 2015), respectively.

Empowering farmers through Command Agriculture

Despite downscaling the HSCT on 'affordability' grounds in the face of increasing food insecurity (ZMSTAT 2015: 14, 2016), the ZANU-PF administration rolled out a US$500 million[19] small-scale farmer input support scheme, Command Agriculture (CA), in 2015. CA sought to achieve household and national food security through enhanced maize production. CA beneficiaries are expected to produce approximately 91 per cent of Zimbabwe's maize requirement (equivalent to 2 million tonnes). To be eligible for the inputs, farmers should commit a quarter of a hectare to the programme[20] and have 'irrigation infrastructure [and] potential irrigable areas, and be maize producers on dry land (large and small scale farmers)'.[21] Justin Mupamhanga, Deputy Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet, said that farmers on the programme would receive 'production inputs like fertilisers, seed and agrochemicals' in addition to irrigation and mechanized equipment.[22] CA aimed to support 20,000 households, and 19,608 households[23] had been reached by November 2016 (MoAM 2016).

CA ostensibly promotes family reliance rather than government or donor dependency. Together with the agricultural input package already discussed, CA is therefore aligned to the ruling party's agrarian approach to social protection for the poor and poor families with children. Emmerson Mnangagwa, Vice-President, underscored that CA would 'stimulate the agro-industry and create employment' and potentially 'generate income and improve livelihoods of all people.'[24] But CA, like the presidential input scheme, provides ZANU-PF with an opportunity to reward those who voted it back to power in the 2013 election and 'prepare' them for the upcoming election in 2018,

[18] Interview with Nicholas Goche, 27 July 2016.

[19] *The Herald* newspaper, 15 August 2016: http://www.herald.co.zw/500m-command-agric-scheme-begins/

[20] http://www.moa.gov.zw/index.php/component/content/article/13-latest-news/7-latest-news

[21] *The Herald*, 16 August 2016: http://www.herald.co.zw/command-agric-takes-course/

[22] *The Herald*, 12 August 2016: http://www.herald.co.zw/500m-command-agric-scheme-begins/

[23] http://www.moa.gov.zw/index.php/component/content/article/13-latest-news/7-latest-news

[24] *The Herald*:, 25 August 2016: http://www.herald.co.zw/vp-mnangagwa-calls-for-unity-on-command-agric/

since the inputs are distributed on a patronage basis. CA is exclusionary and largely benefits ZANU-PF supporters, as the target group, small-scale farmers, constitutes the majority of beneficiaries of the land reform programme aligned to the ruling ZANU-PF party (Moyo 2013; Scoones 2014).

4 Explaining the distinctive characteristics of Zimbabwe's child welfare regime

The distinguishing characteristics of Zimbabwe's CWR are a result of a combination of structural, ideological, and political factors. Structural factors including HIV/AIDS, drought, economic downturn, and unemployment heightened household and child poverty and increased the number of OVCs. These changes prompted the government to modestly expand child social protection by introducing School and Vulnerable Group Feeding programmes, school and hospital fee waivers, and direct cash transfers to children in poor and labour-constrained households. In drought years, the government partnered with UN agencies to provide social transfers to poor families with children, the bulk of which were in-kind. The ruling ZANU-PF party's ideological belief in an agrarian route to poverty reduction was consequential in sustaining the familial provision of primarily non-cash social transfers pre- and post-GNU. Pressure to shift from in-kind to cash transfers from international donors and agencies during the GNU led to a change in the form of benefits from largely non-cash to cash transfers. The 2009 election also ushered in a shift to cash when the MDC joined ZANU-PF in government, but winning the 2013 election gave ZANU-PF the power to reduce direct cash in favour of non-cash transfers, and shift the focus back from transfers to the poor to support for small farmers.

4.1 'Structural' factors

The effects of structural factors (AIDS, drought) were exacerbated by the government's economic mismanagement, creating the need for policies that would mitigate the effects of poverty. More than half of all children (3.5 million) and almost all children (5,148,000) lived in poverty in 2010 and 2012, respectively (Schubert 2010c: 23; ZIMSTAT 2012). Orphan rates decreased but remained high at 22 per cent in 1994 and 15 per cent in 2015 (CSO 1995: 12; ZIMSTAT 2016a: 29). In 2014, Zimbabwe had the largest absolute number of orphans (Kavak 2014: 8). A high HIV/AIDS-related death rate weakened family support and increased the number of OVCs requiring state support. At the height of the 2000–2008 economic crisis, 'national HIV prevalence exceeded 30 per cent, making Zimbabwe one of Africa's hardest-hit countries' (Bratton 2014: 85). In 2015, Zimbabwe had the fifth-highest prevalence (14.7 per cent) in Sub-Saharan Africa after Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, and South Africa.[25] The revitalization of BEAM in 2009, for example, was prompted by the increase in children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. Reduced numbers of caregivers and weakened and inadequate extended family structures to provide a family safety net combined with poverty to increase OVCs. During drought years (particularly in 1982/83, 1991, 2002, and 2004), the government partnered with international donors to provide feeding schemes for drought-affected families. On the other hand, financial crises—especially that of 2000–2008, which 'ended up in a full-blown economic crisis' (Bratton 2014: 84)—increased household vulnerability to poverty.

[25] http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/zimbabwe/

Although the Zimbabwean government is adamant that 'the economy is now on the right track' (as recently claimed by Patrick Chinamasa, Minister of Finance),[26] the country has experienced and continues to experience low or negative economic growth, making it difficult to prioritize cash transfers and other social programmes. Such social and economic changes urged the government to modestly expand direct and indirect social transfers to poor families with children.

4.2 Ideological factors

ZANU-PF's agrarian approach to social protection largely explains the familial provision of primarily non-cash transfers in the form of food aid and agricultural inputs and the low coverage of cash transfers to poor households with children. As discussed, Zimbabwe's CWR is located in an agrarian general welfare regime supporting families through the provision primarily of in-kind benefits rather than direct cash transfers. ZANU-PF's emphasis on poverty reduction through land redistribution and agricultural input support for the peasant farmers who make up a large proportion of the population has led to continued familial targeting and wider coverage of children with indigent parents or caregivers with in-kind support.

The agrarian route to poverty reduction has also resulted in low expansion of direct cash transfers. The downscaling of the HSCT reduced cash transfers but the introduction of Command Agriculture, complemented by the Agricultural Input Pack Support Programme, extended the provision of non-cash social protection for poor families with children. In drought years and lean periods (usually between November and March of each year), the government provides in-kind support in the form of food aid to almost all food-insecure households. Nevertheless, agricultural support (land and farm inputs), ZANU-PF's preferred form of social protection, has been discretionary, clientelistic, and exclusionary. Hence, some families with children fail to access government support. Despite the government's (and non-state actors') drought relief programmes for the most drought-stricken households, cash transfers still have low coverage of poor households with children.

4.3 Political factors

Political factors including electoral competition, the power of donors and international agencies, and the proselytising of individuals within the government were consequential in the modest expansion of coverage, increase in value of benefits, and shift from in-kind benefits in Zimbabwe. Electoral competition between ZANU-PF and MDC, particularly in the tightly contested and disputed 2008 election that led to the formation of the GNU (Britz and Tshuma 2013: 189), transformed Zimbabwe's politics and social policy. For the first time in independent Zimbabwe the opposition won more parliamentary seats and the presidential vote (but not enough to win the election outright) (Bratton 2014; Bratton and Masunungure 2008). In government, MDC-led social services ministries (education, health, social services) opened doors for donors, who were enthusiastic about cash transfers. The participation of the MDC in government led to significant policy reforms, including the introduction of the HSCT, which provided direct cash transfers to families with children, the establishment of health and education funds, which expanded the coverage of BEAM and AMTOs, and the inaugural joint (government and donors) funding of the SFP and its later institutionalization that saw the programme reaching more children in poverty-stricken communities.

Nonetheless, as Bratton (2014: 1) predicted, ZANU-PF's 'crushing defeat' of the MDC in the 2013 election 'represented a resounding reassertion of one-party power', and the victory 'threatened to

[26] Patrick Chinamasa addressing ZANU-PF conference delegates in Masvingo, 12 December 2016.

derail the country's fragile recovery from a dire period of deep economic and political crisis'. Indeed, ZANU-PF returned to political power but 'had little to offer other than an unchecked return to economic folly, elite corruption, and the bitter politics of exclusion' (Bratton 2014: 2). The retrenchment of social protection programmes for poor families with children and the continued partisan distribution of agricultural inputs and food aid post-GNU, as discussed above, bear testimony to this retrograde step.

The power of donors and international agencies has been central in defining Zimbabwe's CWR coverage and form of benefits. International donors, through UNICEF, piloted and expanded the coverage of the HSCT from 1 to 20 districts. UNICEF successfully advocated child-sensitive social protection in the form of a cash transfer programme (the HSCT) that deliberately targeted food-poor and labour-constrained families with OVCs. Moreover, the revitalization of the defunct BEAM programme by donors in 2009 resulted in the expansion of coverage of social cash transfers. On the other hand, the wider coverage of food aid for poor households has been made possible by WFP funding. Almost all social cash transfers have been funded off-budget by donors and international agencies, resulting in a relatively wide coverage of poor households with children. The World Bank's assessment of the 2005–2009 economic crisis period was that 'Donors have played a major role in financing social expenditures even prior to the economic crisis, and increasingly after that' (World Bank 2011: 9). Where donor funding was withdrawn, as with BEAM funding for primary school pupils since 2014, or partially discontinued, as in the case of the HSCT since February 2016, social transfers coverage reduced drastically.

Finally, certain individuals within government played significant roles in the establishment and reform of social cash transfer programmes. Sydney Mhishi in particular strongly advocated cash transfers within government. At the establishment of the GNU in 2009, donors were still sceptical about funding social protection through government and it was critical to have individuals in government that they could trust in reforming social policy. Although Mhishi was a ZANU-PF-appointed bureaucrat, he became the trusted individual donors needed. Mhishi also worked closely with MDC ministers—Paurina Mpariwa in the MLSS, Henry Madzorera in the Ministry of Health, and David Coltart in the Ministry of Education—to gain donor confidence. As a result, the flagship cash transfer programme, the HSCT, was introduced, marking a shift from food to cash transfers as well as expanding the coverage of transfers.

5 Conclusion

This paper has analysed Zimbabwe's CWR, providing the basis for a comparative analysis of how and why it differs from those in other countries in Southern African. The CWR in Zimbabwe is distinctive because of its agrarian-based social protection policy, primarily targeting the poorest families; the low coverage and low benefits of direct cash transfers; and the relatively wide coverage of non-cash benefits. The absence of social pensions including old-age and disability grants in Zimbabwe—programmes that in neighbouring South Africa provide massive indirect support for children—contributes significantly to the low coverage of social cash transfers. The government of Zimbabwe strategically aims to reduce child poverty through reducing household poverty; hence, social cash transfers are family- rather than child-specific. Zimbabwe introduced cash transfers later than most other countries in Southern Africa because its poverty-reduction strategy was largely agrarian. Consequently, Zimbabwe is regarded as a laggard in terms of cash transfers in the region, but previous studies of social cash transfers in Zimbabwe often overlooked the non-cash components (see Mtetwa and Muchacha 2013; Seidenfeld et al. 2016; Siampondo 2015), which were considered in detail in this paper.

The distinguishing characteristics of Zimbabwe's CWR are largely the result of the ideological preferences of the ZANU-PF administration. Political insecurity affected the form of the interventions (programmatic versus discretionary) more than the fact of the interventions themselves. ZANU-PF promotes in-kind social transfers in the form of farm inputs and food aid that favour its political ends. In-kind benefits are more easily used for clientelistic purposes than cash transfers, especially when donors are putting in place measures to stop the political manipulation of cash transfers. ZANU-PF found a winning policy formula in land reform and food aid. The CWR resembles Zimbabwe's general welfare regime, which, both pre- and post-GNU, was classically agrarian, focused notionally on land reform, an idealized understanding of agrarian society, and emergency relief in times of drought, not on the 'modern' panoply of cash transfers.

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