

Evidence and Level of Supplementary Food Ration Sharing

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Amalima program conducts monthly supplementary food ration distributions to reduce stunting. Pregnant and lactating women (PLW) are entitled to 5.5kg of Corn Soya Blend Plus (CSB+) and 1.5 litres of vegetable oil, while children who are 6-23 months old are entitled to 3kg of CSB+ and 1 litre of vegetable oil per month. This ration size was determined by considering the nutrition needs of both a PLW and a child under 2, and should last at least four weeks if used solely by the principal beneficiary. The program conducts post-distribution monitoring monthly at food distribution points. While the distributed ration is meant for the index beneficiary, a key finding from post distribution monitoring is that household members share the food rations.

2. Research Objectives

- To assess the extent to which supplementary food rations are being shared among household members.
- To understand the major reasons that lead to supplementary rations being shared at the household.

3. Research Questions

1. To what extent are food rations shared among the community?
2. What are the reasons for sharing received rations?

4. Methodology

The study was carried out in September 2018, in Gwanda and Bulilima districts located in Matabeleland South Province. The study was predominantly quantitative. A structured questionnaire was administered to 173 randomly selected households. Observations were conducted at the respondents' households to verify the credibility of responses. For instance, interviewers requested to see the remaining food rations to verify consumption patterns. The primary data collected was triangulated with the Amalima monthly Post Distribution Monitoring findings. Quantitative data entry was conducted using Microsoft excel while data analysis was conducted through Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).

4.1 Study Sample

100 ration beneficiaries in Gwanda and 73 in Bulilima were purposively sampled to respond to a structured data collection questionnaire. 109 (63%) of the sampled beneficiaries represented ration beneficiaries aged between 6 and 23 months while 64 (37%) represented Pregnant and Lactating women (PLW). The sample comprised of beneficiaries who at the time of the survey had been with the program for at least a month and a maximum of 22 months. The average length of stay with the program for all the respondents was seven months.

5. Key Findings

5.1 Knowledge Levels on the Rationale for Ration Distribution

A quarter of households (25.4%) were highly knowledgeable about project objectives, ration size and rationale of distributed rations while 48% had an appreciation of the same but were not articulate and 26.6% were not knowledgeable at all.

5.2 Household Size and Prevalence of Sharing CSB+

There is intra-household sharing of CSB+ in 77.5% of the households. Intra-household sharing of CSB+ was especially pronounced in households with children under five. The results indicated that 98% of households hosted a maximum of eight and an average of two under-five children, hence respondents reported that it was impossible to prepare a meal for one registered child while a separate meal was prepared for other children. In the Zimbabwean culture, food is shared in the household.

5.3 CSB+ Consumption Patterns at the Household Level

The Figure 1 below illustrates the consumption pattern of the CSB+ in the surveyed households.

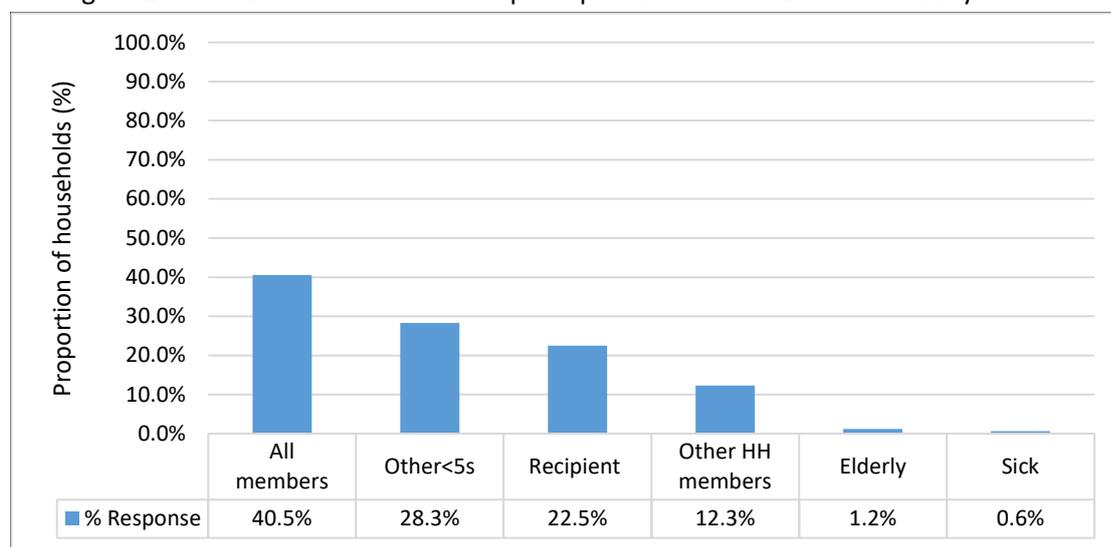


Figure 1: Consumption of CSB at household

As the results show above, in most cases (77.5%) the CSB+ is consumed by more people than the principal recipient. It was in only 22.5% cases that the ration was consumed by the index beneficiary.

5.4 CSB Consumption Patterns and CSB+ Longevity in the Household

The CSB rations last longer (about 3-4 weeks) in households where only the principal recipients consumed the rations in comparison to those where other household members or where the recipients and other under 5s shared, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Time	Recipients n=39	All members n=70	Recipient & other <5 n=49
<1 week	0%	10%	4%
1-< 2 weeks	10.2%	47.1%	36.7%
2-< 3 weeks	28.2%	35.7%	34.7%
3-< 4 weeks	46.2%	7.1%	22.4%
4 weeks+	15.4%	0%	2%

Table 1: CSB consumption rate by recipient only and by all members

Sharing of food rations is a major concern as the index beneficiaries are deprived of the nutritional value they are supposed to benefit from the commodity. The study findings showed a positive relationship between household size and ration sharing: the bigger the household the higher the likelihood of ration sharing.

5.5 Knowledge of Ration Size Rationale and Behaviors on Ration Sharing

The study assessed the rate of CSB+ consumption for the 44 respondents who professed knowledge about the ration size rationale and investigated whether this knowledge was translated into action. The findings showed that in only 34% of households the index beneficiaries exclusively consumed CSB+. Of the households who had an appreciation of the rationale, 22.9% followed the process and in the non-knowledgeable 10.9% ration recipients were the sole consumers of CSB+. These results appear to show that the issue of ratio sharing has no relationship to the amount of knowledge one has on the rationale of the ration size and how it should be treated at the household level.

5.6 Consumption Patterns for Vegetable Oil

The study showed that in most households (78.6%) vegetable oil was not used exclusively to enrich the distributed CSB+ as explained in the pre-distribution messaging process. The oil was used to prepare other household meals, which were consumed by other members of the household. Of the remaining 37 (21.4%) households who exclusively used distributed vegetable oil to enrich CSB+, 16 households or 43.2% reported that the vegetable oil lasted two to three weeks. The results are shown in Table 2 below.

Time	Number of households	% Response
<1 week	3	8.1%
1-< 2 weeks	8	21.6%
2-< 3 weeks	16	43.3%
3-< 4 weeks	6	16.2%
4 weeks+	4	10.8%

Table 2: Vegetable oil consumption rate exclusively used to enrich CSB+

5.7 Usage of Vegetable Oil among Knowledgeable Beneficiaries

The investigation of the use of the vegetable oil among the knowledgeable beneficiaries revealed that the trend was like that of the CSB+. Of the 148 respondents who affirmed that the usage of the vegetable oil was explained to them, only 21.6% used vegetable oil to exclusively prepare CSB+ while the majority (78.4%) did not translate the knowledge possessed about the program into action.

5.8 Ration Meal Frequency among Pregnant and Lactating Women and Children under Two Years of Age

The majority of sampled PLW (84.4%) and (72.5%) children consumed one (1) CSB+ meal per day.

Number	PLW n=64 (% response)	Children n=109 (% Response)
1 meal	84.4%	72.5%
2 meals	12.5%	19.3%
3 meals	1.6%	6.4%
4 meals	0%	1.8%
5 meals	1.6%	0%

Table 3. Number of CSB+ meals per day

Data showed that only 35 (20%) of the respondents are care group members. Only 7 (20%) of the care group members said that CSB+ was exclusively consumed by intended index clients. Furthermore, only 10 members (28.5%) said that they used vegetable oil exclusively to enrich porridge. The findings show that even care group members did not adhere to the objectives of supplementary rations.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Investment in Social and Behaviour Change

It is important to understand the deep cultural expectations of food sharing which is extended to the rations received by principal beneficiaries. As such it is also important that programs invest a lot of effort in Social Behaviour Change to ensure that there is appreciation for the importance of the ration to the intended beneficiary.

6.2 Provision of a Supportive Ration

It is important in lean season times to provide a protective ration for households that have many children under five and sick household members so that the ration received is reserved exclusively for the principal beneficiary. This maximizes the benefits realised by the intended beneficiary.

6.3 Recommendation Three

Establish a strong working relationship with the Ministry of Health and Child Care for buy in and to ensure that health personnel play an active role in reinforcing the rationale of the program and its impact on stunting.

6.4 Diversification of Sources of Food and Income

Emphasize the need for ration beneficiaries to participate in other project activities such as Village Savings and Loans, Income Generating Activities, and agriculture to increase both the sources of income to purchase food and for consumption of food from own production.

7. Conclusion

The study results indicated high level of intra-household ration sharing. Intra-household ration sharing culminated in rations being consumed and finished in less than the expected four (4) weeks. Future programs should consider that in most communities of Matabeleland, ration sharing has deep cultural roots and will occur despite the dissemination of messaging to promote consumption of the ration by the index client. As such the ration size that only takes care of the index beneficiary in households that have younger children or in times of lean food availability might not result in full benefits for the intended recipient. The messaging during ration distributions should also emphasize that rations are supplementary hence households should engage in other activities that promote food security.