

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES IN THE AFTERMATH OF CYCLONE IDAI AND COVID-19: A CASE OF CHIMANIMANI WARD 15, FROM 2019 TO 2022

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Abstract

Zimbabwe has faced a number of shocks recently, some caused by the climate, such as Cyclone Idai and ongoing droughts, and others by economic crises that were made worse by events that occurred throughout the world. The COVID-19 epidemic significantly strained the economy and the capacity of economically disadvantaged households to make ends meet. This study assesses how natural and man-made disasters have impacted negatively on people across the world. In 2019, Zimbabwe was negatively affected by Cyclone Idai and COVID-19 in 2020. The two disasters negatively affected the socio-economic fabric of communities and the nation at large. Livelihoods and infrastructure were destroyed because of the two disasters lockdowns enforced. The available literature has left a

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research gap on the importance of social protection programmes in the aftermath of disasters. Thus, there was a genuine motivation by the study to move from a general to specific sphere by investigating the importance of social protection programmes in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai and COVID-19. The research is guided by the need to investigate the importance of social protection in the aftermath of these phenomena in Chimanimani, to identify various social protection services/programmes rendered to the Chimanimani community by both government and development partners,, to identify challenges faced by the government and development partners in providing social protection programmes in Chimanimani and to recommend solutions on how to improve the efficiency of social protection programmes offered by the government of Zimbabwe and its development partners. The study is guided by the mixed methodology. The study avers that social protection programmes played a pivotal role in helping the Chimanimani Ward 15 residents to be “resilient”, that is, social protection programmes helped them to bounce back from the two negative shocks, Cyclone Idai and COVID-19. The study also found that the Department of Social Development provided social workers for counselling and social support during and after Cyclone Idai to the families that had lost their loved ones. The research notes that social protection programmes are of paramount importance because they help vulnerable families/communities to bounce back through food donations. Information gathered from the study recommends that, for efficiency of the social protection programmes in the aftermath of natural disasters, the Government of Zimbabwe should formulate a sound policy in line with social protection programmes and avail funds to cater for victims during and after natural and man-made disasters. The government should secure and budget adequate resource to respond to shocks posed by natural disasters.

Keywords: *resilience building, meteorological disaster, disaster response*

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is negatively impacting the global and local communities in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Extreme weather events are now occurring more frequently, posing a threat to human lives and well-being. Communities throughout the world are witnessing effects of climate change unlike before. Felbermayr and Groschl (2014) assert that these effects can lead to a 6.8% reduction in per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in the year they occur, while Klomp and Valckx (2014) analyse 750 empirical estimates to show the detrimental effects of climate change on economic growth per capita. Munich Re (2018) reports that between 1980 and 2018, tropical cyclones accounted for nearly half of all-natural-related disaster losses worldwide, causing damage of US\$2 111 billion. They are considered to be some of the planet's worst natural hazards (Kunze, 2021). The African continent, especially in the south of the Sahara, has not been exempt. Cyclone Idai struck the southeast of Zimbabwe in March 2019, causing a catastrophic meteorological disaster. Barely a year later, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) surfaced, prompting the imposition of nationwide lockdowns that rendered socio-economic systems impossible to operate. Storms have caused enormous destruction and displacement in Zimbabwe, a country that experiences natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and tropical cyclones. Floods caused by Cyclone Eline in 2000 left Zimbabwe and Mozambique with over 700 dead, over 500 000 displaced, and S\$1 billion worth of infrastructure damage (Wamukonya and Rukato, 2001). The most recent tropical storms to hit Zimbabwe, Cyclones Dineo in 2017 and Idai in 2019, both brought flooding and destroyed villages, making life difficult for the people. Munsaka (2021) reports that from March 14 to March 17, 2019, the Chimanimani District was devastated by Cyclone Idai. The cyclone brought with it strong winds and much rain, and severely affected at least half of the district's 135, 00 residents, 15 of the district's 23 wards (as of the 2012 Census)

(UNICEF 2019). The cyclone resulted in human fatalities as well as property damage from landslides, riverine flooding, and flash floods. According to the Chimanimani District Development Coordinator, Cyclone Idai resulted in almost 300 deaths, over 325 reported missing persons, and about 4000 displaced people who had to be relocated (Matsvange *et al.* 2020). Furthermore, 1 481 homes, 140 schools, and 634 kilometres of roads were destroyed in the calamity (Chatiza, 2019). The cyclone completely destroyed human existence in terms of food security, health, education, and other areas (OCHA, 2019).

When COVID-19 broke out later that year, the entire world experienced a health catastrophe. Compared to the Cyclone Idai disaster, the COVID-19 pandemic disturbed socio-economic systems across the nations and Zimbabwe was not immune to the epidemic. According to the World Health Organisation (2020), coronaviruses are a class of viruses belonging to the *Corona viridian* family which can infect both humans and animals. While some human coronaviruses, such as MERS (the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) and SARS (the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), cause mild illness similar to the common cold, others can cause more serious illnesses. In December 2019, a previously undiscovered human coronavirus surfaced in Wuhan, China. Early in 2020, while Zimbabwe was still recovering from the devastations of Cyclone Idai, the country was hit by the unprecedented COVID-19 epidemic. The cyclone's socio-economic effects were exacerbated by the pandemic. The already precarious position in Chimanimani Ward 15, and Zimbabwe as a whole, was worsened by the global response to the pandemic, which included lockdowns, travel bans, and economic disruptions.

The residents of Chimanimani were reminded of Cyclone Idai by the stringent statewide lockdown. Already, livelihoods were being disrupted. Residents of Chimanimani were also quickly reminded of the Cyclone Idai fatalities due to the socio-economic challenges that

accompanied COVID-19, which was in addition to the high statistics of fatalities and the dissemination of news of COVID-19-related deaths in other parts of the world. Chaitezvi (2020) reports that the president of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa, imposed restrictions on people's freedom of movement and announced a nationwide lockdown in March 2020 due to COVID-19. The only people allowed to move around were crucial personnel like health service providers, police officers and some others on condition that they had supporting documents permitting their movement. As a result of this limitation of movements, both formal and informal businesses were forced to close, forcing everyone to stay at home. Public gatherings were banned as part of the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. People's religious beliefs, including their worship patterns, became discreet but more strongly conjoined after Cyclone Idai than they were before. Even though the Chimanimani community was still recuperating from Cyclone Idai, it was not spared from the COVID-19 induced restrictions. The COVID-19 pandemic made the situation worse and stole people's livelihoods. The study examines how social protection programmes were autonomously cultivated and eventually utilised by the Cyclone Idai disaster survivors in Eastern Chimanimani Ward 15 from 2019 to 2022 to face fresh socio-economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In light of these circumstances, the study looks into the significance of social protection programmes in the wake of Cyclone Idai and COVID-19, using Chimanimani Ward 15 as a case study.

Social protection programmes play a crucial role in mitigating the impacts of natural disasters and pandemics like Cyclone Idai and COVID-19 in Zimbabwe. These crises often result in widespread devastation, loss of livelihoods, and increased vulnerability among affected populations. These programmes are now a vital instrument for meeting immediate needs and enhancing the resilience of affected communities as a result of catastrophic disasters. The deteriorating

living standards in Chimanimani generally increased citizen visibility in state politics, as several disaster victims increasingly felt that government agents failed the mandate to protect their livelihoods (Chingombe and Musarandega, 2021). Chatiza (2019) points out that a range of policies and initiatives are referred together as social protection in order to lessen poverty, vulnerability, and inequality as well as to ensure access to essential services and support in times of disaster. These programmes could include funding, food assistance, healthcare, education support, and job opportunities. Social protection services are widely recognised as being crucial during times of crises and after natural disasters. These programmes are critical in guaranteeing the affected populations' access to needs, protection from further harm, and opportunities for recovery. Social protection programmes can foster social cohesion by providing a sense of solidarity and support within communities. By creating opportunities for community engagement and participation, these programmes can help rebuild social ties and strengthen community resilience. They can facilitate access to healthcare services, offer psychosocial support and counselling, ensuring that individuals receive the necessary care to recover from the traumatic experiences and restore their well-being. Comprehensive social protection programmes in the aftermath of disaster and pandemics strategies are essential for sustainable development and for addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in a society. Furthermore, they support social stability and general well-being in communities, strengthening their resistance to shocks in the future. The study aims to explore the significance of social protection initiatives in the wake of Cyclone Idai and COVID-19.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are some of the challenges faced by the government and development partners in providing social protection to communities affected by disaster?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical structure is the "blueprint" or direction of a study, as defined by Grant and Osanloo (2014). It is a framework that embodies the study's hypothesis and is based on a well-established theory in a field of study. Researchers regularly "borrow" this plan in order to build their own house or research project. It serves as the foundation upon which research is constructed. The resilience hypothesis developed by Van Breda (2001) will serve as the study's main guiding principle. Carlson *et al.* (2012) define "Resilience Theory" as the ability of an entity to recover from a negative impact caused by a natural or man-made hazard. Resilience is assessed, in this instance, after a negative shock has occurred as opposed to beforehand. Therefore, actions taken prior to a threat, whether natural or man-made, do not fit the definition's criteria. Resilience is classified into two categories: infrastructure resilience and community resilience. For the purposes of this study, the concept of community resilience and its guiding principles are employed.

Nyabeze *et al.* (2021) define resilience as a community's capacity to, among other things, prevent, defend against, respond to, or mitigate any anticipated risks or significant threat during terrorist attacks, adapt to changing circumstances, and swiftly return to a normal or new normal while reestablishing critical assets, operations, and services with the least amount of disruption and harm to the environment, the economy, public health and safety, and national security. The Resilience Theory, according to Carlson *et al.* (2012), describes how people recover from shocks or stresses.

In this context, the outcomes adaptation, responding to, recovering from, absorbing, and reacting to adversity are contrasted with the outputs, which are seen as the capacities or qualities that an individual demonstrates in the face of natural or man-made challenges. The entire study, which assesses how social protection policies have assisted the

community Ward 15 in Chimanimani in recovering from two teething disasters COVID-19 and storm Idai employs this paradigm.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In times of natural disasters like Cyclone Idai and public health crises like the COVID-19 epidemic, social protection measures are essential. These initiatives are crucial for offering both short-term relief and ongoing assistance to affected people and communities. According to Gwanaz (2013), social protection has five general goals or purposes, that is, prevention, promotion, transformation, protection, and transformation. He adds that when measures are put in place to save lives and lower levels of deprivation in a society, they are performing a protective function (*ibid*). Social protection has a preventative function in that it tries to keep people from falling into greater poverty or being more vulnerable to risks and unforeseen circumstances brought on by illness, accidents, crop failure, and natural disasters. The goal of promoting social protection is to make it easier for individuals, groups, and organisations to participate in all types of activities. In order to reduce inequities and vulnerability, the transformative function modifies laws, financial allocations, policies, and other factors. Additionally, serving a developmental and generative purpose, social protection also promotes the purchasing habits of the impoverished, supports local economic growth, and makes it easier for them to access opportunities in the economy and society.

In a study on the effects of catastrophes and the function of social protection in managing natural risks, Vathana (2013) examines how crucial social protection is to the management of strategic catastrophe risk. In 2011 there were floods and a drought in Cambodia, which had an impact on the livelihoods of the majority of the population because agriculture is their primary economic activity. Over 1.2 million people were affected by the floods, which destroyed infrastructure in 18 out of Cambodia's 24 provinces (*ibid.*). In order to lower the cost of health

care and education in the affected areas and to give poor households access to a range of health, sanitation, and educational services, the Cambodian government provided social protection to the affected communities in the form of cash transfers and service fee exemptions. Food transfer programmes were implemented in disaster-affected areas. Financial transfers provided by social protection programmes proved beneficial in the aftermath of the disaster. According to Janvery (2006), the goal of the cash transfer programme is to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty through long-term accumulation of human capital, as well as to address short-term structural poverty objectives through income support. Cash transfers can give households the most options in how to handle their issues in the event of a natural disaster. According to Vathana (2013), social protection services gave people with impairments wheelchairs, hearing aids, and money transfers following the flood disaster. In light of this, the current study aims to close a knowledge gap in the pertinent literature by concentrating on Chimanimani Ward 15, a district in Zimbabwe's Manicaland region, and explore the significance of social protection in the wake of Cyclones Idai and COVID-19.

Social protection plays a fundamental role in the period following a natural disaster, according to Wickramasinghe's (2013) analysis of a different study on the subject done in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government offers two types of social protection: general disaster relief and unexpected disaster aid. Widespread disasters include fires, landslides, plagues, cyclones, floods, droughts, landslides and cyclones. Casual disasters include fires, minor property damage, and agricultural loss from wild elephants. In Sri Lanka, social protection programmes include cash transfers to people in need, crop insurance, insurance against attacks by wild elephants, and microfinance initiatives. Wickramasinghe (*ibid.*) opines that cash transfers have a wide-ranging impact in catastrophe situations. They offer victims the most versatility in how to utilise them. People received financial

transfers as a result of the tsunami that struck Sri Lanka in 2004. Cash grant programmes were started with help from the World Bank in the wake of the disaster. Each impacted home received four payments of 5 000 rupees. The whole anticipated expense was Rs.4 billion. Thus, it is clear to note that social protection programmes are of great importance in and after disasters.

Mtapuri (2012) states that social protection in the form of medical and nutritional assistance is crucial in the wake of disasters. He contends that during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was crucial for both individuals and communities to have access to healthcare and sustenance (*ibid.*). Access to healthcare services, such as medical treatment, immunisations, and preventive measures, can be helped by social protection programmes. Additionally, they can support nutrition initiatives, particularly for young children and expectant mothers who may be at more -risk during emergencies. In the wake of natural catastrophes, social protection services are crucial because they aid in recovery and provide psychological support through counselling (Mapfumira, 2019). The people affected by Cyclone Idai in Nyengu Township received psychological and grief support from UNICEF, Childline Zimbabwe, and REPSSI (*ibid.*). Social workers were sent to the impacted districts by the Department of Social Development to help children with vital services. Mupfumira contends that social protection programmes are crucial in the wake of catastrophes in order to shield children from the psychological pain caused by disasters and prevent scars from having a long-lasting impact on them *ibid.*).

Midgley (1997) asserts that it is challenging to trace the history of social protection in Africa due to the continent's vastness and variety as well as the term's relatively recent invention. The idea of social protection in development talks is changing. Until the late 1990s, the fundamental goal of social protection was to provide a safety net for the most

vulnerable members of society against unanticipated personal events or economic catastrophes. More recently, the term "social protection" has come to mean any measure done to control and reduce the vulnerabilities of both people and communities. These formal and informal measures involve both private and governmental players.

Payments of cash without any restrictions to people in need are known as unconditional cash transfers, or UCTs. Governments, NGOs, and research efforts in low- and middle-income countries provide cash transfers as social security to enhance people's livelihoods by, for example, lowering poverty or boosting health and educational achievements (Pega *et al.*, 2017). A recent meta-analysis found that most cash transfer programmes have a statistically significant impact on their intended outcomes (Bastagli *et al.*, 2019). Cash transfers, according to Bastagli (*ibid.*), allow for investments in health and education, lessen immediate poverty, and provide people with the ability to meet their basic needs. Cash transfers have the capacity to safeguard essential needs during disasters, preventing food insecurity, thwarting infections, recovering destroyed property, and preserving human capital by ensuring children's education. According to Bhaiseni (2020), during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Zimbabwean government pledged to provide vulnerable and underprivileged households with financial support to help them fend off the disease's impacts. In April 2020, the Zimbabwean government stated that households would get ZW\$200 (about US\$10 equivalent at the time). Berkel (2021) studied the function of cash grants and transfers in promoting micro-enterprise recovery in Mozambique after Cyclone Idai. The findings show that the grants had a significant and positive impact on business income, profit, and savings. More importantly, the research found that financial transfers facilitated the rehabilitation of businesses and buildings in Idai-ravaged Beira, Mozambique (*ibid.*). According to de Mel *et al.* (2012), cash awards help expedite the recovery of businesses following disasters.

The social assistance programmes are a different social protection scheme (Mtapuri,2012). Programmes for social assistance are non-contributory and intended to help people and struggling households to meet their fundamental requirements. These programmes offer means-tested benefits like housing subsidies, food assistance, income support, and grants for low-income families, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations. Programmes for social assistance are designed to combat poverty, meet urgent needs, and safeguard society's most defenceless citizens.

Free food distribution was introduced in 1995 to shield vulnerable populations from food shortages caused on by drought (Kaseke *et al.*, 1997). Free meals were provided for the elderly, the disabled, and the chronically sick. The government created the Public Works programme) for physically fit people, wherein applicants received funding to buy food in exchange for working on projects to improve community infrastructure (*ibid.*). This initiative was renamed the Food-for-Work programme, in which participants received meals in return for performing community service. The free food programme's fatal fault was the absence of empowerment programmes and departure plans to guarantee self-sufficiency (*ibid.*).

Jongwe *et al.* (2014) emphasise the Assisted Medical Treatment Order (AMTO) is one of Zimbabwe's social protection initiatives. As part of the Health Assistance Programme me, the government pays medical expenses for extremely low-income households through the Hospital Referral System. Beneficiaries receive vouchers for medical care from the Department of Social Development. The vouchers are accepted at government hospitals. Over the years, the programme has faced numerous challenges due to the AMTO's reluctance to cover the cost of care in for-profit hospitals. The programme's objective is hampered by the lack of medications that referral hospitals are facing, which leaves patients with prescriptions for drugs they cannot afford to fill. Giving

the poor a safety net depends heavily on the availability of medications at public health facilities.

METHODOLOGY

The importance of social protection in the aftermath of cyclone Idai and COVID-19 was evaluated using the mixed approach model that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. The phrase "multi-methodology" approach is another name for the mixed method approach. To minimise or remove the bias associated with utilising one method, several approaches were combined. A qualitative method was used to support and enhance the quantitative elements so that the research could directly assess the importance of social protection programmes in the aftermath of cyclone Idai and COVID-19. Using qualitative research techniques has aided in giving facts and numbers derived through quantitative techniques.

When used on their own, quantitative and qualitative procedures produce good results, but when these two methods are combined, the results are even better because the mixed approach design covers the weakness of a single research design. The research on the value of social protection in the wake of Cyclone Idai and COVID-19 in Chimanimani Ward 15 was well-suited to use the mixed method approach design. The qualitative method also contributes significantly to the disclosure of context and subject information, as well as the development of hypotheses and scales for measuring the importance of social protection in the aftermath of disasters. In contrast, the quantitative technique allows the researcher to identify correlations between the variables under investigation and provides the level of confidence needed to extrapolate the findings from the chosen sample to the intended audience (Morris, 2008). According to Passley (2010), while the qualitative approach concentrates on non-quantifiable aspects like sentiments, views, and attitudes, quantitative data

gathering consists of quantifiable data that may be represented through graphs, charts, and statistics.

The researcher uses both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to describe and assess the significance of social protection initiatives in Chimanimani following both Cyclone Idai and COVID-19. Therefore, the benefits of the mixed methods approach outweigh the disadvantages of both qualitative and quantitative research. Using a mixed method approach allows the research to use a range of data collection tools, as opposed to doing just qualitative or quantitative research. By using qualitative data to explain quantitative data, and vice versa, mixed techniques offer answers to problems that neither qualitative nor quantitative research alone could address. Because The research selected Chimanimani since it was the area most severely affected by Cyclones Idai and COVID-19. The study's five wards, Wards 10 through 15, were its emphasis. The study's main focus is on the value of social protection programmes in the wake of Cyclones Idai and COVID-19. A case study of Chimanimani is thoroughly explored and provides relevant and reliable information.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The results obtained in Chimanimani Ward 15 are presented in this section. The study concentrated on the importance of social protection following COVID-19 and Cyclone Idai. Focus groups, questionnaires, observations, and interviews were used to gather the data. A thematic format was employed to display the data, discussing the perspectives of the participants under overarching themes closely related to the study's goals. The focus of the discussion is the research's objectives, which include evaluating the value of social protection programmes in the wake of COVID-19 and Cyclone Idai, listing the different social protection services provided by the government and development partners to the Chimanimani Ward 15 community, and outlining the difficulties these parties face in delivering social protection. The data

from the field research of Chimanimani Ward 15 is presented using pie charts, graphs, tables, and narrative analysis.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study on the importance of social protection measures in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai and COVID-19 is presented in this part. The research objectives that direct the investigation serve as the section's guidelines. The initial goal was to look into the value of social protection in Chimanimani ward 15 following Cyclone Idai and COVID-19.

The researcher found that social protection programmes played a critical role as an adaptation strategy to the effects of natural and man-made disasters. Data gathered from the in-depth interviews of the study found that social protection programme helped communities to bounce back to their feet after the negative impacts of Cyclone Idai and COVID-19. One of the respondents coded Mr M, noted:

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a forced lockdown which resulted in closing of business and people were restricted movements so as to curtail the spread of the virus. Many livelihoods were disturbed which resulted in widespread poverty. Prior to COVID-19, the Chimanimani Ward 15 was still nursing wounds of the negative effects of Cyclone Idai which resulted in the destruction of infrastructure, livelihoods and led to loss of life. The Government of Zimbabwe and its development partners combined efforts in providing harmonised cash transfer of US\$50.00, or ZWL equivalent, to affected households. This cushion helped in mitigating poverty which had been brought about by COVID-19 and Cyclone Idai. Social protection programmes **in the form of food deficit mitigation strategy provided by World Vision** helped to provide food, beans and cooking oil. This helped in providing food for the affected households.”

Another participant alluded that social protection programmes are significant and essential in responding to disasters and are offering urgent relief to the affected households especially medical and nutritional assistance. He noted that:

“The COVID-19 crippled many national governments. Social protection programmes during COVID-19 included the provision of face masks, medical treatment, immunisations. After Cyclone Idai, the Department of Social Development provided counselling and psychological support to young children and youth. Thus, social protection programmes are of paramount importance in providing relief during aftermath of disasters. Ward 15 benefited from government initiatives of face mask and provision of vaccinations against COVID-19.”

Mrs N noted that:

“During Cyclone Idai many peoples’ homes were destroyed, some people lost their lives and leaving others permanently. Social protection programmes were essential in providing wheelchair, medical support to the affected families, provision of food, emotional support was provided during cyclone Idai.”

The research findings are echoed by the Resilience Theory which argues that social protection programmes help communities affected by disasters to bounce back from shocks caused by natural or man-made disasters. The study notes that there were various social protection programmes provided to people in Chimanimani after the COVID-19 and Cyclone Idai disasters. These included harmonised cash transfer, food deficit mitigation strategy and the assistance medical treatment order (AMTO). The research found that the Department of Social Development provided the cash transfer so as to help the affected households. In one of the interviews, a respondent, the research explained that:

“During the COVID-19 pandemic the Department of Social Development provided HCT to the most vulnerable households. HCT involves the transfer of money to beneficiaries who are most vulnerable. Cyclone Idai wiped away peoples’ homes and livelihoods. As a response to that the Government of Zimbabwe, together with its development partners, facilitated HCT in Chimanimani.”

The second social protection programme for the Chimanimani Ward 15 residents after Cyclone Idai and the COVID-19 was the Food Deficit Mitigation Programme (FDMS). The World Vision together with

Department of Social Department implemented the FDMS, which involved the distribution of food to vulnerable households according to their level of vulnerability. The study notes that under FDMS, every household was given 10 kg of maize meal per head. On top of that, vulnerable households were given two litres of cooking oil and beans as a way to alleviate poverty.

The third social protection programme was the assistance medical treatment order (AMTO). The study notes that AMTO was given to residents of Ward 15 who were vulnerable and who could not afford basic medical health. Through the Hospital Referral System, the government, together with its development partners, helped to cover medical costs for low-income households and those affected by both Cyclone Idai and COVID-19. This initiative was part of the health assistance programme. The Department of Social Development distributed vouchers for medical care to beneficiaries in Nyengu township Ward 15. The research finding on AMTO concurs with Jongwe *et al.* (2014) who identified the Assisted Medical Treatment Order (AMTO), as one of the social protection programmes provided in Zimbabwe.

The fourth social protection programme which the study found was the Basic Assistance Education Module (BEAM) launched in January . 2001The study notes that during Cyclone, Idai many school children lost their parents, with many becoming vulnerable orphans. As a result ,school fees become a problem for these children. However, through BEAM helped to fund these children to go to school. This concurs with Kaseke (1997). The Enhanced Social Protection Project (ESPP), a collection of programmes that serves as a crucial aspect of the Zimbabwean government's larger social protection strategy at the start of the new millennium, included BEAM).

The fifth social protection programme include public works. The study notes that during the Cyclone Idai, many infrastructures were destroyed. Social protection programmes in the form of public works helped rebuild infrastructure through food for-work programmes. One of the respondents noted that:

“Social protection programmes in the form of food for work were of great importance in resuscitating the destroyed infrastructure by constructing and removing mudslides which had destroyed peoples’ homes.”

CHALLENGES FACED BY GOVERNMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS IN PROVIDING SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

Despite the significance of social development programmes, successful implementation in Zimbabwe faces substantial challenges and barriers. These barriers hinder the attainment of programme goals and impeded progress in addressing critical social issues such as poverty, education, healthcare, and social protection. Since gaining independence, the Zimbabwean government has made progress in putting various social protection programmes into place, but there have been a number of obstacles in the way of providing social protection services. Poor monitoring systems, political intolerance, resource scarcity, beneficiary profiling, and insufficient centralised coordination resulted in incoherent and sectorised social protection under multiple ministries, including the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Ministry of Health and Child Care, and others. These factors frequently lead to bureaucratic and complex situations.

The research found that one of the challenges faced by the government of Zimbabwe is incoherent and sectorisation of relevant ministries in providing the social protection programmes. One of the participants noted that:

“The relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Primary And Secondary Education are incoherent in their stance on social protection programmes. For instance, a patient was referred to Chimanimani Rural

Hospital using AMTO but was not attended to because he didn't have money."

The study also notes that another challenge facing government and its development partners is the lack of funds and resources to help those affected by disasters. In an interview with one of the participants, she said that the lack of funds and resources posed a serious challenge to the full implementation of the social protection programmes. Social protection programmes in the form of AMTO have been affected. She said:

"The COVID-19 pandemic crippled the whole world economy. As such, most governments finances were limited as many countries were focusing on their citizenry, so it affected social protection programmes in Zimbabwe. As such, monitoring and evaluation of social protection programmes becomes limited."

The study findings concur with Price (2021), who avers that inadequate funding may have a negative effect on social protection programme monitoring and evaluation. He contends that the inability to make evidence-based policy decisions and the lack of resources for monitoring and evaluation might make it difficult to evaluate programme outcomes, spot gaps, and come to wise conclusions about how to improve programmes.

Another challenge which the study found was that social protection programmes often face challenges in the profiling of beneficiaries. In an interview one participant noted said:

'FDMS had challenges when it came to selection of beneficiaries because of the criteria of vulnerability. People turned to vote based on friendships in the ranking of vulnerability. This then disadvantaged the real need because they could not have been ranked as the most vulnerable."

The research findings correspond with Kaseke (1997) which observe that inaccurate targeting can lead to inclusion errors where ineligible people receive benefits or exclusion errors where worthy people are

left out. Two different sorts of targeting mistakes can be made, according to Cornia and Stewart (1993), the error of omitting the poor from the scheme and the error of including the non-poor. According to Kaseke (1997), political affiliations might lead to the distribution of social security services to people who are neither deserving nor impoverished. Governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) split the populace politically by distributing food supplies and seed packets on partisan lines.

SOLUTIONS ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMME

The fourth and last research objective is based on investigating and recommending solutions on how to improve the efficiency of social protection programmes in Zimbabwe, particularly the Chimanimani Ward 15. Improving the efficiency of a social protection programme involves optimising its design, implementation, and evaluation to ensure that resources are allocated effectively and reach the intended beneficiaries. The study found that there is need of a new design when profiling beneficiaries. In an interview, one of the respondents, Mr Bunya said:

“In order to improve the efficiency of social protection programmes, he Government of Zimbabwe, together with its development partners, must design a transparent criterion in selecting beneficiaries which is based on vulnerability, unlike political affiliation. In doing so, beneficiaries should not be the ones who select the vulnerability ranking, hence the implementors should first do monitoring and fact-finding at the households and compile information based on the research which they have done and also the government should honour its promises. For example, some local households were told to buy Nerone lines so as to receive the COVID-19 cash funds which they did not receive.”

The study also discovered an additional way to boost social protection programme effectiveness through improved assessment and monitoring. In order to track the effectiveness and impact of social

protection programmes, the majority of participants in the focus group discussion suggested that the government and development partners set up strong monitoring and evaluation procedures. Frequent evaluations can assist in pinpointing areas in need of development, gauging the success of programmes, and guaranteeing appropriate budget allocation. This can include gathering and analyzing data as well as implementing feedback systems to help with programme modifications and resource allocation optimisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study recommends that for efficiency of the social protection programmes in the aftermath of natural disasters, the Government of Zimbabwe should formulate a sound policy in line with social protection programmes and avail funds to cater for the affected during natural and man-made disasters. The government should secure and budget adequate resource to respond to shocks posed by natural disasters.

The study also recommends that they should design a transparent framework for selecting and profiling beneficiaries so as to avoid corruption and biasness. The findings and knowledge gained from the study recommends a review of the selection criteria used by the Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy when selecting beneficiaries.

The study also recommends an increase in social protection coverage to include current, newly poor and vulnerable individuals since this will allow social protection programmes to expand and respond to future crises that may be experienced. This will cater for others who might not be eligible for social protection programmes but they remain vulnerable to the disasters. The study also recommends the government to identify and address other complex needs that are likely to emerge from the impacts of the disasters. The findings from

the research suggest that there is need to pay more attention on issues like mental health also.

To reduce the impact of catastrophes such as COVID-19, some disease awareness programmes should be implemented to appropriately prepare the local people's mindsets.

The government, the private sector, and development agencies should put together relief programmes and counselling units to alleviate suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Cyclone Idai and COVID-19 wreaked havoc in Eastern parts of Chimanimani in Zimbabwe. The study, therefore, concludes that social protection programmes played a pivotal role in helping Chimanimani Ward 15 residents to be "resilient". Social protection programmes helped them to bounce back from the negative shocks of COVID-19 and Cyclone Idai. Social protection programmes in the form of AMTO, HCT, food for work, food deficit mitigation strategy helped in providing relief to the affected households. There were various social protection programmes provided to people in Chimanimani after COVID-19 and Cyclone Idai disasters. These included Harmonised Cash transfer, food deficit mitigation strategy, food for work, public works and the assistance medical treatment order (AMTO). Despite making strides in providing relief to people affected by Cyclone Idai and COVID-19, there were challenges facing government and development partners, that is, lack of funding, beneficiary profiling, political intolerance, improper centralised coordination that resulted in incoherent and sectorised social protection under various ministries, including the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Ministry of Health and Child Care, which frequently creates bureaucratic, complex situations, and weak monitoring systems.

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