

Food Security Indicators of the Temporary E-Card Food Voucher

November 2014 – July/August 2015

Presidency of the Council of Ministers

**National Poverty Targeting Programme
Central Management Unit**



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Introduction

The National Poverty Targeting Program, NPTP, resumed its electronic card (e-card) food voucher service in May 2015, after pausing for two months due to a lack of finances. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) financed that month of May and the World Bank financed the June to September period.

For every cycle of the e-card service, the NPTP completes a post-distribution monitoring questionnaire, PDM, to monitor, assess and evaluate the implementation of the service and its effects on beneficiary households. For the May to August period this year, NPTP completed 734 PDM questionnaires: 371 for the May/June cycle and 363 for the July/August cycle. This report will compare the results of the latest two cycles with the baseline survey of November 2014.

As usual, the Central Management Unit of the NPTP, evaluated three food security indicators in order to better understand changes in behaviour of e-card beneficiaries regarding their food consumption, dietary diversity and coping strategies. The three food security indicators are: food consumption score, dietary diversity score and coping strategy index. The three indicators will be compared to the baseline survey from November 2014, and to the first cycle of January/February 2015.



Food consumption score

Food consumption scores increased majorly. The baseline survey determined a food consumption score of 52 which then increased to 66 and 68 during the May/June and July/August cycles.

Table 1: Average Food Consumption Score by Cycle

Average food consumption score			
Cycle	Average	Standard deviation	Change from baseline
Baseline	52	20.2	32%
Jan/Feb	65	20.4	
May/Jun	66	20.4	
Jul/Aug	68	18.7	

A 32 percent increase in the food consumption score reflects an encouraging and positive indication that e-card beneficiaries are consuming more food; in fact, around 1.3 times more.

Table 2: Food Consumption Score by Category and Cycle

Food consumption score			
Cycle	Poor	Borderline	Acceptable
Baseline	11.7%	25.3%	63.0%
Jan/Feb	2.2%	16.2%	81.6%
May/Jun	3.2%	11.9%	84.9%
Jul/Aug	1.1%	9.1%	89.8%

Poor and borderline groups decreased in favour of an increase in acceptable food consumption scores. During the July/August cycle, only 1 percent of e-card beneficiaries had a "poor" food consumption score compared to around 12 percent during the baseline survey; a significant decrease of 90 percent.

9.1 percent were categorized as borderline food secure, compared to 25.3 percent; a decrease of 64 percent. Beneficiaries with acceptable food consumption scores increased in numbers to 90 percent versus 63 percent during the baseline.

Despite the cut in assistance during the months of March and April, the food security of beneficiaries continued to improve between the second and third cycle of assistance (Jan/Feb and May/Jun). Nevertheless, this improvement was less than the improvement recorded with consistent assistance. This finding indicates that e-card beneficiaries have better food consumption with consistent assistance.

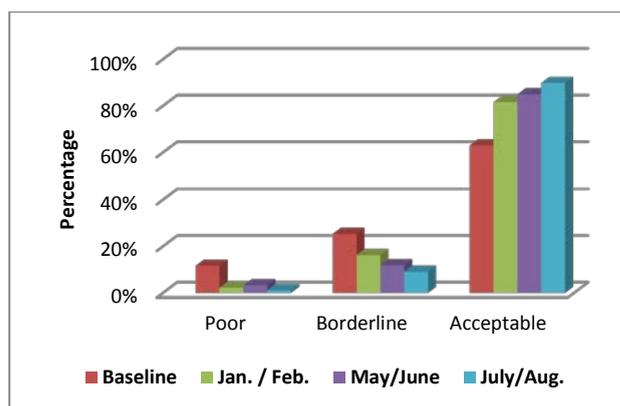
The food consumption score is a proxy indicator of household food security based on the weighted frequency (no. of days in a week) of intake of eight different food groups.

It is measured as:

$$FCS = a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 + \dots + a_8x_8$$

Where i=food group, x=frequency, a=weight

Figure 1: Food Consumption Score by Categories and Cycle



Dietary diversity score

A dietary diversity score is an indicator of the diversity of food consumed. Overall, since the beginning of the assistance, the score improved by more than 10 percent compared to the baseline. This indicates that beneficiaries are consuming more diversified food groups which has positive implications on the food security of e-card beneficiaries.

Table 3: Dietary Diversity Score by Cycle

Dietary diversity score			
Cycle	Average	Standard deviation	Change from baseline
Baseline	5.8	1.33	12%
Jan/Feb	6.4	0.91	
May/June	6.3	0.93	
Jul/Aug	6.5	0.84	

During the May/June cycle, dietary diversity scores decreased slightly compared to the January/February cycle. This result coincides with the cut in assistance that took place during the cycle of March/April where beneficiaries did not receive any assistance, which might have contributed to the slight decrease.

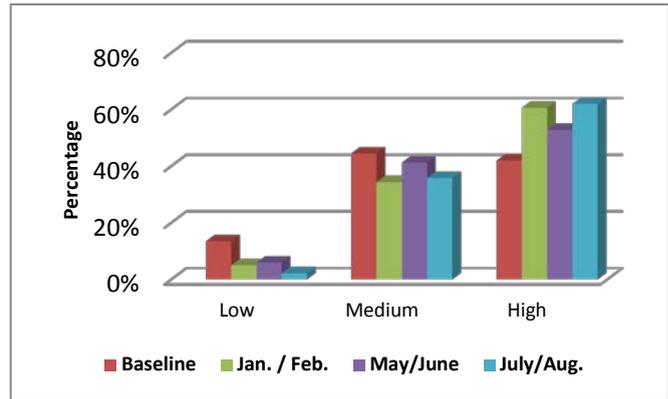
Table 4: Dietary Diversity Score by Category and Cycle

Dietary diversity score			
Cycle	Low	Medium	High
Baseline	13.5%	44.5%	42.0%
Jan/Feb	5.0%	34.4%	60.6%
May/June	5.9%	41.2%	52.8%
Jul/Aug	2.2%	35.8%	62.0%

Low and medium categories decreased in favour of high dietary diversity scores during the four cycles of e-card implementation. 2.2 percent were categorized as low during July/August, down from 13.5 percent for the baseline. Medium decreased by 20 percent, from 44.5 percent to 36 percent. On the other hand high increased

from 42 percent to 62 percent; an improvement of around 50 percent.

Figure 2: Dietary Diversity Score by Category and Cycle



Dietary Diversity is defined as the number of different foods or food groups consumed over a given reference period.

Low and medium rankings increased and high decreased for the May/June cycle compared to the previous January/February cycle.

Coping strategy index

The coping strategy index score greatly improved between the baseline and July/August cycle. It decreased by around 50 percent, setting a value of 9.5 compared to 18. This indicates that e-card beneficiaries are using fewer coping strategies to cope with lack of food.

Table 5: Coping Strategy Index by Cycle

Coping strategy index			
Cycle	Average	Standard deviation	Change from baseline
Baseline	18.03	13.28	-47%
Jan/Feb	11.15	10.31	
May/Jun	11.95	11.20	
Jul/Aug	9.55	10.28	

On the other hand, the values of the January/February cycles and May/June cycles reveals once again that e-card beneficiary households had small set-backs during the two month stoppage period regarding food security. Coping strategy indexes increased from 11.1 to 11.9, an increase of around 8 percent.

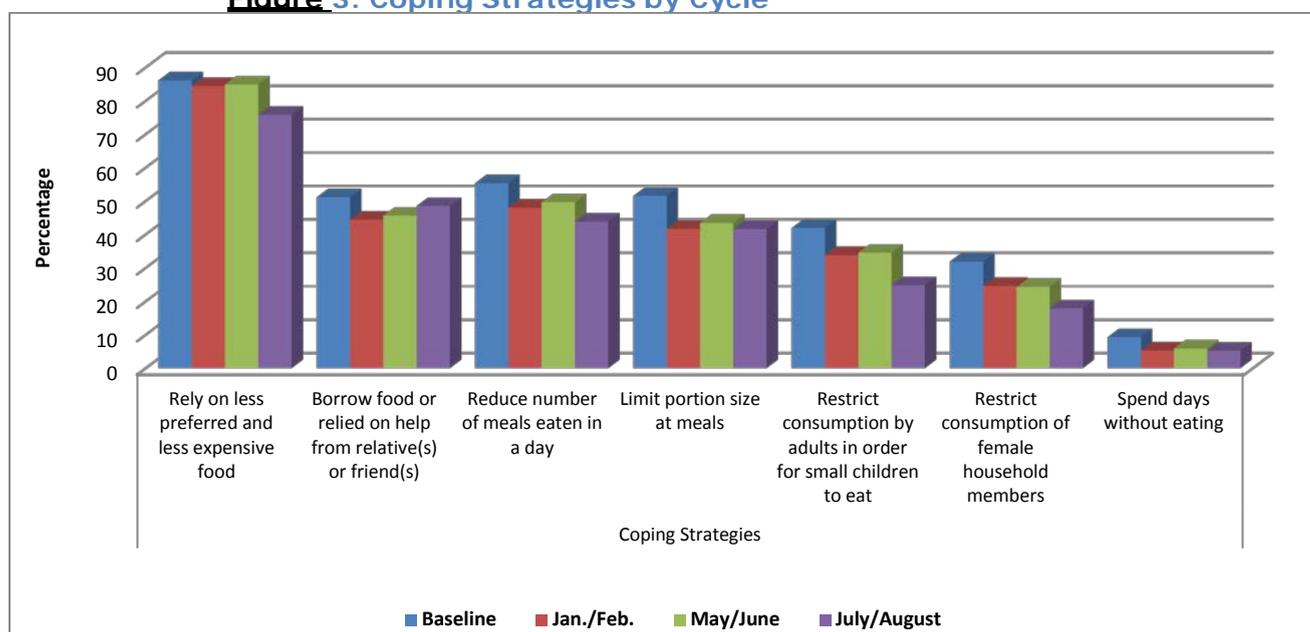
The above figure (figure 3) shows seven coping strategies that were used by beneficiary households per cycle. A decreasing trend can be observed, which reveals that beneficiaries were using fewer coping strategies of each of the seven strategies compared to the baseline.

Results show that with the cut of assistance during the March and April cycle, the impact was noticeable most on the coping strategies. Meaning that the food component stayed the same but the beneficiaries had to employ more coping strategies to cope with the lack of food or money to buy food.

The cut in assistance during March and April had an impact on the beneficiaries where all the coping strategies recorded an increase during the monitoring cycle of May/June. Beneficiaries reported that they mainly reduced the number of meals eaten in a day and limited portion size at meals.

The coping strategies index is an indicator of household food security that is relatively simple and quick to use, straightforward to understand, and correlates well with more complex measures of food security.

Figure 3: Coping Strategies by Cycle





Conclusion

The three food security indicators: food consumption score, dietary diversity score and the coping strategy index show that NPTP e-card beneficiary households are witnessing a major and significant improvement in their food security.

E-card beneficiaries are consuming more food that is more diversified and are relying less on coping strategies when facing food shortages compared to the baseline survey.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the three indicators shows that halting the e-card programme between March and April 2015 had a negative impact on the on beneficiaries regarding their food consumption, food diversity and coping strategies. Although the programme was implemented for four consecutive months, from November 2014 to February 2015, e- card beneficiaries' food security situation remains fragile.



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