



ACTED
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***Expenditure Patterns of Cash-for-Work versus Non Cash-for-Work
Households within a Food Security Context***

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1. SUMMARY

This report is the result of a household spending survey conducted within the framework of a USAID-funded Cash-for-Work (CFW) project.¹ The project was implemented by the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) and People in Need (PIN) between July 2010 and March 2011 in Madhu, Mannar Town, Musali DS Divisions (Mannar District), Maritimpattu DS Division (Mullaitivu District) and Karachchi DS Division (Kilinochchi District). The project targeted 7,000 households with cash transfers of 30,000 LKR.

The assessment focused on identifying the expenditure patterns as well as food consumption patterns of CFW and non-CFW households. Furthermore, the assessment aimed to establish how households have used their additional income from CFW. Finally, the assessment looked at whether and how spending patterns on food were influenced by WFP rations.

The results of the survey clearly indicate that the majority of participants used a significant part of their earned cash for purchasing food items. Nearly 70% of the beneficiaries have spent in total 16,000-28,000 LKR of the CFW earnings on purchasing food. This sum represents one half or more of the income earned through CFW. One of the key assessment findings is that apart from food consumption, people use the CFW money on basic items that are needed to survive and protect livelihoods.

The timing of the CFW intervention is crucial for maximizing its effectiveness. Attention must be given to the agricultural calendar. Cash is most effective when payments coincide with the two harvest seasons

The findings further suggest that the WFP rations helped to reduce household's spending on essential food items. ***It also appears that the combination of CFW and WFP rations enables households to invest more into their medium term food security and reduce indebtedness than if each of these assistance measures is used alone, or if none is available.***

In order to understand the longer term impact of the CFW program on asset formation in beneficiary households and its effects on household food security, it would be useful to conduct a follow-up assessment in one year time.

¹ Disclaimer: This study was made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of ACTED and PIN and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Project Overview

This report is the result of a household spending survey conducted within the framework of a USAID-funded Cash-for-Work (CFW) project. The project was implemented by the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) and People in Need (PIN) between July 2010 and March 2011 in Mannar, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu Districts. The project targeted 7,000 households with cash transfers of 30,000 LKR. CFW was used as it offers beneficiaries the most flexibility in the usage of their earnings, and empowers them to identify and meet their most pressing needs, including the purchase of livelihood assets which will pave the way for sustainable recovery. And, by directly injecting cash into return areas, CFW is an effective way to strengthen the recovery of free local market mechanisms, thus jumpstarting the local economy. Traditional commodity distributions often bypass local markets, thereby marginalizing area merchants and significantly distorting local economies. However, this project was designed to increase the purchasing power of returnees, who can then utilize local markets for needed goods. CFW was also a methodology through which a variety of other objectives were achieved. For example, the rehabilitation of productive assets and infrastructure, such as paddy fields, irrigation canals, water tanks and agricultural roads will pave the way for the recovery of sustainable food security in the area. The clearing operations will increase the available agriculture land, providing livelihood means for additional farming families and raising overall food production in the region. Likewise, the rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure will increase agriculture productivity, in particular that of paddy, and possibly allow for a second harvest each year. As such CFW was intended not only to increase the purchasing power of beneficiaries which will allow them to respond to their households' immediate but also longer-term needs and jumpstart economic activity in the target area, but will also provide long term food security as a food security supportive framework of productive infrastructure and assets was created through the rehabilitation of agricultural land, irrigation canals, water tanks and agricultural roads.

2.2 Background to the Study

All ACTED countries comprise of an independent Appraisal, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (AMEU), which reports directly to the Country Director. The AMEU is responsible for pre-project assessments, monitoring (input, process and output) and qualitative evaluation of completed projects. Accordingly, this assessment was designed and conducted by ACTED AMEU together with the project partner, People in Need (PIN).

The main purpose of the assessment is to encourage critical thinking about program design and delivery, and to enable continuous organizational learning. This brief study strives to reflect on key issues inherent to program design—whether the action taken has been effective and efficient, and whether it had any adverse impact on the population that it aimed to serve and/or the larger community. As such, it contributes towards accountability and transparency of ACTED's and PIN's actions and results.

2.3 Assessment Objectives

The objective of the study has been four-fold:

First, the study aims to explore what are the consumption patterns of families receiving CFW assistance. In this section, the study attempts to establish whether the income earned through CFW was utilized in the way the project anticipated—to cover food and other essential items.

Next, the study attempts to compare the consumption patterns of families that received CFW assistance and those who did not. In this section, the study aims to explore whether the income earned through CFW did affected household consumption patterns.

Third, it seeks to understand whether the combinations of various interventions (CFW and WFP rations) had an impact on food and other essential items consumption.

Finally, the study aims to explore whether the food is available and accessible to people of the areas of intervention. That is, it seeks to understand whether the cash-based intervention was appropriate in the local context.

2.4 Methodology

The assessment utilized both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The key quantitative data were collected through household survey. These were further complemented with information from monitoring visits, in depth interviews with the beneficiaries and other stakeholders, and information arising from focus groups discussions conducted in the area of project implementation.

2.4.1. Survey

The primary quantitative data were collected from respondents using a standardized survey questionnaire. (*Annex 2*). The respondents answered the questionnaire in an oral form, and their responses were recorded by ACTED and PIN monitors and trained temporary enumerators. The data collection was carried out during the first week of March 2011 in all three districts of project intervention (Mannar, Mullativu and Kilinochchi).

In order to answer the above discussed research questions, following 5 key sets of variables were observed:

- Household profile and demographic composition of the family
- Key economic indicators of the family
- The expenditure pattern of families receiving the WFP rations
- The expenditure pattern of families enrolled in CFW program
- The food expenditure, consumption and availability

In order to be able to explore the difference that CFW made, the sample comprises of CFW recipients and a control group of non-recipients from the same geographical area. That is, 51% among the total number of respondents (371) were Cash-for-Work recipients while the other 49% were the control group, not involved in CFW. Out of the CFW recipients, 92% had received from WFP food rations, while, for one reason or another, 8% had not received any WFP rations. From the sampled non CFW respondents, 90% had received WFP food rations. In total, 91% of the respondents had received the WFP rations.

The following criteria have been considered in deciding the sample size:

- Size of the population
- Variability of the population
- Time feasibility
- How precise we want the final estimates to be (margin of error)

The sample size was calculated as follows:

$$n_0 = (t)^2 * (p) (1-p) / (d)^2 \quad \text{And} \quad n_1 = n_0 / (1 + n_0 / N)$$

Where: Alpha error (α) = 0.05, t statistical value for selected alpha level (t) = 1.96, Margin of error (d) = 0.05, Maximum possible proportion (p) = 0.5, Minimum sample size (n_1) and Population (N) = 11403

Taking into account the above cited criteria, the minimum sample size (n_1) was computed and taken as **371**. Therefore the sample has been selected as:²

	USAID CFW Recipients	Non-CFW Recipients	Total
ACTED's area of Intervention (Mullaitivu, Mannar Districts)	93	92	185
PIN's area of Intervention (Kilinochchi District)	93	93	186
Total			371

2.4.2 Qualitative Methods

In order to contextualize the analysis and to understand the views of the respondents, supplementary information was collected during field monitoring visits, through interviews with beneficiaries and several focus group discussions. These monitoring missions were undertaken based on a pre-defined terms-of-reference and a guideline document and it were carried out during as well as after the project implementation stage. The interviews and focus groups were used to understand how the respondents understand and interpret certain issues explored as a part of this report.

2.5. Limitations

The following limitations need to be considered for this study which may have an impact on the results and interpretation of the findings:

- Small sample part of respondents who did not receive WFP rations.
- Income is very sensitive topic and some respondents were hesitant to answer questions related to money, and their household's income and expenditure.
- Some respondents could not well remember time periods, when CFW payments were made or WFP rations received, and they found it difficult to recall the exact sums and amounts received.

² Alpha error (α) tells us the chance of getting a false positive. An alpha level of 0.05 (5%) has been used since the survey is more focused in identifying marginal relationships and differences in the population. Also, the margins of error used for the survey is 0.05 (5%).

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1 Source of Family Income

More than half of all respondents (60%) were female. Majority of respondents (95%) further reported to have had at least some primary education.

However, regardless of education of household heads, majority of the respondent families relied on low and erratic income. In the sample, 89% of respondent families did not have any family member engaged in a type of work for which a salary or a regular wage was paid. The distribution of reported main source of family income in the past 3 months reflects the lack of labour market opportunities in the areas where the CFW was implemented: The largest segment of respondent families (42.8%) was engaging in irregular, non-skilled labor work. Irregular skilled labor (6.91%), home gardening (7.18%), small business/self employments (7.73%) and paddy cultivation (6.91%) are the other most common categories from which families earned some form of income. Notably, 7.73% of the surveyed families reported to have no source of income at all. Only 3% of respondent families had a family member engaged in regular salaried employment.

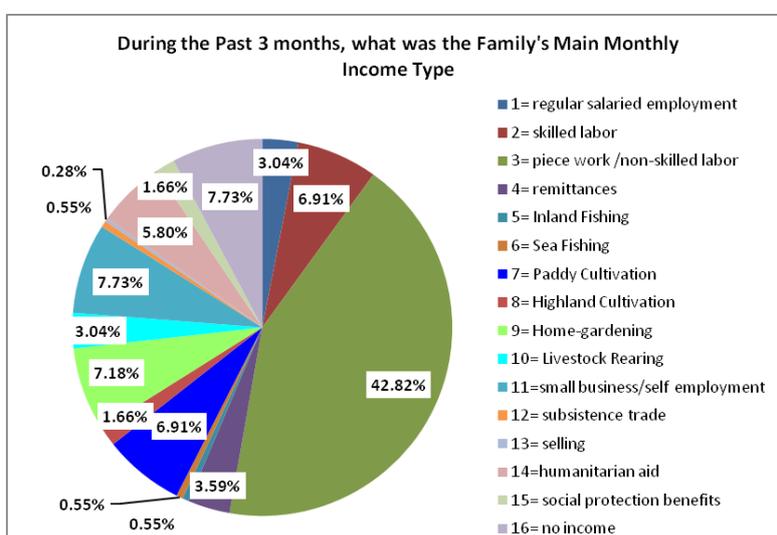


Figure 1: Main source of family income in the 3 months prior to the survey

In covering their essential needs, majority of all respondents benefitted from the WFP assistance. In total, 91% of the respondents had received the WFP rations. Out of the CFW recipients, 92% had received from WFP food rations, among the non-CFW respondents, 90% had received WFP food rations.

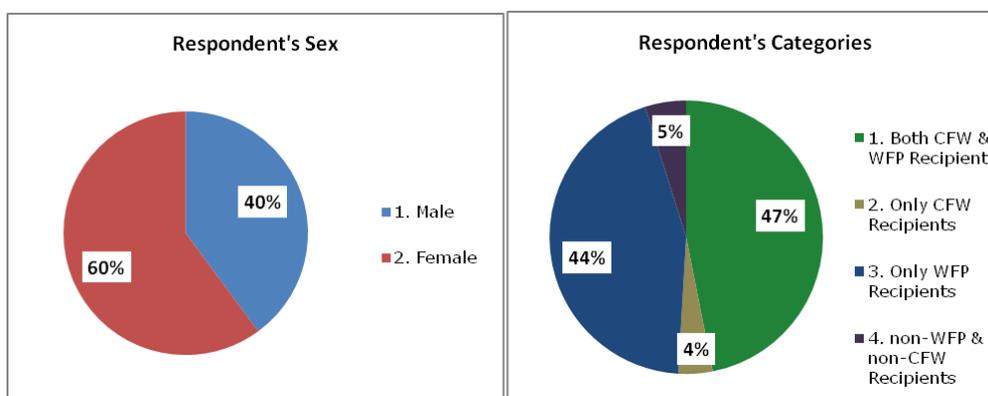


Figure 2: Respondent's sex and category

3.2 Children in Respondent Families – Basic Facts

In our sample, 59.3% of the surveyed families include at least one child (between age 2-17 years) and 15.6% of families include at least one infant (age less than 2 years). 14.3% of the surveyed families included a pregnant or lactating mother, and 6.5% of the total surveyed families had a baby born after the resettlement. Out of them, 16% revealed that the baby was suffering from some complications or health problem. The common problems mentioned were diarrhea, fever and low weight. At the time of birth, 17.4% of newborns were found to be underweight, i.e. born with a weight of below 2.5 kilograms which has been defined by the Ministry of Health as cut off point for being considered underweight. ***This figure does not show any significant difference to other parts of Sri Lanka as according to the Census and Statistics Department, 17% of all newborns in Sri Lanka are found to be born with a weight of below 2.5 kilograms. Thus, the weight of newborns in the target area is in line with the national average.***

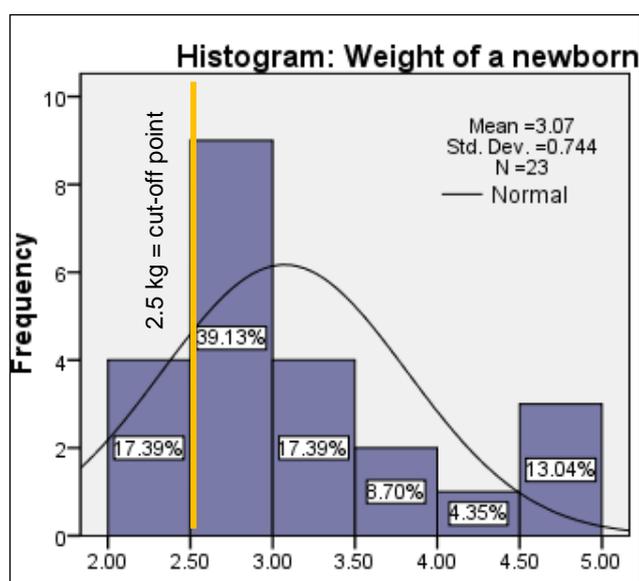


Figure 1: Weight in kg of a newborn

Out of the families who had a baby born after resettlement, 32% of had received assistance like CFW or food rations at some point during the pregnancy of the mother. ***However, both CFW and/or WFP food rations do not seem to have a significant effect on the weight of newborn babies.*** It seems that during pregnancy women receive traditionally more food than other household members.

Respondent's Category	Average Weight of a Newborn (kg)
CFW and Food Ration Recipients	3.1
Only CFW Recipients	3.25
Only Food Ration Recipients	3.3
Non-Food Rations and Non-CFW Recipients	3
Mean Average	3.07

Table 1: Average Weight of a Newborn

3.3 Expenditure and Food Consumption Patterns

3.3.1 Expenditure Patterns among the recipients of CFW assistance

Among the CFW recipients, 75.6% were able to recall how much money they had received under the USAID-funded program. According to their answers, the families have received a maximum of 30,000 LKR through the CFW program. The amount varied from family to family since it depended on the

number of days worked. However, the majority (74.3%) received between 25,000 LKR to 30,000 LKR, which is the standard package (see figure 4).

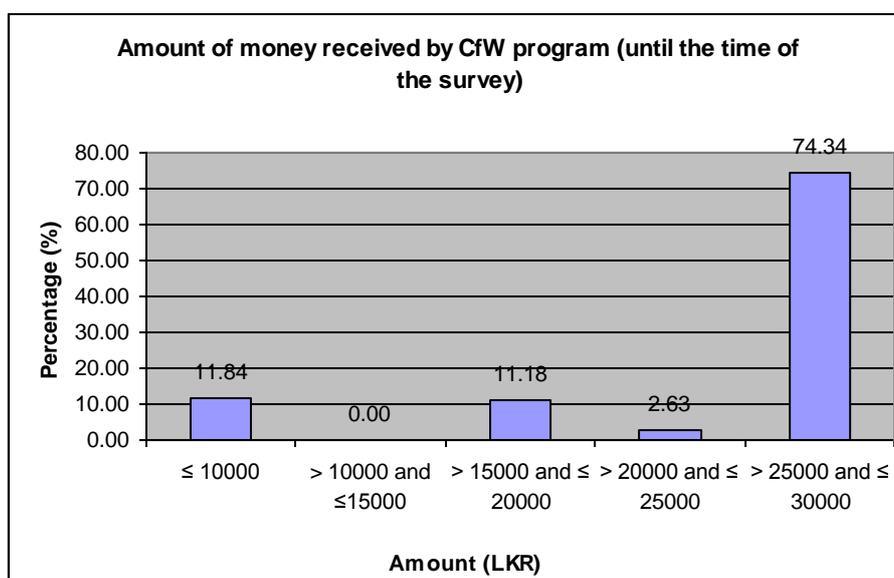


Figure 2: Amount of money received from CFW program

The Majority (79%) of the CFW beneficiaries could recall on what they spent this CFW money. **Food was the key expenditure.** When asked to state three main categories of their spending, 80% of respondents ranked the food purchase as their main spending category. The responses further suggest that the remaining money is largely spent on basic items that are needed to survive and protect livelihoods, such as education, healthcare, clothing, livelihood related investments (agriculture inputs, livestock investments, small business investments, tools for skilled labor work, etc) and transportation.

Spending Category	% of Respondents		
	1 st Main Category	2 nd Main Category	3 rd Main Category
Food	79.87	2.59	1.37
Clothing	0.00	13.79	10.96
Housing	2.52	0.86	4.11
Education	5.66	34.48	16.44
Healthcare	0.63	17.24	13.70
Livelihood Investments	5.03	12.93	10.96
Transportation	0.00	6.90	15.07
Household non-food	6.29	6.03	2.74
Savings	0.00	0.86	1.37
Repayment of loans	0.00	0.86	5.48
Other	0.00	3.45	17.81

Table 2: Main expenditure categories, which CFW money was spent on

Respondents explained that they used their CFW income to cover their basic food needs first before spending the money on other requirements. Figure 5 below illustrates the distribution of the amounts that CFW recipients spent on food: nearly 70% of the beneficiaries have spent between 53% (16,000 LKR) and 93% (28,000 LKR) of their earnings to purchase food. The average mean food expenditure covered from the CFW was 16,609 LKR. **It can therefore be safely assumed that CFW was**

effective and contributed towards meeting the immediate food needs of the returnees which was a key objective of the CFW program.

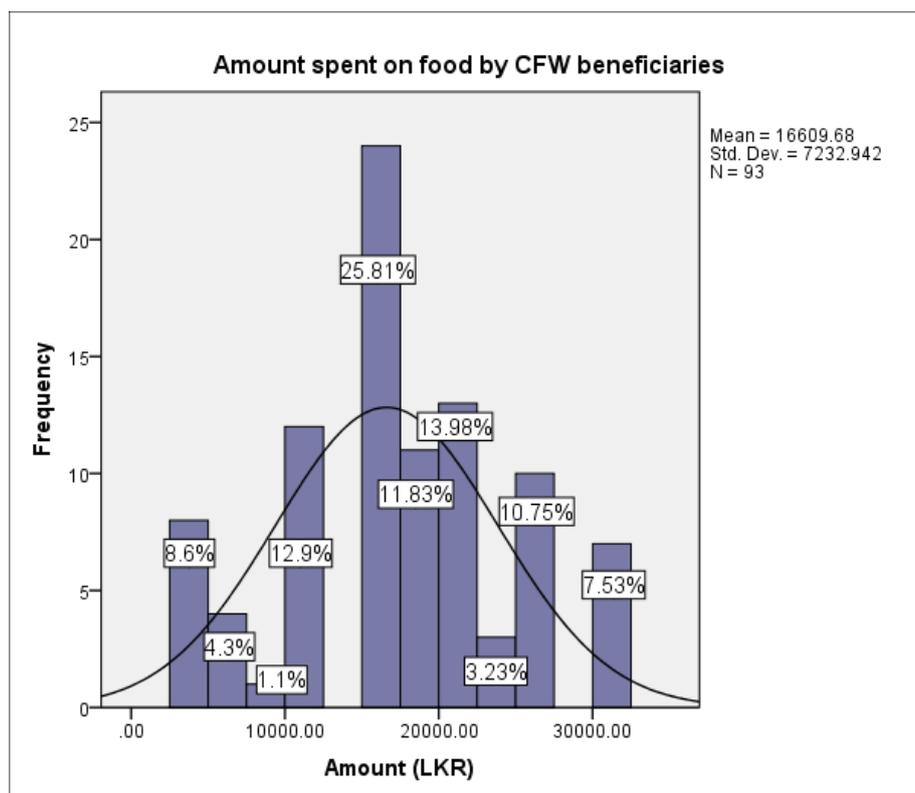


Figure 5: Amount of CFW money spent on food by CFW beneficiaries (based on beneficiaries who had received at least 25,000 LKR Note: Since some of the beneficiaries in the sample had not received the full payment of 30,000 LKR at the time of data collection, for analytical purposes only those beneficiaries who had received at least 25,000 LKR at the time of the survey were considered for this analysis.)

Notably, apart from purchasing food as other essential items, 44.8% of CFW beneficiaries who had received at least 25,000 LKR also saved some of their CFW earnings. Out of these, it was found that nearly 65% of them saved an amount between 5,000-10,000 LKR. The mean amount saved by those beneficiaries was 6,666 LKR (see figure 6 for the distribution). It must be noted that those savings are however intended to cover essential needs and protect the households in emergencies. Indeed, when asked about for the purpose of saving money, more than half of respondents (66%) said they saved CFW money to start up livelihoods. 12% mentioned that the savings were for their children. Others mentioned that it was for emergency medical needs (9%) and for future housing purposes (9%).

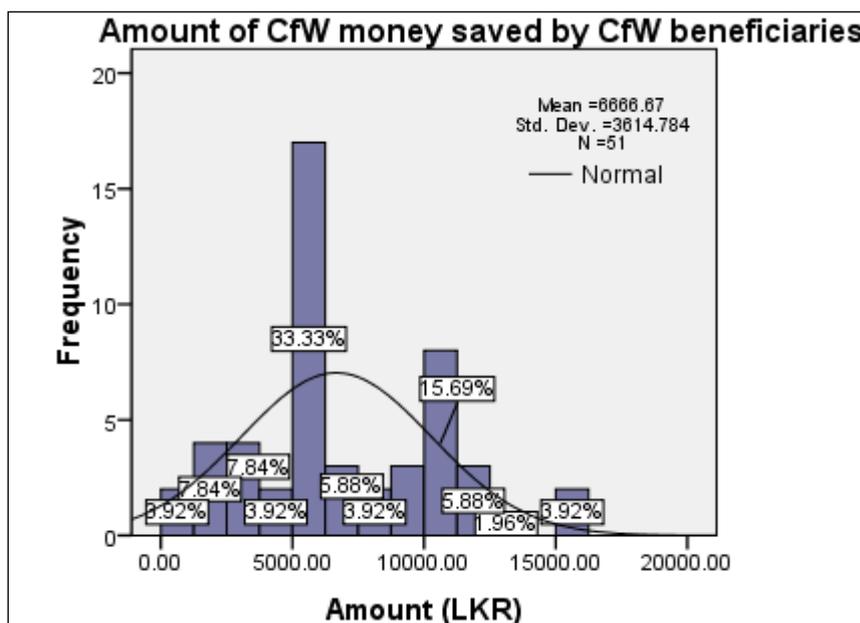


Figure 6: Amount of CFW money saved by CFW beneficiaries

3.3.2 Comparison of Expenditures patterns between CFW Recipient and Non-Recipient Families

Unsurprisingly, it is not only the CFW families that spend an important part of their family income on food items. Indeed, 96% of all surveyed families (CFW & non-CFW recipients) stated that their main monthly expenditure is for food items.

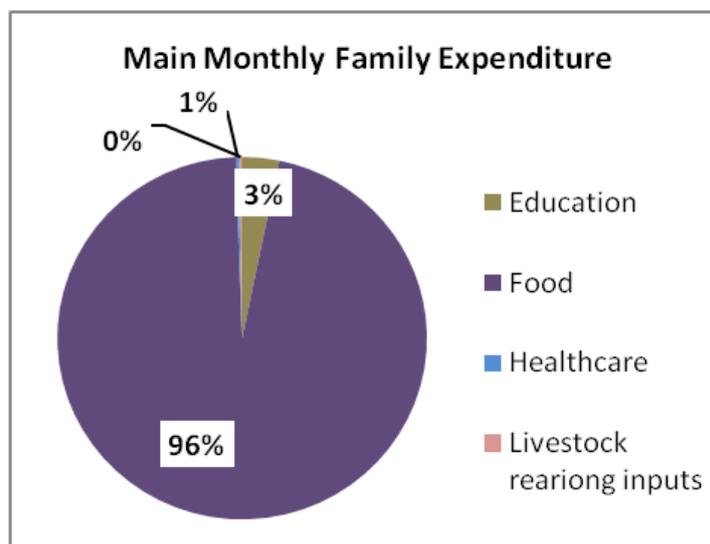
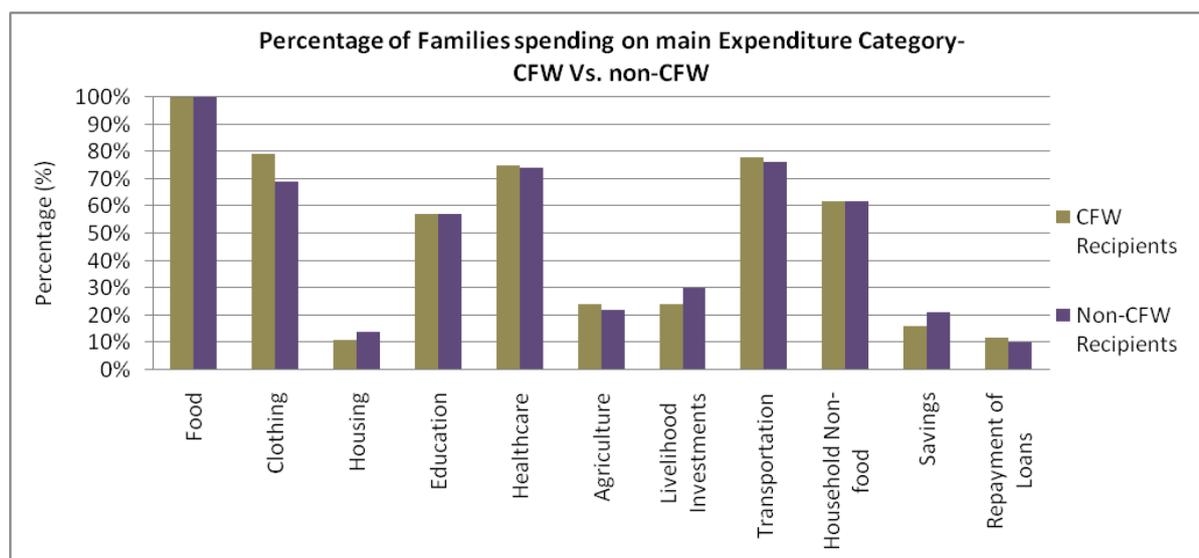


Figure 7: Main monthly family expenditure (inclusive CFW & non-CFW recipients)

A closer look reveals further similarities: **The proportion** of families that spend on certain items such as housing, education, healthcare or agriculture is not substantially different between the CFW and the control group. For example, 75% of CFW families and 74% of families in control group make monthly expenditure on healthcare. Similarly, 62% families in both groups reported monthly spending on household non-food items. The majority further cited transportation and clothing as their monthly expenditure. Also, **the type** of items that families regularly spend their money on is broadly similar between the CFW recipients and those families that did not receive CFW assistance. **This would suggest that the families share similar patterns of spending priorities, regardless of the source and size of the household's actual income.**



*Figure 8 : Percentage of Families Spending on Main Expenditure Category
Comparison CFW and Non-CFW*

In absolute terms, however, significant differences between CFW recipients and control group arise. **On average, the CFW beneficiary families were able to spend 26 % more on food than the control group. Importantly, those CFW beneficiary families that reported purchase of clothing were able to spend on average 58 % more on it than the control group.** That means that although the composition of essential items (i.e. the “what” the families buy) does not differ substantially between the groups, **the volume and perhaps the quality of what they are able to afford (i.e. the “how much” and “how good” are the consumed goods and services) has likely substantially increased with the additional family income from CFW.**

Interestingly, of those who managed to make regular monthly savings, the CFW recipient families reported lesser amount of regular monthly savings than the control group—the control group families reported 44% higher average monthly saving than the CFW recipients. **Further, the non-CFW families have invested more on small business and agriculture. Possible interpretation is that the families without CFW assistance spend more to strengthen their sources of future income.**

It is important to mention that out of those who undertook to repay their loans in the period covered by the survey, **the CFW recipient families spent on average 46% more than the control group on repayment of their loans.** The issue of loan-taking was not the focus on the current assessment. However, over the course of data collection, and through qualitative interviews, the problem of repayment of loans did surface as a matter of concern that would merit further exploration. The qualitative interviews and focus groups conducted in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu reveal that after depleting their remaining assets, people increasingly resort to measures such as selling most treasured personal items (jewelry etc) and also buy food and essential items on credit. That would perhaps partially explain the assessment finding that although the respondents claimed that they have no regular income, the reported estimates of average monthly spending of families without CFW assistance add up to a sum upwards of 13,000 LKR per family/month. **This might be a serious indicator that the debts of the families are growing, while the opportunities to re-pay the loans (from job earnings) are not necessarily arising. The inability to re-pay the loans might cause severe constraints to the families in the near future.** Although sufficient data about loan-taking patterns and coping with indebtedness is not available at the moment, the anecdotal evidence of growing concern among communities suggests that the issue is worth consideration for further research.

Category	% of Families Spending on each Category per Month		Average Monthly Spending on Particular Category by Respondent Families (LKR)			Mostly Used per Respective Item/categories
	CFW Recipients	Non-CFW Recipients	CFW Recipients	Non-CFW Recipients	%	
Food	100%	100%	7822.22	6211.05	26	Rice, Wheat Flour, Sugar
Clothing	79%	69%	1884.92	1195.30	58	
Housing	11%	14%	392.59	384.62		
Education	57%	57%	1240.48	1101.10		Stationary, Tuition fees
Healthcare	75%	74%	1019.84	1022.53		Clinic/consultation fees
Agriculture	24%	22%	685.19	735.71		Fertilizer, Seeds
Livelihood Investments	24%	30%	304.50	308.06		Cattle, poultry, and Capitol for Investments
Transportation	78%	76%	847.88	854.89		Transport for school kids
Household Non-food	62%	62%	866.14	786.10		soap, fuel-kerosene
Savings	16%	21%	116.40	262.09	44	At banks
Repayment of Loans	12%	10%	412.96	282.42	46	Bank loans, loans to buy agriculture inputs loans

Table 3: Average monthly family spending on main expenditure categories

As has been pointed out above, overall, the CFW recipient families did spend on average 26% more on food consumption than was the sum invested by the control group, which could imply that the quantity and/or quality of meals did rise. Next we explore how was this higher expenditure is indeed reflected in food consumption patterns of the families.

The frequency of meals does not seem to be affected: Nearly 95% of all the families (whether participating in CFW or not) have three meals per day, and the rest of the families have only two meals. ***It is thus safe to assume that rather than the frequency of meals, it was the quantity of food per serving and the quality of meals that has changed for the FCW beneficiaries.***

The disaggregated description of food consumption patterns of CFW recipients and non-recipients are depicted in the below figure. All families both in CFW and control group reported consuming rice. However, apart from eggs and oil and fat, all other items were consumed by higher proportion of CFW beneficiary families than by the control group. ***Most noticeable difference concerns consumption of meat and fish and seafood: nearly 10% more families consume these foods regularly if they are CFW beneficiaries.*** Higher percentage of CFW recipient families also regularly consumes vegetables, and other items

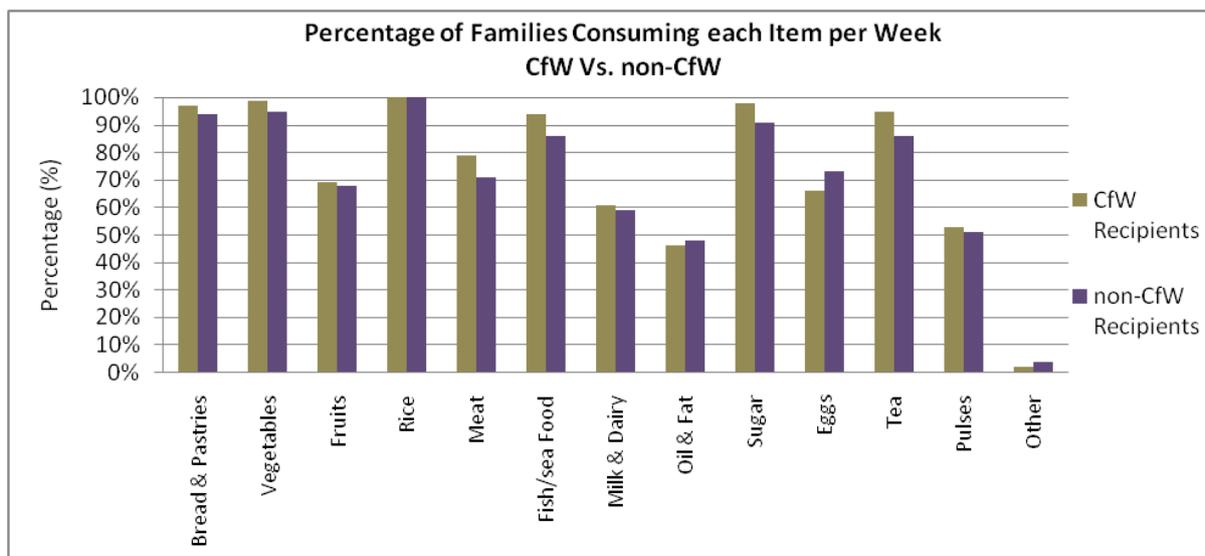


Figure 9: Percentage of families consuming each item per week

The above main consumption items seem to be mostly available on the local markets in the targeted areas. Figure 10 shows the level of availability. Except for commodities which are usually not widely consumed in the North (e.g.: raw white rice and cowpeas), most of the items could be purchased on the local markets.³ However, a caution must be exercised when estimating the food availability. As the figure below shows, almost none of the items surveyed was available in **all** local markets. In order to purchase some of the items, families would need to travel. That might have serious implications for the composition of food basket of families with low mobility, which are likely the most vulnerable families: i.e. female headed households with small children and other dependants, single living elderly persons, the disabled, etc. This theme has not been explored in depth during the data collection of this assessment, and it is advisable to include this consideration into the design of future food security studies.

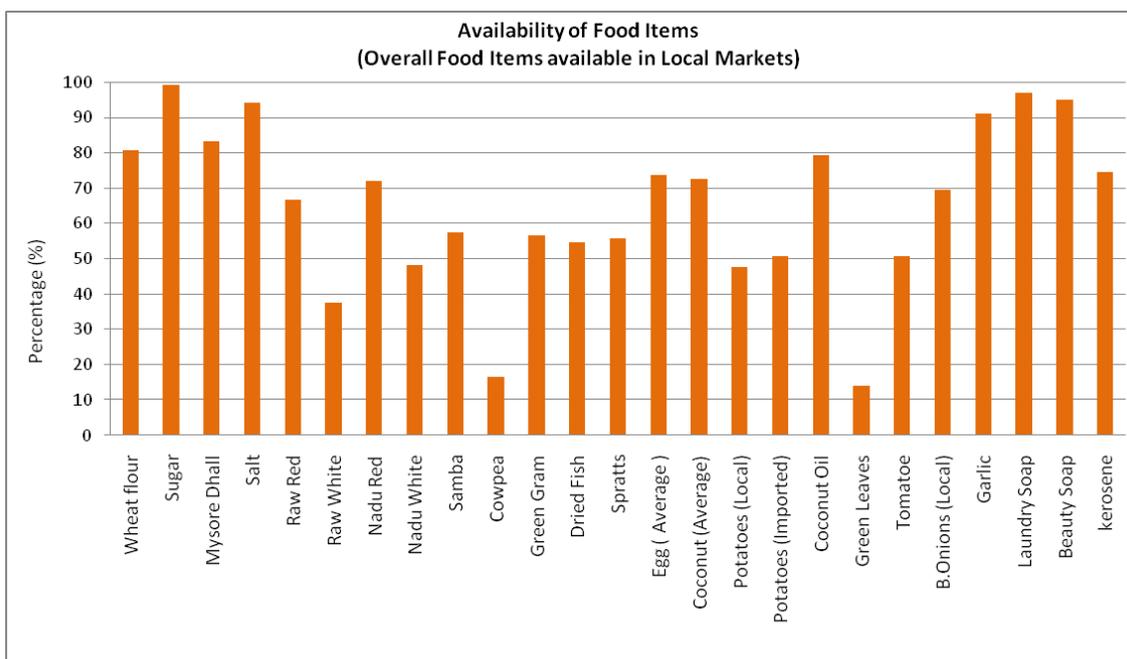


Figure 10: Availability of essential food items in local markets

³ Also, green leaves are usually not available in shops since there are door-to-door sellers who sell them at cheaper prices.

3.3.3. Influence of WFP Rations on Family Food Expenditures

Finally, the assessment also aims to explore whether and how the combination of various food security assistance measures – that is the CFW and WFP food rations—affects food expenditure and consumption of families in the target areas. As already mentioned, 91% of the respondent families have received or are currently receiving WFP rations. Out of them, only 27% were able to recall the time for which they had been receiving the rations. Out of the people who could recall the period, 94.6% had received rations for 4-9 months or they were receiving it during the time of the survey in addition to receiving it for 4-9 months.

While receiving the rations, the majority of respondents (80.5%) have bought some additional food from village shops or other market places. However, **respondents who received WFP rations for more than 3 months and at least once within the survey period, reported spending on average 32% less money on purchasing food than those who have not received WFP rations.**

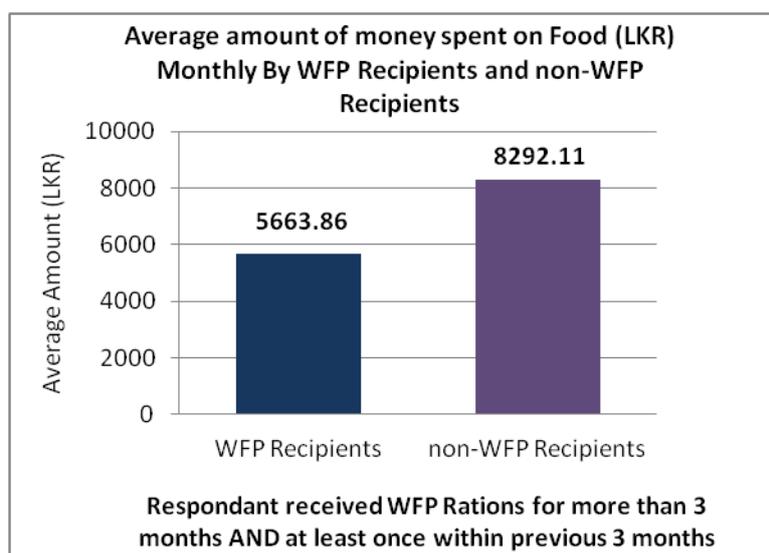


Figure 11: Average amount of money spent on food monthly by WFP rations recipients and non-recipients

In fact, the effects of the interplay between the various types of assistance would merit a detailed study on its own. **The data collected during this assessment suggest that consumption pattern of essential items changes in relation to whether families receive in kind or cash assistance and/or combination of these.**

If compared, those who received both types of assistance and those who received neither kind of help have similar spending priority: the major part of total household income was spent on food. Similar average amounts were spent also on education and healthcare, suggesting that these have both high value and priority for the households and at the same time inflexible price.

If families were not receiving WFP rations, they spent on average more on food, regardless of whether they received CFW assistance or not. On the other hand, the families did tend to economize on other essentials: Without the WFP rations, regardless of having CFW income or not, they spent substantially less money on clothing and housing.

Families without the WFP rations also seem to have invested substantially more into agriculture inputs, presumably in an attempt to secure future food from subsistence farming. However, these families do seem to have less capacity to make an investment into a livelihood that would provide an income. Also, the capacity of families without the WFP food rations to repay their loans is minimal.

Generally, it appears that apart from increased food consumption and improved diet, **the combination of the two types of assistance might deliver also more medium-term progress** in three areas critical for well-being of the resettled population:

- **Starting-up livelihoods** (and thus ensuring medium-long term food security and income): If compared, those who received both cash-for-work and WFP food rations could afford to invest 4.8 times more into their livelihoods than those who had neither kind of assistance. That is, the combination of those two types of assistance is likely to enable people to invest into ensuring longer term food security and income-generating.
- **Reducing the level of debts of households:** As suggested earlier in this assessment report, the level of debts and the inability to repay them is a matter of growing concern. If compared, the beneficiaries of the combined kind of assistance were able to repay 6,2 more in debts than those who did receive neither kind of help.
- **Enabling households to purchase non-food essentials:** While food is the key survival priority, the basic needs to ensure well-being go being food consumption. In this sense, the combination of the two kinds of assistance meant improvement for the recipients as they were able to spend 1,8 times more on household essentials than those who did not receive either kind of help.

Naturally, these are only tentative suggestions since the part of sample that were non-recipients of WFP is too small to enable firm conclusion. However, the possibility that a combination of these two types of assistance might help to address the immediate needs as well as some of the medium term key challenges that the population of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu faces is worth serious consideration and further exploration.

Category	Average Monthly Expenditure (LKR)			
	WFP Food Ration Recipients		Non-WFP Food Recipients	
	CFW recipients	non-CFW recipients	CFW recipients	non-CFW recipients
Food	7730.00	5984.00	8887.00	7933.00
Clothing	1982.00	1258.00	760.00	622.00
Housing	426.00	418.00	0.00	83.00
Education	1301.00	1103.00	540.00	1083.00
Healthcare	1055.00	1014.00	613.00	1097.00
Agriculture Inputs	606.00	695.00	1600.00	1111.00
Livelihood Investments	849.00	1006.00	767.00	178.00
Transportation	861.00	829.00	700.00	1094.00
Household Non-food	850.00	830.00	1053.00	389.00
Savings	111.00	279.00	173.00	111.00
Repayment of Loans	449.00	305.00	0.00	72.00
Total	16,220.00	13,721.00	15,093.00	13,701.00

Table 4: Monthly spending of WFP & CFW recipients & non-recipients

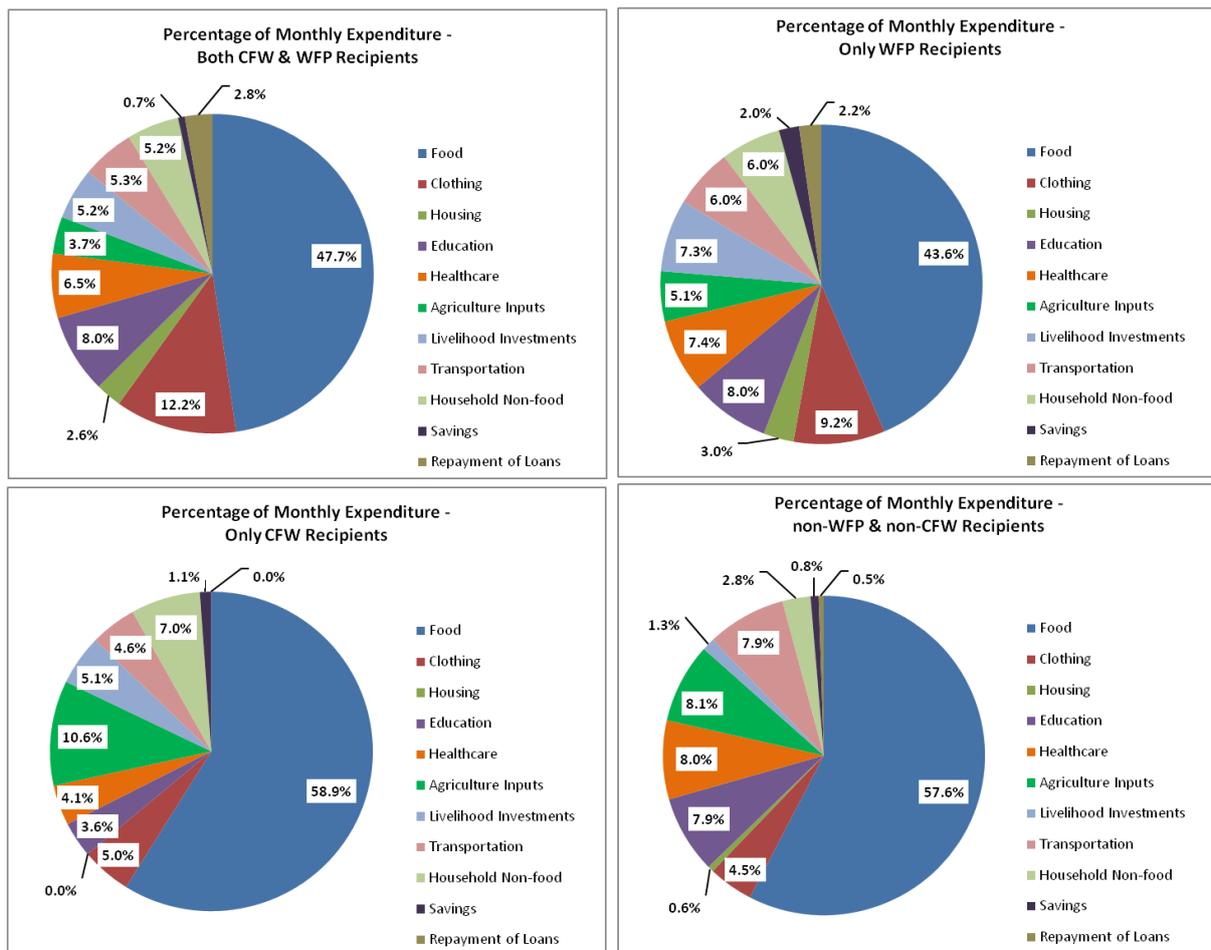


Figure 12: Percentage of monthly expenditure of WFP and CFW recipients and non-recipients

4. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this survey suggest that the combination of WFP food rations and CFW ensures immediate food security for returnees while at the same time this combination enables households to invest more into their medium term food security and possibly reduce indebtedness than if each of these assistance measures are used alone, or if none is available.

Further findings are:

- Almost all returnees (whether recipients of food rations, and/or CFW or neither) main monthly expenditure is for food items.
- Families who received WFP rations for more than 3 months and at least once within the survey period, reported spending on average 32% less money on purchasing food than those who have not received WFP rations.
- Income from CFW was mainly used to purchase food. Nearly 70% of the beneficiaries have spent between 53% (16,000 LKR) and 93% (28,000 LKR) of their earnings to purchase food. It can therefore be safely assumed that CFW was effective and contributed towards meeting the immediate food needs of the returnees.
- Households share similar patterns of spending priorities, regardless of the source and size of the household's actual income. However, in absolute terms, some significant differences between CFW recipients and non-recipient household arise which means that although the composition of essential items (i.e. the "what" the families buy) does not differ substantially between the groups, the volume and perhaps the quality of what they are able to afford (i.e. the "how much" and "how good" are the consumed goods and services) has likely substantially increased with the additional family income from CFW.
 - CFW beneficiary families were able to spend 26 % more on food than non CFW families. These families eat also more meat and fish and though the number of meals did not increase, probably did the quantity and quality per meal.
 - CFW beneficiaries spent significantly more on clothing than non CFW families.
 - CFW recipient families spent on average 46% more than non CFW families on repayment of their loans.
- Non-CFW families and also families who did not receive the WFP food rations have invested more on small business and agriculture. A possible interpretation is that the families without CFW and WFP food rations assistance spend more to strengthen their sources of future income. However, these families do seem to have less capacity to make an investment into a livelihood that would provide an income. Also, the capacity of families without the WFP food rations to repay their loans is minimal.
- When comparing families who received both types of assistance (CFW and WFP food rations) and those who received neither kind of help have similar spending priority: the major part of total household income was spent on food. Similar average amounts were spent also on education and healthcare, suggesting that these have both high value and priority for the households and at the same time inflexible price.
- Although most households claimed that they have no regular income, the reported estimates of average monthly spending of families without CFW assistance add up to a sum upwards of 13,000 LKR per family/month. This might be a serious indicator that the debts of the families are growing, while the opportunities to re-pay the loans (from job earnings) are not necessarily arising. The inability to re-pay the loans might cause severe constraints to the families in the near future.

- 17.4% of newborns in the areas surveyed were found to be underweight, i.e. born with a weight of below 2.5 kilograms. This figure does not show any significant difference to other parts of Sri Lanka as island wide 17% of all newborns in Sri Lanka are found to be born with a weight of below 2.5 kilograms. Thus, the weight of newborns in the surveyed areas of the Northern Province is in line with the national average. CFW and/or WFP food rations do not seem to have significant effect on the weight of newborn babies.