

Is Social Cash Transfer a Political Tool?

Kazembe Zyambo^{1*}; Ndalama L. P.²

^{1,2} Lecturer, Africa Research University

*Corresponding Author: Kazembe Zyambo

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Abstract: Governments do influence the political process through their control over resources and shape public opinion. Indeed, the government of Zambia has been controlling the Social Cash Transfer programme through the Ministry of Community and Development & Social Services not as a political manipulation tool. The view that suggests that the Social Cash Transfer programme is a political manipulation tool for the ruling party is not empirically established by this study. Instead, it established that the Social Cash Transfer programme is a social framework within which government under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services helps the vulnerable population and the programme was pioneered in Mexico in early 1990s. The research methodology was a descriptive qualitative research design which is crucial in social sciences, education, healthcare and business research. Descriptive qualitative describes the characteristics, behaviors, or phenomena as they exist without influencing or manipulating the study environment. Hence this study has provided a snapshot data of that strongly support that Social Cash Transfer programme is not a political management tool to manipulate the vulnerable population but an essential vehicle for protecting the vulnerable population in Zambia and elsewhere in the global.

Inclusions, the study discovered that Social Cash Transfer is a global vehicle that has created significant and positive impact among the vulnerable population worldwide. Since Social Cash Transfer is not an island, it is being controlled by the government agency not a political organ in Zambia and it will remain a government programmer for ever because of its positive on the need population worldwide.

Keywords: Social Cash Transfer, Vulnerable Population, Political Manipulation Tool, Government.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Social Cash Transfer in Zambia that has been implemented by the present governments has been subjected to various opinions and debate respectively. This study aims to determine whether Social Cash Transfer is political tool that is rooted to manipulate the vulnerable population through social protection to win electoral favour. The paper has also discussed the empirical historical background of Social Cash Transfer.

➤ The Background of the Study

There has been a serious debate among the Zambian people in most recent times, whether Social Cash Transfer is a political tool for manipulating the vulnerable population to win electoral favour in Zambia, or it is a programme that truly aims to protect the vulnerable population without any political influence or political manipulation. This paper aims to dip

deeper into theoretical and practical perspectives of Social Cash Transfer in Zambia. It would be quite naive to discuss Social Cash Transfer first without understanding its historical background and implications on the part of affected population. Several empirical data suggests that there is no strong evidence whatsoever to assert the prevailing opinion that Social Cash transfer is linked to political manipulation. The prevailing view is that Social Cash Transfer is a political tool because it influences vulnerable population to favour the ruling party for electoral advantages over the opposition parties in Zambia. The study, however, revealed that because of the enrichment of social cash transfer operations of being linked to government affairs to protect the people needed that makes this programme to be vital tool for manipulation. The study revealed that Social Cash Transfer is not an isolation in itself; it must be associated with the systems and that system must be a government system.

Strong evidence indicates that Social Cash Transfer, Mexico is often credited with pioneering conditional cash transfer programs, with its Prospera program (formerly known as Oportunidades in the 1990s (Hanlon, 2009). Prospera provides financial assistance to families who meet specific assistance needs such as health, education requirements like sending children to school and attending health check-ups. This program has been replicated in over 52 countries worldwide and it has demonstrated positive impacts on poverty reduction, education and health outcomes.

While Mexico Prospera program is a well-known example of conditional cash transfer, it is worth noting that Zambia has also implementing social cash transfer since 2003, targeting vulnerable population. However, Mexico is still cited as one of the earliest and with most influential models for conditional cash transfer globally. With this rich historical background, the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) is a Government of Zambia Social Protection programme aimed at reducing extreme poverty and the inter-generational transfer of poverty. On the programme, beneficiaries receive cash transfers of K400 and 800 monthly which are paid bimonthly to able bodies and people with disabilities. It is worth noting that PWDs are paid double due to their special needs. In view of the above and by understanding this historical background, Social Cash Transfer is not a political tool, but a government initiative program that aims to reduce poverty among its population and vulnerable populations in Zambia. To this effect the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme in Zambia has become largest and most important poverty targeted social protection intervention.

➤ *Global Social Cash Transfer*

Social Protection Programmes have been implemented in several economies, and it has become a global phenomenon with excellent efforts to tackle poverty and inequality in the global world. According to the available World Bank data (World Bank, 2015a), Social Cash Transfer is a global movement that is being implemented by several countries where SCT is now implemented. Some of the countries are Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Ugandan, Tanzania, Mali, Lesotho, Botswana, Ethiopia and several countries others not identified in this paper.

From the Zambian perspectives, Social Cash Transfer cannot be a political manipulation tool that any ruling party can use as a vehicle to manipulate the vulnerable population. Presently, scholars have divided politics into theoretical or academic and practical or applied politics. To the majority, cash transfer is a practical politics since it bears positive bearings on the vulnerable population. Theoretical politics refers to the thinking and fundamental characteristics of the state without reference to its activities or how its ends are attained. While the term applied or practical politics means the state in action. Therefore, by definition Easton (1971) conceived politics as the authoritative allocation of value for the society. Similarly, in his

postulation American political scientist Lasswell (1931) said politics is Who Gets What, When and How? This view is interpreted as the power view. A relationship involving power rule or authority. According to the Greeks in their earlier conception of politics is that politics is the pursuit of public interest. Public interest may be interpreted as serving the will of the people.

To some extent social cash transfer may be considered as a political tool, because Heywood (2007) made a distinctive classification about politics and that Politics must be primarily associated with the art of government and its activities; meaning social cash transfer is a government activity and it can be easily understood like a political tool when the facts are different.

II. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

This study adopts a pragmatic research philosophy to understand whether social cash transfer is a political tool in Zambia. Pragmatism was selected because of its intrinsic focus on producing tangible outcomes, prioritizing the application of results to practical poverty challenges. It is believed that pragmatism bridges the gap between theory and practice, resonating with the needs of economic challenges for striving to improve human social welfare. (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

Guided by its pragmatic stance, this research utilizes a qualitative design that integrates descriptive data and qualitative interview narratives. This choice is supported by both the need for breadth in capturing descriptive and depth in elucidating nuanced group and social cash transfer dimensions. The qualitative methodological approach serves to triangulate findings, ensuring that narrative description is contextualized by the lived experiences and perceptions of vulnerable population. This study provides a holistic account of the phenomena under investigation.

IV. SAMPLING METHOD

Since the study was qualitative desk research, the study sampled all related empirical data with relevant and significant information regarding the Social Cash Transfer to provide meaningful knowledge about the Social Cash Transfer and politics. It was a purpose sample method, because the study targeted all related empirical literature.

V. FINDINGS OF RESEARCH

Social Cash Transfer is for the vulnerable population, and it is a government social protection programme for the needy, its impact and outcome in several countries cannot be emphasized.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study set out to determine whether Social Cash Transfer is political manipulation tool to be used by a ruling or governing political party in Zambia. The research revealed contrary data among politicians and ordinary citizens. However, Social Cash Transfer can be manipulated when it is implemented by a political party not the government. There is a sharp difference between a political party and the government. Therefore, government refers to the system or institution responsible for the administration and governance of a country or region. It is a formal structure that exercises authority, enforces laws, and provides public services. Governments are established to maintain order, protect citizens' rights, and promote the welfare of the population while as a political party there are specifically political actors, such as UPND, FDD, PF and other politicians, activists, that are engaged in various strategies to gain support, mobilize voters, and shape public opinion. Despite this, government and politics are two interconnected concepts that play a crucial role in shaping societies and governing nations. However, political actors always exert pressure through public opinion and influencing policy decisions and government actions, hence the understanding of Social Cash Transfer can be perceived as a political manipulation tool for the governing party.

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