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Qualitative case study on social cash transfers and livelihood support in Lesotho

Lesotho country case study report

Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed (Independent Consultant) and Pamela Pozarny
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)



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The views and summary analysis expressed in this report are based solely on those of the authors and do not reflect necessarily those of MoSD, CRS and other stakeholders and partners associated with the Lesotho Child Grants Programme (CGP) or SPRINGS.

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Abstract

This in-depth qualitative study in Lesotho examines the impacts of linkages between the Lesotho Child Grants Programme (CGP), the second largest national social protection programme supporting poor households with children 0-17 years, and the Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government services (SPRINGS) pilot project, implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) through UNICEF and European Union financing.

This current study explores the impacts of these two combined programmes - CGP and SPRINGS – namely social assistance through cash transfer and livelihood support, both at the household and at the local economy level. The study examines in-depth the causal links and channels - the how and why – that create these impacts, particularly regarding the areas of interest of this study – namely economic security and resilience and nutritional knowledge, dietary practices and infant and child care. The report also analyses impacts of operational features, notably of the complementary programme effects (capturing intended and unintended impacts) and how the SPRINGS design and implementation has effected results and shaped the experiences of CGP beneficiaries and other stakeholders interacting with the programme. In addition, the study consists of a “light” comparative analysis of sites not receiving either CGP or SPRINGS support to analyse conditions of people outside coverage of the programmes.

Overall, findings indicate the value-added of SPRINGS for CGP beneficiaries in all priority areas of the research – to varying degrees, specifically: household income, financial education, income-generating skills, market engagement, resilience, food security, diet diversity, information on nutrition, hygiene, and for care-givers, improved practices concerning childcare and feeding. Findings suggest that the impacts of CGP and SPRINGS combined are also dependent on length of engagement in the programme, with more positive impacts observed in older CGP and SPRINGS sites. This evidence showing greater impacts over time yields important lessons informing policy and programme design. Findings also indicate that the combination of the CGP plus SPRINGS interventions may lead to more sustainable effects over time, particularly regarding poverty reduction and improved nutrition.

The report ends with a set of recommendations in support of potential expansion of CGP and SPRINGS combined interventions: promoting and intensifying CGP beneficiaries’ engagement in Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) to strengthen resilience; providing continuous support for food, nutrition security and livelihoods through keyhole gardens and Community Complimentary Feeding and Learning Sessions (CCFLS); and strengthening support to local service providers to improve access to services.

Abbreviations

BOS	Lesotho Bureau of Statistics
CC	Community Councils
CCFLS	Community Complimentary Feeding and Learning Sessions
CGP	Child Grants Programme
CHAL	Christian Health Association of Lesotho
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
ED	Electoral Division
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoL	Government of Lesotho
ICHWR	Improving Child Wellbeing and Household Resiliency
IGA	Income Generating Activities
KII	Key Informant Interview
LVAC	Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee
M	Maloti (Lesotho's currency)
MoAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
NISSA	National Information System for Social Assistance
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
OAP	Old Age Pension
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PA	Public Assistance
PMT	Proxy Mean Testing

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SILC	Savings and Internal Lending Communities
SPRINGS	Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government Services
TCI	Investment Centre of the FAO
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAC	Village Assistance Committee

Executive summary

Background

This report presents analysis and findings from a qualitative fieldwork conducted in October and November 2017 in Lesotho, on the impacts of linkages between the Lesotho Child Grants Programme (CGP), the second largest national social protection programme supporting poor households with children 0-17 years, and the Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government services (SPRINGS) pilot project.

This qualitative study explores the impacts of these two programmes - CGP and SPRINGS, the existing complementarities between their social protection and livelihood components, both at the household and at the local economy level, and looks into the causal links and channels - the *how and why* - through which these interventions impact the outcomes of interest. The report also analyses impacts of operational features, notably of the complementary programme effects (capturing intended and unintended impacts) and how the SPRINGS design and implementation in complement with CGP has effected results and shaped the experiences of CGP beneficiaries and other stakeholders interacting with the programme.

This study is a component of a broader mixed-method analysis, both quantitative and a lab-in-the-field experiment, of the impact of the two specific interventions covered by this qualitative study. This study builds on and deepens the existing evidence base, aiming to assess and provide greater evidence of the stand-alone impact of the CGP, compared to the impact of combined CGP and SPRINGS, both at household and at local economy level, concerning specific outcomes regarding household expenditures, food security and nutrition, agricultural activities, livelihood strategies, attitude towards risk and resilience, savings and financial literacy, dietary practices and consumption patterns. Specifically, the research hypotheses focus on three interrelated areas: (i) household income, market engagement, resilience and local economy impacts; (ii) nutrition and consumption; and (iii) operations (e.g. effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy of coordination and synergy), notably regarding combined programmes. The intention of this study is to contribute to the existing literature evidencing benefits from complementarities between social assistance and agricultural and rural development programmes.

The study consists of an analysis of three sites, two in Leribe and one in Thaba-Tseka districts: in Leribe district - a CGP alone site and an earlier cohort site of CGP and SPRINGS combined (starting in 2015); and in Thaba-Tseka district - a more recently started site of CGP and SPRINGS combined interventions (starting in late 2016/early 2017). Additionally, there is a “light” comparative analysis of sites not receiving either CGP or SPRINGS support to analyse conditions of people outside coverage of the programmes.

Main qualitative methods employed in this study include: focus group discussions with participatory tools, key informant interviews, and in-depth household case studies. Daily debriefings were conducted after each day’s fieldwork, facilitating in-depth systematic review of findings to capture key conclusions. Community feedback sessions were also conducted to validate findings and preliminary conclusions, offering community members an opportunity to add last observations. These meetings also enabled ownership and sharing of the findings with communities met. Finally, synthesis-day sessions (three in total) were held at the conclusion of each research site to consolidate evidence and develop research conclusions.

Research areas and key findings

A growing body of evidence shows that programme coherence and linkages between social protection programmes, notably cash transfers, and other agricultural and rural development interventions can play a fundamental role in addressing constraints faced by households living in poverty in rural areas. Complementarity among interventions can break the intergenerational transmission of poverty, promote productive investments and stimulate sustainable graduation out of poverty while avoiding potential harm. The research leads to the following conclusions:

Household income, market engagement and resilience and local economy impacts:

CGP transfers enabled families to invest in children's educational needs and buy food. However, the money is often too little and comes irregularly leading to households ending up in debt. SPRINGS provided a significant value-added to CGP beneficiary households who now have access to savings and loans through forming Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) groups, leading to increased income and greater stability of income, as well as a reduction in debt. SILC Field Agents are community members recruited, oriented and trained to deliver the SILC intervention directly to groups of 15 to 20 individuals. They train newly formed SILC groups in areas such as budgeting, saving, borrowing, and record keeping. Their local presence and ongoing support further promote capacity, commitment and ownership within communities and sustainability over time of SILC interventions. Beneficiaries are able to diversify their income streams - notably by generating additional income from selling on a small-scale surplus vegetables within the community from keyhole gardens - another initiative supported by SPRINGS. However, there are risks of market saturation due to beneficiaries selling similar vegetables within a relatively small local community. Multiple income streams, including through CGP transfers, SILC, and small-scale income-generating activities (IGAs), provided diverse sources of food and income, particularly important during periods of stress. This promoted improved resilience – evidenced by beneficiaries less affected by the delays and irregularities in CGP quarterly payments; relying less on irregular and often low-paid piecework; as well as reducing negative coping strategies such as consuming more nutritious food throughout the day.

Through financial education provided by SPRINGS, CGP beneficiaries have also experienced an increase in their knowledge, awareness and practice on saving, borrowing and budgeting. This has resulted in higher savings over time and an increased desire to save more. The additional income continues to be allocated to children's educational needs and to buy food, but also to invest in SILC groups to generate further income, and to invest on a limited scale in productive assets such as buying seeds and fertilizers. In a number of cases, beneficiaries have been able to set up small-scale businesses and IGAs. In the context of longer programme engagement, members of SILC groups were able to access more formal financial institutions such as banks to open accounts and take out loans for larger IGAs or register as formal associations - with assistance from Extension Agents in organizational, financial and business support.

Beneficiaries on CGP alone and CGP and SPRINGS combined contribute to a positive change to the local economy by increasing expenditures. CGP and SPRINGS combined enabled beneficiaries to spend their CGP transfer and additional income in markets in town more frequently, once or twice a month – rather than once a quarter on CGP payment days as observed with CGP alone beneficiaries. The majority of purchases continued to be made

in nearby towns rather than in the proximate community-based *spaza* shops - which typically carried limited range of items and or maintained higher prices than in town. However, local shop owners increasingly bought more products in bulk, resulting in more variety and quantity of goods for purchase in local markets. An additional result of SPRINGS support has been strengthening of existing market groups in the community, notably concerning market access. Male and female beneficiaries reported that by having additional and more stable incomes CGP and SPRINGS combined has led to households struggling less to make ends meet and coping better - by relying less on others in their community (family members or neighbours) for assistance.

Nutrition and consumption impacts: CGP alone has enabled households to increase and improve their food consumption. However, their diet diversity and improved consumption behaviour was short-lived and only occurred for a week or two after they have received the transfer, with practices going back to normal soon after – eating mostly maize meal. A key value-added of SPRINGS for CGP beneficiary households was a more constant supply of vegetables from their keyhole gardens, which led to an improved and more nutritious diet that lasted for longer periods. Findings of the study suggest that sustainability of keyhole gardens can and will be achieved over time. For example, beneficiaries are using additional income from SILC groups to purchase seeds, and follow-up support is being provided by Lead Farmers (trained community members) on how to construct and maintain keyhole gardens, vegetable care, post-harvest methods, monitoring if gardens have sufficient water, providing advice on where and how to use soil and manure.

Male and female beneficiaries in the study reported children feeling healthier, stronger, happier and performing better at school because they were able to eat a variety of food “on demand” and no longer had to worry about having something to eat. Beneficiaries expressed the constant vegetable supply as a result of being provided clearer information and support on keyhole garden construction and maintenance from SPRINGS personnel. CGP and SPRINGS combined provided beneficiaries with improved nutritional and health information, through the Community Complimentary Feeding and Learning Sessions (CCFLS) for example. However, evidence has indicated that in the study sample sites visited, access to other support services - envisaged through SPRINGS ‘citizen outreach service days’ - has not improved with SPRINGS intervention. While the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) has received training on how to implement well-being days, this activity of the programme has not yet been operationalized in study sites. This resulted in additional costs and time for beneficiaries, who had to make trips to the main town to access services with uncertainty of outcomes.

Combined programme operations: While messaging for CGP alone is centred on using the transfers to meet children’s needs, the effects of the combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions on programme operations has resulted in an expanded set of messages, particularly addressing income generation and poverty reduction more widely, including improved health and nutrition. This breadth of messaging appears to have positive impacts on beneficiary households. CGP beneficiaries, for example, were being sensitised on using the CGP money to invest in SILC groups, which in turn will create additional money for them to invest to meet children’s needs, and other priorities. Combined interventions have shown to lead to a reduction in household vulnerability, particularly those household engaged for longer periods of time – and seems to be creating a perception of decreasing inequalities,

resulting in improved social cohesion. Importantly, there is an increased perception among some beneficiaries that with SPRINGS, if CGP phased out, they would still be able to sustain their livelihoods. This evidence suggests that the combination of the CGP cash plus SPRINGS may lead to more sustainable effects over time, particularly regarding poverty reduction and improved nutrition. An unintended consequence of the combined programmes was heightened tensions of community members excluded from CGP due to the initial exclusion of non-CGP beneficiaries from the pilot phase of the SPRINGS programme (i.e. the “Improving Child Wellbeing and Household Resiliency” (ICWHR) pilot project). However, this tension reduced once SPRINGS became open to all community members, early on in the programme implementation. However, in fact, not all CGP beneficiaries participated in SPRINGS interventions due to lingering fears that participating meant being removed from CGP.

One of the biggest impacts of the combined programmes reported by a majority of male and female beneficiaries engaged in both programmes has been less stress in the household. This is attributed to: reduced borrowing from neighbours, friends and relatives; increased school enrolment – particularly among high school children as beneficiaries are able to comfortably pay high school fees; improved food and diversity in diet due to a constant supply of vegetables from keyhole gardens beneficiaries; and improved nutrition and information and awareness around nutrition, hygiene and health. As SPRINGS is open to CGP and non-CGP beneficiaries, keyhole gardens and SILC groups have also shown to generate improvements in social cohesion in communities by bringing community members together. Evidence also suggests that impacts generated by CGP and SPRINGS combined varies over time - and that longer durations of support appear to yield more visible effects.

Policy Recommendations

The study raises a number of important lessons and recommendations for consideration for the Government of Lesotho (GoL), Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS), including extension workers, and other key stakeholders. From the findings and conclusions presented above, there are a number of key lessons learned in support of potential expansion of the CGP and SPRINGS combined intervention model – particularly in light of the possible envisaged community development model of social assistance. The recommendations are presented in order of priority and importance:

Promote and intensify CGP beneficiaries’ engagement in SILC for improved resilience and livelihoods: the research team highlights this issue as priority. Based on evidence from the qualitative research, SILC groups provide CGP beneficiaries increased and stable incomes enabling them to purchase additional food for household needs, invest in setting up small-scale businesses, maintain savings and plan for long-term needs. Participating in SILC also results in beneficiaries’ reduction in debt (particularly prompted by delayed CGP payments). CGP plus SILC intervention support shows potential to gradually reduce poverty levels sustainably, improve livelihoods and promote more resilience over time, eventually alleviating the need for cash transfer support. This is largely due to the creation of multiple income streams that can generate diverse sources of food and income security, particularly vital during periods of stress. It is recommended that the MoSD and implementing partners provide continuous support to encourage CGP beneficiary engagement in SILC groups and emphasise linking CGP beneficiary households with SILC as a way of strengthening their

capacity to generate additional income and access to loans, including through both informal and formal institutions. **MoSD district staff can achieve this by:**

- **messaging:** encouraging and actively promoting CGP beneficiaries (e.g. at paypoints and other events) to participate in SILC groups - with assurance that achieving increased incomes will not necessarily lead to immediate removal from CGP;
- **promoting/communicating benefits of SILC to all community members:** by providing information to beneficiaries and wider communities on multiple advantages derived from SILC, notably catalysing productive income-generating investments and increasing knowledge and skills in financial education - all contributing towards achieving more resilient and improved livelihoods;
- **supporting scale up of investments:** by assisting CGP beneficiaries as well as other members already active in SILCs to scale up their investments into larger-scale enterprises (for example commodity-based projects) - and connecting them with producer organisations and trade associations at local, district and national, levels (e.g. piggery and poultry associations). This would broaden access to market opportunities and services, including technical assistance and formal financial institutions (e.g. to finance production inputs).

Provide continuous support for food and nutrition security and improved livelihoods through keyhole gardens and other forms of homestead gardening, and CCFLS support: this advice, following above, is considered the second priority of importance. Based on evidence from the qualitative research, keyhole gardens benefit beneficiaries in terms of food security, nutrition, health, income generation and savings. They also can strengthen cohesion, building on traditional support groups and values (through *Matsema* groups). It is recommended that CGP complementary interventions are geared to provide continuous support towards achieving sustainability of improved keyhole gardens within communities by working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS) extension workers and community and district stakeholders, including local authorities, traditional leaders and health workers. **MoAFS Extension Workers can achieve this by:**

- **setting up linkages** to enable continuous and consistent effective follow-ups by Lead Farmers, including providing regular refresher training and education to Lead Farmers. This is essential to support the maintenance and sustainability of keyhole gardens within communities following project phase out;
- **supporting diversification** of garden produce, particularly in cases where beneficiaries in the same community sell similar vegetables, to promote local availability of diversified vegetables and increased income from local market exchanges.

In complement with keyhole garden support, the CCFLS capacity development should continue and be systematically implemented. This would promote improved dietary practices among infants and young children and particularly support improved consumption - linking up with keyhole vegetables.

Strengthen support to local service providers for improved access to services: this is the last recommendation of priority among the three. Based on evidence from the

qualitative research, although SPRINGS pilot aims to promote and strengthen access to government services and service providers, access has remained low. This is largely due to limited staff capacity and availability of resources to effectively service Community Councils (CCs), commonly remote and dispersed in Leostho. Increased access to services for beneficiaries, as well as all rural populations at large, is critical to addressing inclusive poverty reduction – including supporting social, human, economic and more specifically labour market integration. It is recommended that the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) and implementing partners can improve access to multi-sectoral services of combined programmes, as envisaged in the citizen outreach model (one-stop-shop) piloted by SPRINGS, by continuing to advocate for and encourage different institutions operating in diverse sectors such as education, health, agriculture and labour, to work in greater cooperation at local levels. **MoLG can achieve this by:**

- **intensifying advocacy and training** to service providers (government and non-government) on the value-added of collaboration: encouraging a combination of various types of multisectoral support (e.g. production, nutrition, marketing etc.) towards improving livelihood outcomes, resilience and reducing poverty at community levels;
- **encouraging concrete linkages** among programmes, for example through incentivising services/programmes to include beneficiaries on combined interventions.

1. Introduction

Coherence refers to “a systematic promotion of complementary and consistent policies and programmes across sectors, thereby creating synergies to combat rural poverty and food insecurity more effectively” (Gavrilovic *et al.*, 2016). There is a growing body of evidence showing that programme coherence and linkages between social protection programmes, notably cash transfers, and other agricultural and rural development interventions can play a fundamental role in addressing constraints faced by households living in poverty in rural areas. Complementarity among interventions can break the intergenerational transmission of poverty, promote productive investments and stimulate sustainable graduation out of poverty while avoiding potential harm (Gavrilovic *et al.*, 2016; Davis *et al.*, 2016). The “cash plus” integrated approach, as defined by FAO includes *social protection +/- productive transfers*” aiming at boosting livelihoods and productive capacities of vulnerable households through providing or facilitating flexible combinations of cash transfers with productive assets, activities, inputs, and/or technical training and extension services (Winder Rossi *et al.*, 2017).

This study builds on and deepens this evidence base – examining the impact of the linkages between the Lesotho Child Grants Programme (CGP), the second largest national social protection programme implemented by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) of the Government of Lesotho (GoL) supporting poor household with children 0-17 years, and the Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government services (SPRINGS) project. This qualitative study is a component of a broader mixed-method analysis, both quantitative and a lab-in-the-field experiment, of the impact of the two specific interventions covered by this qualitative study. The purpose of the overall impact evaluation is to assess and provide evidence of the stand-alone impact of the CGP versus the impact of combined CGP and SPRINGS, both at household and at local economy level, concerning the areas of interest of this study.

This study explores the impacts of the complementarities between the social assistance and livelihood support components, both at the household and at the local economy level. The study examines the causal links and channels – the how and why - that create these impacts of the combined programmes, particularly concerning specific outcomes regarding household expenditures, food security and nutrition - including dietary practices and consumption patterns, agricultural activities, livelihood strategies, savings and financial literacy, and attitudes towards risk and resilience. The report also analyses impacts of operational features, notably in implementing the complementary programmes - capturing intended and unintended impacts - and how the SPRINGS design and implementation has effected results and shaped the experiences of CGP beneficiaries and other stakeholders interacting with the programme. The research also examines how CGP beneficiaries and main stakeholders are experiencing SPRINGS activities, and how measures of programme operations are shaping results and longer term impacts, particularly in comparison to those not receiving the SPRINGS support.

This report is structured as follows: following this introduction - presenting a brief overview of the Lesotho national context to situate the current study, as well as background to the CGP and SPRINGS programme and the three main research hypothesis; Section 2 describes the

research methodology; Section 3 provides a brief summary of the three research sites; Section 4 presents main research findings; and conclusions and recommendations are drawn in Sections 5 and 6.

1.1 The Child Grants Programme (CGP) in Lesotho

Social protection is one of the key priority sectors in the Government of Lesotho's (GoL) National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2012-2017 and its National Policy on Social Development approved in 2014 and National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) (Government of Lesotho, 2015). The GoL spends a significantly larger share of GDP on social protection than other developing countries - at least 4.6 per cent of GDP, which is well above 1 to 2 per cent spent by most developing countries (Government of Lesotho, 2014a).

In Lesotho, social protection plays an important role in protecting poor and vulnerable people from natural hazards saving lives and livelihoods, while also enhancing families' capacity to cope, respond and withstand threats and crises. Lesotho currently implements ten different social protection/assistance programmes covering Children, Education, Health, and Agriculture sectors. The largest programmes are the Child Grants Programme (CGP), the Old Age Pension (OAP), the Public Assistance (PA) and the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Bursary programmes. Other social protection interventions are the School Feeding programme, which covers 390,000 primary school children and absorbs around 1 per cent of the GDP, and *Fato-Fato*, a public work program which involves 115,000 workers on an yearly basis and costs around 0.5 per cent of the GDP (Daidone and Prifti, 2016).

In 2009 rural poor in Lesotho started receiving cash transfers through the CGP - an unconditional social cash transfer programme that began with 1 250 beneficiary households. By the end of 2016, the programme covered 40 community councils (CCs) in all ten districts of the country, and approximately 27 000 households. The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) runs the programme, having started with financial support from the European Union (EU) and technical support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). By Phase II (2012-2014), the programme became in fact, fully supported through the budget of Government (Pellarano *et al.*, 2016).¹

The CGP supports poor and vulnerable households² with children aged 0 – 17 years of age, with the primary objective to reduce malnutrition, improve the living standards of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), improve health status, and increase school enrolment among OVC. The CGP consists of cash transfers provided to these households identified through community-based targeting followed by validation of proxy mean test (PMT) short lists, and registered in the National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA) (Pellarano *et al.*, 2014). The transfer is provided to qualifying households on a quarterly basis and typically ranges between M360 and M750³ - depending on the number of children in the household as follows: 1-2 children (M360); 3-4 children (M600); 5+ children (M750). The modes of payments are through the following systems: Mobile Payment (Mpesa,

¹ During Phase II, the CGP became 100 per cent paid by the national budget, while the EU increased direct budget support, and also financed capacity building, technical assistance, and coordination efforts.

² Lesotho experiences deep and widespread poverty - 57.1 per cent of the population are poor (UNDP Lesotho, 2017) with World Bank (2015) data further indicating that 34 per cent of the population are below the food (extreme) poverty line of M138 per adult per month, which translates to one out of every three people (BOS, 2014).

³ 1 USD is 12.36 Maloti.

Ecocash), Bank Payment and Security Company at selected paypoints.⁴

A 2014 evaluation of the CGP highlighted that the programme provided much needed resources to very vulnerable families (Pellerano *et al.*, 2014). This included large and significant increases in household expenditure on schooling – including spending on children’s uniforms and school shoes - and health needs for children. CGP also played an important role in improving food security and nutrition, as beneficiaries seemed to have access to food throughout the year and reportedly greater diversity, as well as having positive impacts on the local economy and agricultural production (Pellerano *et al.*, 2014; see also OPM, 2014; Pace *et al.*, 2017; Tiwari *et al.*, 2016).

Despite these achievements, evaluations of the CGP highlight that the programme has had very limited effect on accumulation of assets, and no impact on savings and borrowing behaviour. The CGP transfer also had little impact on beneficiaries’ livelihoods strategies, who “continued to do what they were doing before ... because the transfer amount was small, meant for a specific purpose and did not come very frequently” (OPM, 2014). Very few households relied only on the transfers as a source of livelihood, with most household livelihood strategies combining piece work, own farm and livestock activities and informal support from other community members (Pellerano *et al.*, 2014). Households’ involvement in livestock activities also appeared to be largely unaffected by the CGP (Pellerano *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, the CGP did not seem to have a significant impact on standard poverty measures (Pellerano *et al.*, 2014).

1.2 Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government Services (SPRINGS)

In response to some of these challenges highlighted (see OPM, 2014; Pellerano *et al.*, 2014), in 2015, through a grant from UNICEF, under supervision from the MoSD, the international NGO Catholic Relief Services (CRS) piloted a programme targeting households receiving CGP with services designed to meet their needs for income smoothing, non-labour intensive food production, and improved access to health services. The “Improving Child Wellbeing and Household Resiliency” (ICWHR) pilot project aimed at reducing vulnerabilities and increasing resiliency in three CCs where MoSD provided CGP transfers: Likila (Butha-Buthe district), Menkhoaneng (Leribe district), Makhoarane (Maseru district). UNICEF, MoSD and CRS implemented the ICWHR pilot through EU financial support.

UNICEF, MoSD and CRS were encouraged to implement the ICHWR pilot following the success of FAO-Lesotho’s 2013 pilot initiative Linking Food Security to Social Protection Programme (LFSSP). Implemented in partnership with CRS and Rural Self Help Development Association (RSDA), the programme’s objective was to improve the food security of poor and vulnerable households by providing vegetable seeds and training on homestead gardening to households eligible for the CGP. Food insecurity is prevalent in Lesotho, particularly acute when the country is experiencing major food security crises⁵ -

⁴ Mobile payment currently happens in one CC - Menkhoaneng.

⁵ The annual Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee report (June 2016) estimated that 709 000 will be food insecure at the height of the 2016/17 lean season. Of these, 491 000 people would be in urgent need of emergency assistance.

which was notably a result of the El Niño induced drought⁶. This exacerbated crop failures, low incomes and high food prices that translated into 41 per cent of rural families spending over half of their income on food. The population's high vulnerability was further increased by recurring climatic hazards, including droughts, early frost and a low performing economy (WFP, 2017). An impact evaluation of the pilot revealed important lessons: that combining CGP cash transfers with the delivery of vegetable seeds and training by the LFSSP had greater impact on household food production and food security – especially in labour-constrained households – than did each programme in isolation (Dewbre et al., 2015).

The successful experience of the LFSSP set the foundation for implementation of the ICWHR pilot project. This, along with needed responses to the El Niño induced drought - that affected 680 000 individuals in need of livelihood support – were key drivers in upscaling of the intervention. In this phase, by contrast, implementation was entirely through government channels, ensuring sustainability and possible future expansion.

The ICWHR pilot in three CCs consisted of support to⁷: (i) **community based savings and internal lending groups**, also known as Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) - with financial education to promote savings, smooth consumption, manage finances, and investment in small income generating activities; (ii) **homestead gardening** (keyhole gardens, vegetable seeds distribution and nutrition training) to have improved and diversified source of nutrition; and (iii) **wellbeing days** to enhance localized access to health, nutrition, education, and protection services and to utilize improved knowledge through referrals on existing health, nutrition, education, and livelihood resources. FAO-Lesotho also supported the ICWHR initiative with the provision of vegetable seeds packages, training materials on Home Gardening and Nutrition and training for nutrition officers. The specific input seed package from FAO comprised a kit including 300 grams of seeds (50 grams of 6 different vegetable varieties each: carrot, onion, English rape, Florida broad leaf, beetroot, and spinach). The training consisted of demonstrations and hands-on training on the construction and upkeep of keyhole and trench gardens, and included knowledge dissemination on food preservation and production practices to achieve better nutrition (Dewbre *et al.*, 2015). By November 2015, 2 300 families had constructed keyhole gardens to improve access to diverse foods with minimal labor; 2 037 people had participated in SILC designed to help smooth consumption and improve access to small loans; and 865 children and 609 adults had accessed key health and civil services through the project's outreach approach.⁸

A second, revised phase of this intervention, the Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and access to Government Services (SPRINGS) project, started in June 2016. The programme is a 30-month intervention, expecting to reach over 7 200 households and around 18 355 beneficiaries.⁹ SPRINGS overall implementation is led by CRS in close collaboration with UNICEF, government ministries, including MoSD, the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) and MoAFS, and implementing partners - Caritas Lesotho, Good Shepherds Sisters and Sisters of Charity¹⁰.

⁶ The El Niño drought in Lesotho created challenges for pasture use, water and food at the household and community levels. Women and children, in rural areas in particular, suffer from chronic hunger.

⁷ CRS presentation on SPRINGS, October 2017, Maseru, Lesotho.

⁸ As described in official CRS proposal to UNICEF (CRS, 2015).

⁹ This includes the following beneficiaries: 6 500 for keyhole gardens, 5 175 for SILC, 2 800 for financial education, 1 000 caregivers for CCFLS and 2 880 for market clubs - CRS presentation on SPRINGS, October 2017, Maseru, Lesotho.

¹⁰ As described in the CRS presentation (October 2017), Caritas Lesotho implements keyhole gardens, SILC and income generation and marketing activities. Good Shepherds Sisters and Sisters of Charity implement interventions focused on improving nutrition and provide support to the implementation of Citizen Service Outreach Days.

SPRINGS aims to complement the CGP¹¹ with a community development package deemed essential for households to emerge from poverty and ensure their children's overall wellbeing (CRS, 2015). SPRINGS does this by scaling up SILC and keyhole gardens from the ICHWR pilot experience, and expanding to an additional CC, Tenosolo in Thaba-Tseka district where MoLG is implementing the Citizen Service Outreach Day approach.¹² SPRINGS includes additional complimentary interventions: (i) income generation, market engagement skills and formation of market clubs; (ii) improving nutritional practices complemented with Community-led Complementary Feeding and Learning Sessions (CCFLS); and (iii) improving access to services collaborating with the MoLG to expand the Citizen Service Outreach Days (see Annex One).¹³

SPRINGS prioritizes vulnerable communities as determined by a high percentage of social assistance beneficiaries and/or high rates of poverty according to the NISSA (CRS, 2015). Furthermore, while ICHWR only targeted CGP beneficiaries, SPRINGS allows participation from other interested community members to ensure that those households that did not meet the eligibility criteria for the CGP are not excluded. At the time of the research, it was estimated that 60 per cent of SPRINGS beneficiaries are enrolled in the CGP¹⁴.

At the time of the research, 316 SILC groups with 5 899 members (4 895 women and 1 004 men) had been formed; 218 SPRINGS beneficiaries (153 women and 65 men) were engaged in IGAs and 724 people joined market clubs; 6 332 keyhole gardens had been constructed and 6 001 families have constructed keyhole gardens¹⁵; 842 enrollments on CCFLS and 85 MoLG staff had been trained on conducting multi-sectoral meetings and on organizing and executing service days.¹⁶ However, SPRINGS has experienced a number of constraints and barriers including: drought brought on by El Nino 2015/16; a perception among CGP beneficiaries that they may not receive their transfers if they join SPRINGS; and often limited cooperation from government officials in some areas due to staff capacity and availability of resources.¹⁷

1.3 Research Hypothesis

This study focused on three thematic areas. The areas covered include: (i) the impact of the combined CGP and SPRINGS programmes on household income streams - and effects and pathways to strengthened economic security and resilience; (ii) the impact of the combined CGP and SPRINGS programmes on household nutrition – specifically examining effects on dietary knowledge and practices, particularly effecting infants and young children; and (iii)

¹¹ The cash transfer component in the CGP+SPRINGS includes the quarterly amount that the programme beneficiaries are entitled to plus the emergency top-up that was decided in order to address the consequences of the draught-induced price increases. See Prifti et al. (2016) on this.

¹² In addition to the three initially targeted CCs in Menkhoaneng, Makhoarane and Likila.

¹³ As described in official CRS proposal to UNICEF (CRS, 2015) "One Stop Shops aims to expand the range of services available to citizens at local level in order to address the multidimensional character of poverty and vulnerability. The One Stop Shop has two components: (i) a permanent structure based at community council level where population can access information on different services, get specific services or referred to service providers and (ii) an outreach component where services providers at all levels (public, private and CSO) and for multiple sectors (health, civil, etc.) are called in one place to meet and provide services to the population. In principle, the citizen outreach model improves vulnerable households' access to key services by taking the services where vulnerable group of the population can access them. MoLG plans to use the One Stop Shop as its approach to strengthen service delivery under the National Decentralization Policy".

¹⁴ CRS presentation on SPRINGS, October 2017, Maseru, Lesotho.

¹⁵ 63 per cent of the keyhole gardens had good vegetative growth, 68 per cent had sufficient soil moisture, 79 per cent of the families were consuming vegetables from their own keyhole gardens and 70 per cent of the keyhole gardens monitored was free of pests and plant diseases.

¹⁶ CRS presentation on SPRINGS, October 2017, Maseru, Lesotho

¹⁷ CRS presentation on SPRINGS, October 2017, Maseru, Lesotho

impacts of implementation performance of the combined CGP and SPRINGS programmes on household vulnerability, particularly examining effects on children, with attention to comparing the combined programmes with implementation of the CGP alone.

These three themes were selected for several reasons: they encompass the main goals of SPRINGS (i.e. increased incomes, improved nutrition and improved access to services); they are central to providing evidence and informing on promising approaches towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably #1 (ending poverty) and #2 (hunger and food security); and they align with FAO's mandate in providing evidence concerning if and how social protection combined with rural development interventions can generate productive/livelihood/asset building impacts, food and nutrition security and enhanced resilience among the most poor. The three hypotheses guiding this specific research include:

- Combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions increase and stabilize household income, resulting in strengthened economic security, resilience and market engagement - all of which also benefits the community-wide economy;
- Households benefitting from combined CGP and SPRINGS programmes have improved their dietary practices, nutritional knowledge base and consumption patterns towards healthier diets, resulting in enhanced infant and young childcare practices in particular and improved household wellbeing; and
- Combining cash transfers (CGP) and livelihood programmes (SPRINGS) through effective coordination and implementation reduces household vulnerability, and improves household social and economic well-being - with particular benefits for children - more than implementation of one programme alone or without either.

Annex Two presents the three hypotheses in detail, including presentation of the research guiding questions used for each hypothesis to gather in-depth information and evidence to substantiate conclusions (with examples, experiences, perceptions and views) from a wide range of informants met during the fieldwork.

2. Methodology

This section outlines key concepts of the qualitative approach, followed by presentation of the overall research roadmap, methods and tools applied during the research. The sampling strategy is then presented outlining the selection process for research sites.

2.1 Qualitative Approach

The qualitative research method is an approach eliciting greater depth and breadth of understanding as to *how and why specific decisions and results transpire*. At the same time, qualitative research also applies a wide-angle lens, analyzing the contextual background and enabling environment in which activities/programmes operate, with consideration of mediating factors including sociocultural norms and belief, existing institutions, socioeconomic factors etc., which influence decisions, results and outcomes (Pozarny, 2017).

Qualitative analysis typically includes a triangulation of methods - notably focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), probing and “snowballing”, in-depth household case studies and visual tools - to obtain views, experiences, perceptions and opinions of main areas of inquiry. Through open-ended, iterative and inductive approaches, *qualitative analysis complements quantitative research* by broadening the understanding of impacts on different actors, both intended, unintended and unexpected, and capturing the types and complexity of processes leading to decisions and impacts (Pozarny, 2017; see also Garbarino and Holland, 2009; Pozarny and Barrington, 2016 on advantages of qualitative methods).

2.2 Study Approach: the Research Roadmap

The study is based on a comparative analytical approach – focusing on combined interventions of the CGP and SPRINGS compared to the CGP alone. Additionally, for the CGP and SPRINGS combined sites the study aimed to explore how impacts matter over time by examining an “earlier” cohort sample in Leribe district – having started in the pilot phase in 2015, and a more recent cohort sample in Thaba-Tseka district – starting in late 2016/early 2017. To capture breadth of differences, each sample was examined in two communities within the CCs.

The fieldwork “roadmap” (see Annex Two) outlines the phases and steps of the overall field research process, conducted between October and November 2017 in Lesotho. It entailed five days of fieldwork in each site. In each site, the research team split into two subteams working together in pairs (facilitator and notetaker), visiting each main community (CGP and SPRINGS combined or CGP alone) for four days. On the fifth day of fieldwork, both subteams converged and worked together in the relevant nearby comparison community – where there was no CGP or SPRINGS operating. This process of data collection was replicated in the second and third sites during the second and third week of the fieldwork.

At the end of each day, the team considered the highlights and key findings of each subteam’s fieldwork in **daily debriefing sessions** – a *key stage of analysis in the research*,



Photo 2 Community feedback session in Mokhoallong village, Menkhoaneng CC
©FAO Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed

encouraging the entire team to identify main findings of the day's fieldwork, reflect collectively and discuss findings, analyse results and develop preliminary conclusions regarding the study hypotheses. The aim of this method of daily debriefings was to “build the story in the field” as the fieldwork transpires – adding to, contesting and strengthening findings and results towards determining research hypotheses conclusions. The sessions also revealed knowledge

gaps needing follow up and further inquiry the next day.

Following the four days of fieldwork in each beneficiary community, each subteam carried out a **community feedback session** to report back to FGD participants and key informants on its preliminary findings. This session was critical to enabling ownership and sharing of the findings with the community. It also provided the subteam with an opportunity to validate its findings and preliminary conclusions, and to offer community members an opportunity to add any last observations. The sessions were conducted in all research sites among two of the three CCs and involved from 15 to 30 participants, depending on the size of the community.¹⁸

The daily debriefing sessions fed directly into a **synthesis session** conducted on day six of fieldwork in each site, which all research team members attended. The synthesis day in the first two sites comprised a half-day of consolidation of data, to generate the narratives substantiated by field data to develop conclusions of each of the three research themes. Each week built on the next to build the story in the field. The aim of the final synthesis session was to systematically analyse, consolidate and synthesise all findings from the fieldwork and to refine the main conclusions of each hypothesis and brainstorm preliminary recommendations.

2.3 Study Approach: Research Methods

The main qualitative methods used in this study were focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIs), and to a less extent, in-depth household case studies. Conducted with a small number of participants, FGDs enabled a range of opinions to be sought at once, fostering exchanges among participants stimulating, debate and analysis, which leads to in-depth information and insights (Pozarny, 2017). Key informant interviews provided a separate angle to understanding the thematic areas of the research, and were

¹⁸ Due to weather constraints, community feedback did not take place in Tenosolo CC.

based on detailed knowledge from informant's well-versed in particular relevant subject areas. This provided deep and complementary perspectives to FGDs (Pozarny, 2017).

Prior to the fieldwork, according to fieldwork protocol, the researchers contacted the village head/chief for introductions in each community to explain the purpose of the study and request permission to undertake the study in the community. Each focus group brought together three to ten participants to discuss the three research areas. With exception of the FGDs with opinion leaders, during FGDs the team employed one of two participatory tools used in the study. Use of tools added value to qualitative research by eliciting information through triangulated means – namely visuals. Further, they were particularly invaluable in generating depth and breadth of information and local viewpoints of the areas of inquiry in an inclusive, open-ended less structured setting - allowing participants to cross-check, contest, debate, and validate one another's perspectives in an informal setting, thus enabling participants to contribute to study analysis. The primary aim of the tools was not to complete the exercise however, but to generate discussion, debate, consensus, providing a wide breadth of qualitative data (Pozarny, 2017).

Participatory research tools used in this study included the driving factor matrix and the programme impact analysis matrix. The purpose of the driving factor matrix tool was to understand (i) participants' views of the importance of the different programmes (stand-alone) compared to programme linkages, in driving effects on wellbeing indicators; and (ii) benefits and trade-offs for households and wider communities - comparing stand-alone programmes, complementary programmes or no programme. The tool proved immensely powerful in reflecting indications/trends of the most important motivations/driving forces leading households to dietary practices and consumption patterns, in order to achieve which priority overall objectives.

The purpose of the programme impact analysis matrix was (i) to understand the perceptions and effects of each programme as well as the joint programme on well-being on households and in the community; (ii) to elicit specific differences in impacts among the categories - i.e. a stand-alone programme or complementary programmes, and reasons for how and why these differences have occurred; (iii) to understand perceptions of the impacts on different groups of the population – e.g. the most vulnerable households, female-headed, labour constrained; (iv) to prompt broader discussion on the three research hypotheses. Annex Three indicates the total number of FGDs, KIs and in-depth household case studies conducted for the research (also see Research Guide, available on request).

Individual interviews were also conducted with relevant key informants, including community leaders, extension agents, village heads, teachers, and SPRINGS programme staff that have particular information and/or perceptions about the programme and its impacts on various stakeholders. The purpose was to elicit insights, information/examples, views and opinions of CGP and SPRINGS impacts from a wide diversity of sources. Finally, in-depth household case studies with beneficiaries were conducted at their households also following the question guide structure. These provided rich, more deep and robust narratives about the conditions and perceived changes and experiences brought about either by CGP alone or CGP and SPRINGS combined – and why and how these results transpired. The individuals were identified by the team - following the FGDs - as being able to provide further

insight on their experiences as beneficiaries with CGP alone or CGP and SPRINGS combined.

The research was premised upon principles of good conduct during fieldwork to ensure the research was conducted in an ethical manner. This included the team being clear about their role, seeking fully informed consent from research participants, answering questions openly and ensuring confidentiality and the right to privacy.¹⁹

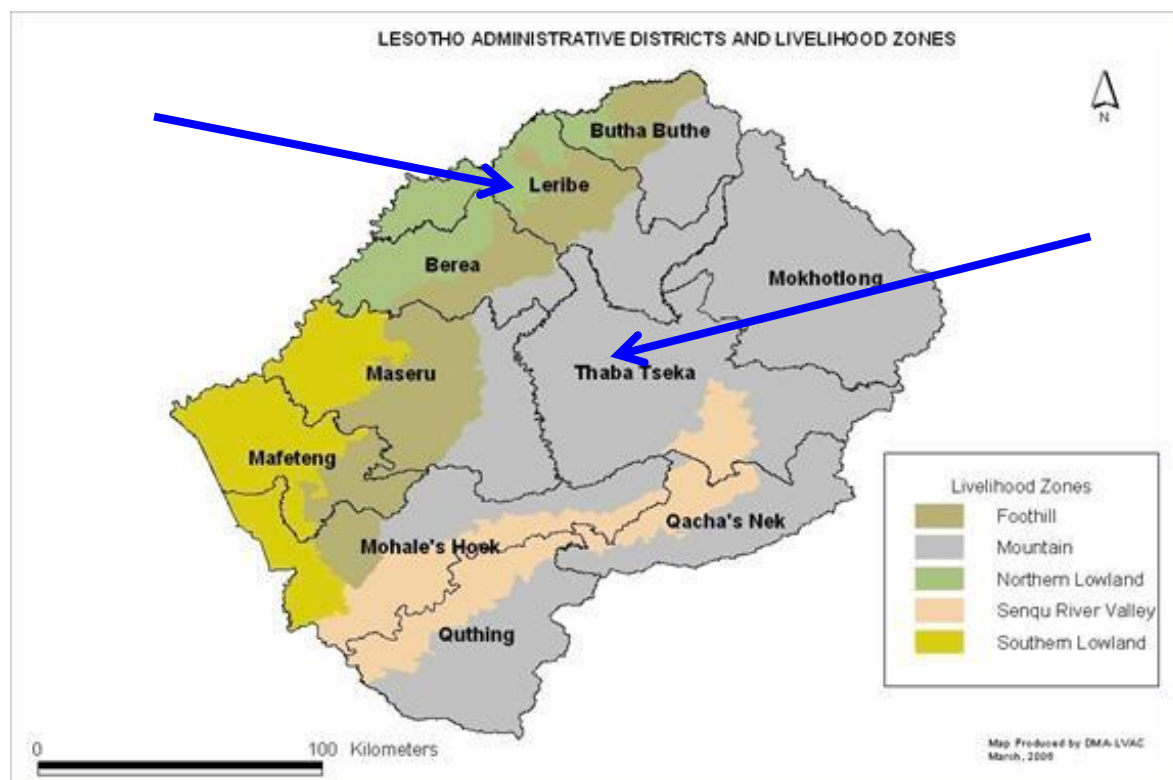
2.4 Selection of Sampled Districts and Communal Councils for the Study

The sampling strategy involved a three-staged hierarchical approach of selecting districts, followed by sampling CCs and then selecting villages within it.²⁰ Additionally, the sampling strategy involved stratifying and sampling focus group participants within selected villages. The following methodology was used to select sites for fieldwork.

2.4.1 Site Selection

The fieldwork was conducted in two districts: Leribe and Thaba Tseka, and three different CCs. Leribe is second-largest district in the country, situated in the north, while Thaba-Tseka district is located in the highlands.

Figure 2.1 Lesotho Administrative Districts and Livelihood Zones and Location of Research Districts Source: Department of Lands, Surveys and Physical Planning – Government of Lesotho



¹⁹ A more detailed and thorough description is presented in the Research Field Guide, available on request.

²⁰ The sampling of the study sites followed a consistent methodology developed by FAO based on the Protection to Production (PtoP) approach, outlined in a number of field guides, which have been tested in over 10 country case studies in Africa, many with partnership with Oxford policy Management (OPM) (see Pozarny and Barrington, 2016) and www.fao.org/economic/ptop.

In Leribe district, the programme targeted two CCs, while in Thaba Tseka district one CC was selected. Within each CC, villages were grouped into clusters that were subsequently divided into main and comparison sites, to enable a rigorous impact evaluation of the programme.

The first level of selection for this study was the districts. The study aimed to undertake research focusing on the CGP and SPRINGS combined compared to the CGP alone. Leribe district was selected as it had a CGP alone site that was in Phase 1 of the CGP, as well as a CGP and SPRINGS combined sited from the pilot phase of the SPRINGS intervention (i.e. the ICWHR pilot). Thaba Tseka was targeted as a district that had entered SPRINGS last – enabling an exploration of the impacts of engaging in SPRINGS over time for CGP beneficiaries.

The second level of sampling for this research was at the CC level. A number of criteria was established for the selection of the CC study locations, which included *inter alia*: (i) timing entering programme: early cohort status in the programme prioritized – during initial SPRING pilot phase - and one CC included that entered last; (ii) geographical diversity (different regions); (iii) sufficient numbers of beneficiaries to conduct FGDs; and (iv) logistical feasibility.

In Leribe district, two CCs were selected: (i) Maisa Phoka – a CGP alone site that had been in the pilot phase of the programme (selected to join CGP in October 2010); (ii) Menkhoaneng - a CGP and SPRINGS combined site that was in Phase 1 of the SPRINGS pilot (selected to be part of SPRINGS in 2015). Maisa Phoka was also selected, as a CGP only site that is not near Menkhoaneng or anywhere near where SPRINGS is operating, but close enough to Leribe town permitting logistical feasibility. In Thaba Tseka district, one CC was selected – Tenosolo, a CGP and SPRINGS combined site that was in Phase 2 of SPRINGS (selected to be part of SPRINGS in late 2016/early 2017).

Within each of the three selected CCs, the team selected those villages with a sufficient number of available beneficiaries to conduct research – a maximum of 16 male and female beneficiaries per village. A village with a low number of beneficiaries (particularly male beneficiaries) dictated the need to conduct research in different villages within the CC. Drawing on support and partnership with CRS staff in the CGP and SPRINGS combined site and village heads and community councillors from the VAC in the CGP alone site, this led to the selection of two to three villages with a sufficient number of beneficiaries for each CC. The villages within these “clusters” then formed one village site.

The villages (CGP and SPRINGS combined, or CGP alone) were also selected based on the following criteria: (i) median number of households enrolled in the interventions (based on consultation with local authorities and CRS staff in the zone and Sechaba consultant staff); (ii) the degree of market integration using distance from a main market/ or main road as the proxy measure, to identify one relatively remote and one relatively integrated cluster/community. During fieldwork preparation phase, the team acquired a list of numbers, names and locations of households in the villages in each CC in order to conduct the community and household selection in advance.

2.4.2 Informant Selection

Within each village “cluster”, the agreed sampling methodology specified six FGDs – four of which were male and female beneficiaries enrolled in CGP alone or CGP and SPRING combined (see Annex Three). The beneficiaries participating in the research within each village or village “cluster” were randomly selected from the beneficiary list provided by the MoSD in close collaboration with in-country partners, Sechaba consultants, and CRS staff. Additional respondents for FGDs were identified by “snowball sampling” through referral from FGDs and KIs. In addition, a number of purposive in-depth interviews were conducted with key resource persons and informants, including individuals from beneficiary households, teachers, Chiefs and field agents.

2.4.3 Comparison Community

In all three CCs, a neighbouring comparison village outside of the programmes (i.e. CGP alone or CGP and SPRINGS combined) was selected to examine households involved in neither programme. The objective was to gain a “snapshot” assessment of the characteristics of communities not enrolled in either programmes, to understand people’s experiences and perspectives regarding the areas of enquiry of this research. It also enabled an exploration of the similarities and differences, if any, between households, as well as the causes and processes driving variance. The comparison villages were selected based on proximity/similarities to the CGP alone or CGP and SPRINGS combined villages, and informants identified with similar socio-economic profiles to beneficiaries in the main research sites (i.e. from poor and vulnerable households with children aged 0 – 17 years).

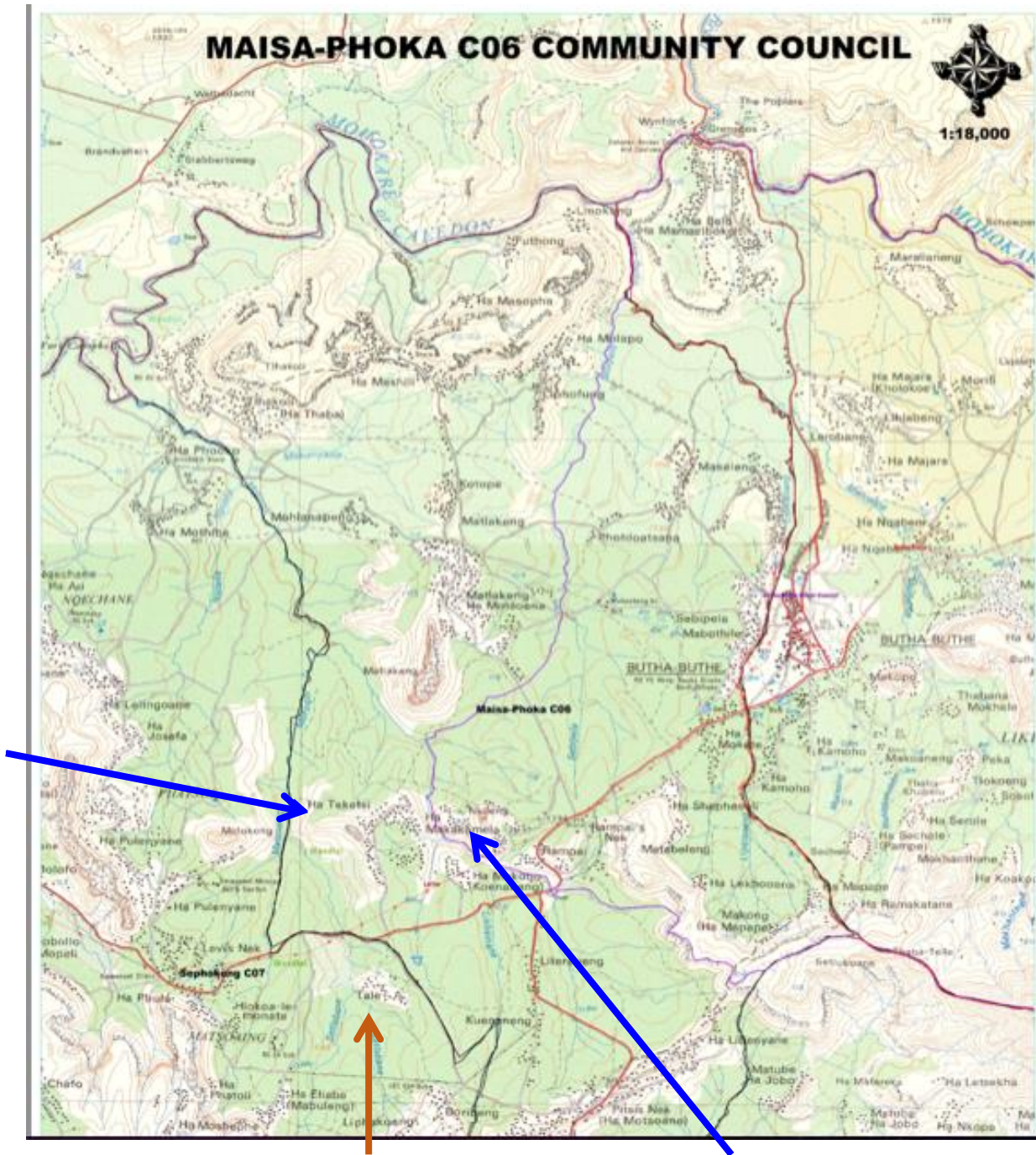
The table below presents the selected districts, CCs, villages and comparison villages, with Figures 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 indicating the locations of the villages in each CC.

Table 2.1 Fieldwork sampling strategy

Districts	Type of Site	Community Councils	Villages	Comparison Villages
Leribe	CGP only	Maisa Phoka	Ha Teketsi, Ha Mokotjo and Literapeng Ha Makakamela	Tale
Leribe	CGP + SPRING (old)	Menkhoaneng (selected to join SPRINGS in 2015)	Top and Mokoallong Mahlabatheng	Ha Topisi
Thaba Tseka	CGP + SPRING (new)	Tenosolo* (selected to join SPRINGS in late 2016/early 2017)	Mocheng Letlapeng	Macheseng

*Up to seven villages were selected in Tenosolo CC

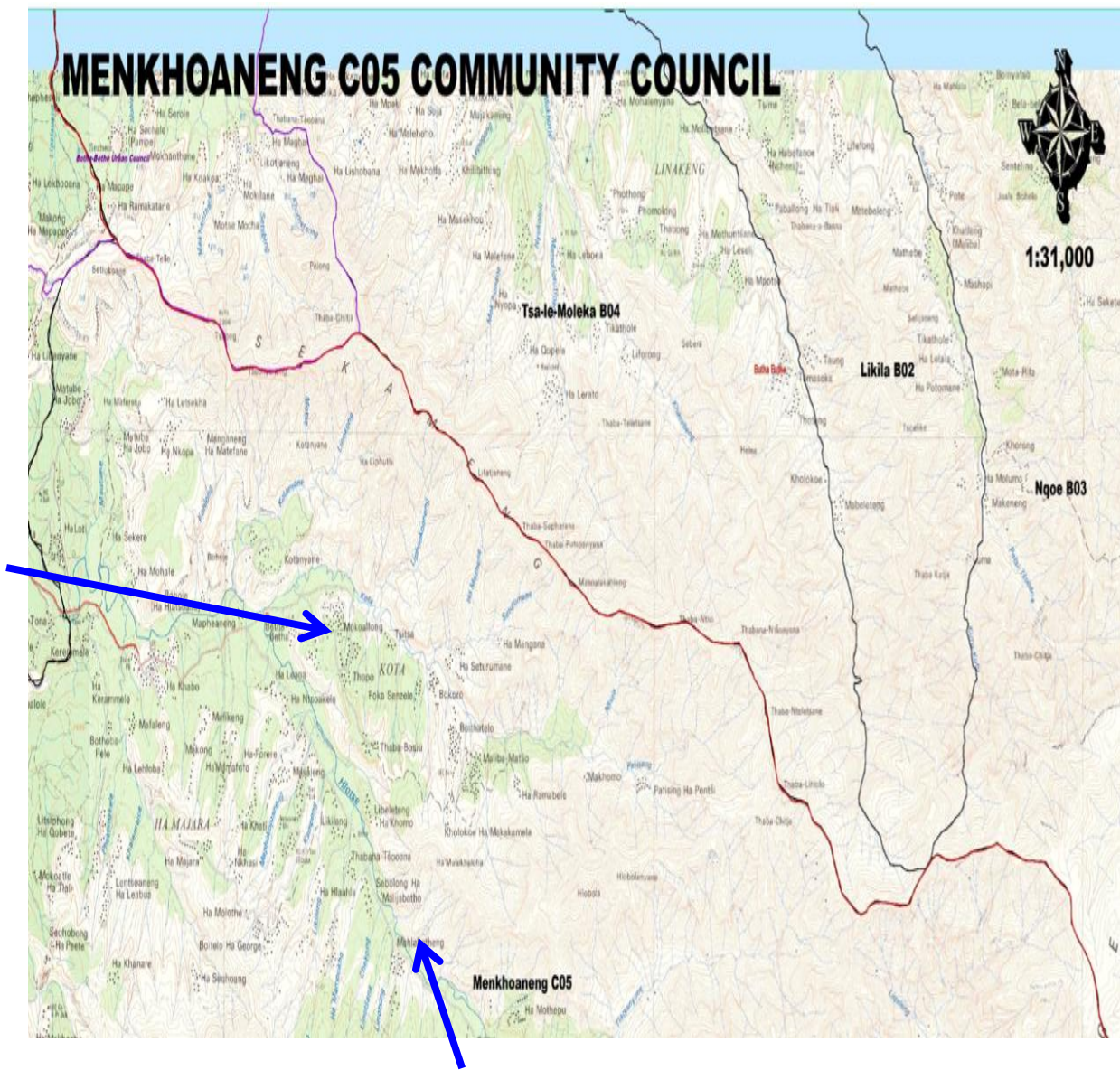
Figure 2.2 Map of Maisa Phoka CC and Location of Research Sites



Source: Department of Lands, Surveys and Physical Planning – Government of Lesotho

Blue arrows: Ha Teketsi (left arrow) and Ha Makalakame (right arrow) Villages. Orange Arrow: Tale (Comparison Village)

Figure 2.3 Map of Menkhoaneng CC and Location of Research Sites



Source: Department of Lands, Surveys and Physical Planning – Government of Lesotho

Blue arrows: Top and Mokoallong (top arrow) and Mahlatheng (bottom arrow) villages. Ha Topisi (Comparison) out of map.

Figure 2.4 Map of Tenosolo CC and Location of Research Sites



Source: Department of Lands, Surveys and Physical Planning – Government of Lesotho

Blue arrows: Mocheng (left) and Letlapeng (right) Villages. Orange Arrow: Mascheng (Comparison Village)

2.5 Research Team Training and Pilot

Prior to fieldwork a four-day training workshop for the national Sechaba Consultants team was held at the offices of FAO in Maseru from 25 – 28 October, 2017. The training was prepared and led by the International Qualitative lead researcher, with the FAO Senior Rural Sociologist. The workshop delivered training on: (i) the qualitative impact evaluation of the CGP and SPRINGS to be researched (objectives, concepts, theory of change, partners in the study, design features, etc.); (ii) the principles and concepts of participatory qualitative research; and (iii) the research methodology, roadmap, question guide and tools. The research roadmap was also introduced. Guest speakers from the MoSD, NISSA and CRS joined the training to present a comprehensive overview of CGP and SPRINGS, including the programme design and implementation and synergies between the two programmes.

The training also included a pilot exercise, allowing the team to practice the methodology, tools and FGD facilitation on the fourth day of training. This was conducted in Qiloane CC of Maseru district – a nearby CGP alone district. The pilot also gave the team first-hand experience of some of the logistical challenges expected in the field. A debriefing simulation was carried out following the pilot field exercise. The full training schedule is provided in Annex Four.



Photo 3 Pilot with male CGP beneficiaries in Qiloane CC | ©FAO Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed

2.6 Challenges of Research

In alignment with norms of qualitative research, evidence and findings reported cannot be systematically generalised for the wider population. Findings present a rich and contextualised understanding of the views and experiences of people interviewed. To strengthen the probability of replicability of findings, sampling was designed through a highly systematic and rigorous approach to avoid as much as possible bias and capture a triangulation of sources of data (see above). Moreover, findings presented here will complement that of the broader mixed methods impact evaluation.

There were a number of challenges in conducting this study, some logistical others inherent to qualitative research, as mentioned above. For one, selection of villages was not always straightforward, as the selected village as per sampling protocol often did not have enough beneficiaries, particularly male beneficiaries to provide a sufficient sample size for the research. The low number of male beneficiaries could be linked to the high rates of male out migration in Lesotho to Maseru or South Africa. As a result, the team – in partnership with CRS staff in SPRINGS sites - had to extend the zone of villages to be able to have enough beneficiaries (see 2.4.1). While in Maisa Phoka and Menkhoaneng CCs in Leribe district, this often meant extending to two or three villages; in Tenosolo CC in Thaba Tseka district due to the dispersed nature of villages in the area – not uncommon in Lesotho - the team had to extend to as much as seven villages to be able to access enough male and female beneficiaries for the FGDs, which led to the entire zone being selected, hence termed “clusters”.

Fieldwork in Tenosolo CC was compounded by weather constraints at the time of the research – first heavy rainfall and then heavy snowfall – that further impacted access to villages in the CC. To address the logistical challenges, research in Tenosolo CC was eventually held in one central site - Mocheng village, that beneficiaries were able to access. Additionally, those in more remote villages were picked up and dropped off by the research team.

Another challenge commonly confronted in qualitative fieldwork was swift uptake of the research methods, tools, open-ended questionnaire, theory of change of the study, and debriefing process. Despite comprehensive training and pilot application, these issues typically require some time and practice by the research team for extracting the most crucial and relevant information from informants and for jointly analyzing data and conclusions. After initial days in the field, with guidance, continued clarifications, and exchange during debriefs, team members improved greatly in their abilities to collect information during interviews and synthesis and contribute to analysis, study conclusions and recommendations.

3. District and Community Profiles

This section provides a brief overview of profiles of the sampled sites in Leribe and Thaba Tseka district, as well as the selected CCs – Maisa Phoka and Menkhoaneng CCs in Leribe district and Tenosolo CC in Thaba Tseka district. The descriptions summarize characteristics and features specifically relevant to this study context, and are not comprehensive profiles. Key agro-ecological, livelihoods and socio-cultural characteristics are presented. For ease of reference, district profiles are summarised in Table 3.1 and community profiles in Table 3.2, where the research was conducted.

Table 3.1 District profile summary

District	Leribe	Thaba Tseka
Population*	331 117	130 532
Poverty status (%)**	8.9	25.4
Language	Sesotho and English	Sesotho and English
Dominant religion	Christianity	Christianity
Number of economic active population employed**	126 049	49 524
CGP beneficiaries***	2 864	1 690
SPRINGS beneficiaries	1 612 (Menkhoaneng CC)	498 (Tenosolo CC)
Basic agro- physical context	Contains the three ecological zones of lowlands, foothills and mountains. Only 17 percent of total land area is deemed arable, but is declining further because of soil erosion and land degradation. Some regions of Leribe have deep permeable soils with good potential for agriculture, but the district produces only 30 percent of food requirement.	Located in the highland district, mostly mountainous except for the part of Senqu River Valley. Around 6.2 per cent of total land is deemed arable. Quality of soil higher in lowlands and lowest in the mountains with shallow soil depth.
Main livelihood activity	Mining, construction and domestic work in South Africa; remittances from work in South Africa; factory work (mainly female); subsistence agriculture; livestock rearing; sale of wool and mohair; petty trading and casual work; and public works programmes (<i>fato fato</i>).	
Basic governance- leadership structure	Operates both under local government administration, namely a District Council and several Community Councils, and a hierarchy of traditional chieftainships. Contains 11 community councils and two urban councils.	Same as Leribe: except the district contains 12 community councils and one urban council.
Socio-cultural characteristics *****	Patriarchal, with women increasingly taking roles in public decision-making. Inheritance is patrilineal and patrilocal. High HIV prevalence, particularly among women.	
*Lesotho Demographic Survey 2011 ** Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) (2011) *** MoSD Presentation at Training **** Labour Market of Lesotho (2009) ***** OPM/FAO (2014)		

Table 3.2 Community profile summary

Districts/ CCs	Leribe District / Menkhoaneng CC		Leribe District / Maisa Phoka CC		Thaba Tseka District/ Tenosolo CC	
	Top and Mokoallong	Mahlabathe ng	Ha Teketsi	Ha Makakamel a	Mocheng	Letlapeng
Villages	Top and Mokoallong	Mahlabathe ng	Ha Teketsi	Ha Makakamel a	Mocheng	Letlapeng
Market access	5km (to main paved road) 22km (to Butha Buthe – nearest town)	8km (to main paved road) 20km (to Butha Buthe – nearest town)	2.5 km (to main paved road) 8km (to Butha Buthe – nearest town)	Less than 1km (to main paved road) 5km (to Butha Buthe – nearest town)	6km (from main road to Mantsonya ne town) 5km (from the village to town.)	4 km (from main road to Mantsonya ne town)
Main Livelihood s	Subsistenc e farming*; piecework** ; home- brew; selling livestock; migrating to South Africa or lowland towns*** for work.	Same as Top and Mokoallong	Same as Mekhoanen g CC	Same as Mekhoanen g CC; market clubs (piggery); old age pension; CGP.	Same as Mekhoanen g CC	Same as Mekhoanen g CC
CGP beneficiari es	28 households (20 female, 8 male)	25 households (20 female, 5 male)	25 households (23 female, 2 male)	46 households (38 females and 8 males)	1 female	14 (3 female, 11 male)
SPRINGs beneficiari es	Not provided	96 households (83 female, 13 male)	N/A	N/A	20 (16 female, 4 male)	17 (12 female, 5 male)
<p>* includes maize, sorghum, beans, peas **includes selling thatch grass and grass brooms, gardening, smearing houses, weeding, construction work *** Maseru, Maputsoe, Butha Buthe</p>						

4 Research Findings

This section presents the main findings from the fieldwork in the three research sites. The findings are presented according to the three main areas of research enquiry. Each sub-section is organised as follows: (i) a focus on the impacts of CGP alone; (ii) a focus on the impacts of CGP and SPRINGS combined; (iii) a summary of overall impacts indicating similarities and differences.

4.1 Impacts on Household Income Streams, Strengthened Economic Security, Resilience and Market Engagement

This research theme examines causal effects of the combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions on the household economy – specifically the hypothesis is: ***combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions increases and stabilizes household income, resulting in strengthened economic security, resilience and market engagement - all of which also benefits the community-wide economy.***

4.1.1 Changes in Household Income, Household Expenditures and Investments

In Maisa Phoka CC - a CGP alone site – beneficiary households explained experiencing a very slight increase in income levels as the transfer amount was relatively small, received every three months, and sometimes often late. This change only occurred after beneficiaries received their transfers, and usually lasted for one or two weeks at the most. CGP transfers were used on children’s educational needs, particularly school uniforms and shoes, school trips and in some cases fees for pre-school education, security fees at primary school and stationary for exams. CGP transfers were also used to purchase basic household needs, such as food and toiletries; and for transportation to access health centres and clinics. Majority of beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC were unable to purchase everything at once - “*you’ll have to buy shoes in January and then something else the next quarter*” (female beneficiary, Ha Teketsi village). To cover their most basic household needs, CGP money was often supplemented by other sources of income, which typically came from erratic piecework (e.g. weeding and washing for others) and remittances – all of which varied in amount.²¹

Beneficiaries also used their CGP transfers sometimes to pay off debts (including to loan sharks, as well as relatives, neighbours and friends). Very occasionally it was used to pay contributions ranging from between M5 to M20 a month to burial services or grocery associations – although in majority of the cases, beneficiaries used money from piecework or pensions (for those with old age pension). Male and female CGP beneficiaries reported not being engaged in any saving associations or networks beyond the above-named ones or

²¹ For example, women in Ha Teketsi village earned M40 to M50 for smearing houses, while remittances from children or spouses working in South Africa could range anywhere from M200 to M700.

party/food stokvels²² - networks they were already members of (see access to finance). Funeral societies, for example, were important because “*without societies, it is very difficult to bury people*” (male beneficiary, Ha Makakamela village). In only very few cases did CGP beneficiaries report engaging in new investment activities – on a small scale, such as a street vendor in Ha Teketsi village who sold detergent and used some of his CGP transfer to buy more stock (see market engagement). CGP beneficiaries found it difficult to invest in other types of savings groups or start small-scale businesses as the transfers were too small and meant mainly for children’s needs.

Despite grievances that CGP money was very little, and oftentimes delayed, when compared with the comparison villages the transfer itself did make an impact, albeit small, on beneficiaries household income (see Box 4.1). In Tale – the comparison village in Maisa Phoka CC, opinion leaders explained that households in the community often struggled. While some households had family members either engaged in *fato fato* (i.e. public works) or working in South Africa, majority of the community members survived solely on irregular and erratic work such as weeding, smearing, washing clothes and blankets.

Box 4.1 CGP on its own can bring about change, albeit small, for beneficiary households.

Mme Khosi, a widow, is a 45-year-old CGP beneficiary who enrolled in the programme in 2013. There are eight in her household and she gets M600 a quarter for her three daughters on the programme. Mme also does piece work, such as smearing houses at M40 per house when she is able to get the work, and sometimes gets M300 when she takes care of the house of a woman who works as a domestic worker in South Africa.

Although she still struggled, Mme felt there has been **a slight change in her life since being enrolled on CGP** “*especially after receiving the money and the first few days*”. First, they ate differently – “*before CGP I would only buy maize meal, I couldn’t afford to buy cabbage and now can I buy that and tomatoes and potatoes*”. Second, her children are happier, as “*now they know they will eat other food and a diversity of food that they used to see other children eat*”. As Mme explained, “*they are able to go to school having washed themselves as I can buy washing soap and bathing soap and Vaseline*”, and she can even ‘*afford to buy them Christmas clothes*’. For her, she “*can see to it that her children’s school need are met and that they are fed*”, which Mme reported meant “*not having as much stress*” as now “*she knows her children will be like other children and not feel left out*”. In the wider community Mme also noticed a change, “*people are not as much dependent on others, there’s less begging around the community and so there’s more peace in community*”.

While Mme has experienced changes from CGP, she noted that she currently had no savings, but was able to borrow money from the burial society when she needed things for the household. While she had not received any skills training – “*no one has given me information on how to manage finance*”, she sometimes used her M100 from CGP money to buy seeds for the beer she brewed and sold for M150. With the extra money, she was able to buy more food – “*especially vegetables, because they only last for a week or two*”.

Since being on both CGP and SPRINGS programmes, beneficiary households in Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CCs experienced more increase in their income levels compared to CGP alone beneficiaries - “*we now have money*” (male beneficiary, Top village, Menkhoaneng CC), reported relying less on neighbours and relatives - “*I am no longer*

²² Stokvels are invitation only clubs of twelve or more people serving as rotating credit unions or saving schemes where members contribute fixed sums of money to a central fund on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.

dependent on siblings and others from the village” (female beneficiary, Top village), borrowing less from loan sharks - “I no longer go to loan sharks with higher percentage and then become unable to pay back the money because the percentage is high (at 30 per cent)” (female beneficiary, Top village), and more security - “I used to struggle a lot with four children. I was only able to buy them clothes once a year, but now after CGP and SPRINGS I am able to buy them clothes a few times a year and then provide them adequate food” (male beneficiary, Mahlabatheng village).

Increased incomes, beneficiaries reported, were mostly due to members of SILC groups being able to access loans and savings from their groups (see access to finance). FGDs with beneficiaries and KIIs with SILC Field Agents and Field Monitors revealed that members could borrow up to three times their accumulated savings from their SILC groups. Amounts borrowed ranged from M100 to M1000 in Menkhoaneng CC and M50 to M200 in Tenosolo CC. Beneficiaries on both programmes also discussed being able to save more - in Tenosolo CC, CGP beneficiaries invested anywhere between M10 and M50 a month, while in Menkhoaneng CC investments were between M50 and M300 a month. The lower amounts borrowed and saved in Tenosolo CC was because SILC groups were newer and beneficiaries contributed less. Beneficiaries also mentioned being less affected by the delays and irregularities in their CGP quarterly payments as a result of SPRINGS. On this, an opinion leader in Mahlabatheng village noted that, *“with savings from SILC they (CGP beneficiaries) can now plan in advance for the upcoming year”*.

Money borrowed from SILC groups could be used to also meet household needs or purchase food while waiting for CGP transfers. For example, a female beneficiary in Mahlabatheng village in Menkhoaneng CC borrowed M200 from her SILC group when there were delays in her CGP payment to spend on food as a form of consumption smoothing. The money from SILC was also used for small-scale investments, including productive investments such as buying fertiliser and seeds, such as beans and maize, or purchasing veterinary products. Beneficiaries in Menkhoaneng CC also discussed being able to start small-scale businesses, such as a poultry groups and piggery projects, setting up *spaza* shops or selling *simba* (snacks) with the money invested. In Tenosolo CC, the newer SPRINGS site, there was also evidence, albeit small, of beneficiaries beginning to invest in small-scale businesses. For example, a female beneficiary in Mocheng village borrowed money from her SILC group to buy paraffin to sell in the community – *“one litre of paraffin was bought for M8.5 to M10 and sold for M10 to M12”* (see market engagement). As further noted, *“people now have capital to start producing home brewed beer and sell too others. From IGAs such as home brewing and spaza shops, people then use the profits made to contribute money to SILC”* (SILC Field Agent, Mahlabatheng village, Menkhoaneng CC).

An important impact of forming SILC groups, as detailed by the Agricultural Extension Worker is the *“organisational, financial and business support”* SPRINGS gives SILC groups. The Agricultural Extension Worker explained, *“with support [from MoAFS Extension Agents] groups are starting to become registered and then become formal associations. Then, these groups can be a beneficiary group for an IFAD SADP [Small Agriculture Development Project] - who is operating in this zone – do livestock groups, greenhouse groups, do processing machines. They also get assisted [from MoAFS Extension Agents] with proposal writing once they are registered”*. This suggests potential and aspiration for future investments by beneficiaries engaged in both CGP and SPRINGS.

Beneficiaries on the combined programmes also discussed relying less on piecework and casual labour for income, with female beneficiaries in Tenosolo CC stating they believed they are relying on it even less the longer their engagement in SPRINGS. There is some evidence, albeit small, that beneficiaries on both programme also relied less on remittances - as discussed by a female beneficiary in Top village who prior to being part of both interventions would get help (in the form of remittances) from sons in South Africa, but told them to stop helping her through remittances, as she no longer needs it.

In sum, while beneficiaries reported experiencing an increase in income levels since being on CGP alone or being on CGP and SPRINGS combined, considerably higher and more stable incomes were reported in the CGP and SPRINGS combined sites. For those beneficiaries with CGP alone, the perceived increased household income lasted for only a short period after receiving the CGP transfers. They also reported that CGP payments were small and often delayed. This led to CGP alone beneficiaries continuing to engage in irregular and erratic piece work or getting into debt by borrowing money from loan sharks at a high interest rate in order to meet their basic household needs. Increased incomes among CGP and SPRINGS combined beneficiaries were mostly due to members of SILC groups being able to access loans and savings from their groups. The savings and additional income from SILC was then used to purchase seeds and fertilizers or to save further to be able acquire on a small scale, productive assets, such as animals/livestock to start IGAs such as piggery or poultry projects. The impact of CGP and SPRINGS combined has led to households struggling less to make ends meet and also relying less on others in their community – family members or neighbours – for assistance.

4.1.2 Changes in Access to Finance

As explained earlier, in Maisa Phoka CC funeral societies and grocery associations were the most common form of savings and borrowing CGP beneficiaries engaged in. Beneficiaries also borrowed money from neighbours and relatives. A similar finding was observed in Tale – the comparison village in Maisa Phoka CC.²³ The impact of the lack of access to finance meant that CGP beneficiaries were unable to borrow or save money – beyond funeral or grocery associations²⁴ and loan sharks²⁵ – making it difficult to plan in advance or invest in small businesses. There had been attempts to introduce saving associations in Maisa Phoka CC, but these were not sustainable. For example, in Ha Makalakame village, opinion leaders mentioned the MoSD encouraged CGP beneficiaries to contribute M50 every month to start poultry or piggery projects, but the Social Development personnel who introduced the idea for savings was transferred to another district. As such, it could not flourish, due to a mix of lack of motivation and a person to champion it. Female beneficiaries further revealed that people were unable to continuously contribute M50 – indicating the importance of a steady and stable source of income to be able to join savings associations. In the end, those who contributed money ended up taking their M50 back.

²³ In Tale, contributing to the burial association required M50 to register and a monthly contribution of M5 - with M10 paid when there was a death; while contributing to the grocery association's entailed anywhere between M50 and M100 a month.

²⁴ As explained by opinion leaders in Tale, people in the community that are members of said associations can borrow from there at interest rates between 10 and 20 per cent.

²⁵ When beneficiaries did borrow money from loan sharks it was at an interest rate of 30 per cent, leading them into more debt.



Photo 4 FGDs with female beneficiaries using the driving factor matrix tool in Ha Teketsi village, Maisa Phoka CC | ©FAO Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed

Since the introduction of SPRINGS and the formation of SILC groups (see Table 4.1), CGP beneficiaries on the combined programmes are able to borrow from them at lower interest rates of 10 per cent (see also Box 4.2). Yet, not all CGP beneficiaries are members of SILC groups.

Table 4.1 Number of SILC Groups in Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CCs

Districts	Menkhoaneng	Tenosolo
Number of SILC groups	85	28
Average number of members	19	18
Females	1 340	380
Males	272	118
Total	1 612	498

Source: CRS

One reason provided by opinion leaders and SILC Field Agents for the limited number of CGP beneficiaries in SILC groups, particularly in Tenosolo CC, was some beneficiaries reporting not having enough money to save, as well as CGP payments never being on time

and having to use the transfer to pay off debts accrued while waiting for the payment.²⁶ An additional reason for the smaller numbers in Tenosolo CC was that it was still new and majority of CGP beneficiaries were uncertain if it was trustworthy. Lack of trust in savings groups was also observed in the comparison village in Maisa Phoka CC – Tale. Here, male informants discussed being part of a stokvel formed by community policing members in the past, but a member “*disappeared with the money*”. They no longer wanted to form savings groups for fear of something similar happening. Addressing the issue of trust is crucial for engaging in SILC groups, as a number of CGP beneficiaries in SILC groups in Menkhoaneng CC explained one of their motivation to become members was seeing existing members not being scammed when they joined and were able to benefit – through increased incomes –from being members.

Box 4.2 SILC brings changes to CGP beneficiaries’ ability to access finance

Ntate Setumo, a CGP and SPRINGS beneficiary in Mokoallong village in Menkhoaneng CC, did not know his age and the exact year his household was registered for CGP, but he believed it was his third or fourth year on the programme. In a household of eight members, with six children on CGP, he reported that since being on both CGP and SPRINGS, “*there is a change, as now I am able to buy more food and toiletries. We are also able to borrow around M250 to buy additional food for the household and meet the children’s needs*”. This reflects **an increased income stability and security as compared with CGP alone beneficiaries**. Prior to participating in SPRINGS he explained him and his wife were told about their CGP transfer “*it’s strictly for children*”, which meant they only spent it on children and not on any additional investments. However, as he went on to explain - even if they wanted to invest their CGP transfer “*there is nothing left to invest after buying uniform and food*”.

Being a member of SILC, he argued, had brought about a change in this inability to invest, which made him both “*excited and thankful*” as him and his wife were now also **able to use some of their additional income to further invest in SILC groups** – something they were unable to do when they were on CGP alone. He admitted, though, that additional money gained was used mainly on buying more food in the household such as “*meat and chicken to make the children happy*”, but not vegetables he maintained – as his keyhole garden “*grows spinach, rape, beetroot and carrots*”. **This shows a more regular availability of vegetables compared with CGP alone beneficiaries, which in turn led to improved diet**. The additional income was also used to purchase school items for children – but he regrets, not to invest in setting up small businesses like some other CGP and SPRINGS beneficiaries, as he explained being too unwell for that.

In addition, he detailed a time when he was able to borrow money from SILC to address a severe shock in his family – when one of his grandchildren was burnt by beans they were cooking, indicating another positive impact access to finance has had for him. The grandchild “*had to go to hospital, and we were able to go to SILC, borrow money and take them*”. Something he said he would not have been able to do if he was not part of CGP and SPRINGS - as in the past, he could not access any money to borrow. In this way, Ntate was able to reveal some of the ways in which being on the combined interventions have made him **more secure and resilient** than in the past when he was on CGP alone.

SPRINGS has also increased awareness of saving among CGP beneficiaries – “*we were never aware we could save and borrow this easily*” (female beneficiary, Top village, Menkhoaneng CC). Beneficiaries in Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CCs also invested some of their CGP transfers in SILC groups as a way to gain additional incomes - unlike CGP

²⁶ SILC groups in Tenosolo CC formed in early 2017 and planned to share out in December 2017. For example, a Lead Farmer - engaged in both CGP and SPRINGS - in Tenosolo CC, explained how before SPRINGS came there were no savings associations in Letlapeng village – Letlapeng formed its first SILC group in September 2017.

beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC who were encouraged by MoSD personnel to spend the transfer only on children's needs. In Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CC beneficiaries reported being advised and encouraged by SPRINGS personnel on the importance of saving and joining associations. Furthermore, sustainability of SILC groups over time is possible through Field Agents – community members who are recruited, oriented and trained to deliver the SILC intervention directly to groups of 15 to 20 individuals. Field Agents train newly formed SILC groups in a set of nine training modules (average of one module per month), including in budgeting (tracking income and expenses), saving and borrowing, and record keeping (see Annex One).

Findings from Menkhoaneng CC further indicate the impact of long-term engagement in SILC groups for CGP beneficiaries. First, by saving more money beneficiaries were able to share out more money at the end of the year. According to female beneficiaries in Top village, sharing of contributions could range anywhere from M600 to M3000 depending on how much was contributed and level of interest accrued. While the money was often used to provide for children, meet household basic needs or pay-off debts, opinion leaders in Top Village also discussed how beneficiaries also used their savings to be able to engage in small-scale IGAs like *ipolokeng* (poultry) and *ithuseng* (potato) groups. Indeed, CGP beneficiaries in SILC groups not only saved more money, but also mentioned wanting to contribute more over time to be able to start new small-scale businesses or forming associations to sell to big companies (see market engagement). Second, SILC groups were more able to open bank accounts. For example, according to a SILC Field Agent, two SILC groups in Top and Mokoallong villages opened bank accounts in July 2017 at encouragement of SPRINGS personnel to be able to take out loans as a group to engage in other income generating projects. The SILC group in Top village with a bank account explained they were contemplating rearing chickens with the money they have accumulated.

In sum, CGP and SPRINGS combined has enabled beneficiary households to gain more access to credit with access to finance being most pronounced in Menkhoaneng CC where SPRINGS has operated longer. The impact has been higher savings over time among CGP beneficiaries engaged in SILC groups and modest but positive effects on debt reduction. Importantly, beneficiaries in the CGP and SPRINGS combined sites are investing in small-scale productive IGAs and have also expressed an increased desire to save and invest more – indications of sustainability. In addition, SILC Field Agents who train newly formed SILC groups in areas such as budgeting, saving, borrowing, and record keeping further strengthen commitment, ownership and sustainability over time of SILC interventions.

4.1.3 Changes in Skill Sets

Findings indicate that CGP beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC did not experience a significant change in their skill sets. While beneficiaries reported often being encouraged by the MoSD to form associations “*so we can grow money*”, they reported minimal support and training on how to setup and sustain these groups. This was corroborated during a KII with a former councillor of Maisa Phoka CC who discussed training initially provided by a MoSD personnel who “*introduced savings clubs – how to save and how to do record keeping and then asked them to contribute M50*”. This was not sustainable as the person who provided the training left and “*nobody came after that person*”.

Additionally, there was a fear of gaining skills, such as those around income generating that could help in setting up and sustaining new businesses (see market engagement) - as *“there are usually rumours in the village that he or she is not using CGP money for the benefit of the children”* (Female Support Group Workers, Ha Makalakame village). There was a perceived fear among CGP beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC that any investment not linked to meeting the needs of the children would lead to immediate expulsion from the programme, particularly as the messaging they received from the MoSD centred on the transfer meant to be used on children to meet their needs.

Beneficiaries engaged in both CGP and SPRINGS combined reported gaining more skills on financial management, the importance of saving *“whatever little money we have”* and starting IGAs. In Menkhoaneng CC, beneficiaries mentioned learning how to form associations, *“how to grow their money through joining SILC groups”* and how to save and borrow. During a mixed FGD with SILC members in Top village, beneficiaries further explained how they are learning and applying new skills, such as how to keep tab of savings, loans and repayments, record keeping, taking minutes and resolving conflicts in SILC groups with the training they received from the SILC Field Agent. Female beneficiaries in Tenosolo CC also reported having *“knowledge on how to budget”* and *“how money can circulate among ourselves”*. SILC groups also have refresher training sessions *“to see if people are still practicing what they have been taught, what challenges they have come up with, how they overcome these challenges and success stories”* (SILC Field Monitor, Tenosolo CC).

A value-added of SPRINGS, as explained by a SILC Field Monitor in Tenosolo CC is the training of SILC Field Agents – community members who provide monitoring once the project phases out. Field Agents are first trained on all aspects of SILC: *“monitoring, share out (usually at the end of 12 months), savings, loans and basic marketing skills”*, and then go on to provide training to community members in SILC groups. As further explained by a SILC Field Agent, who was trained in Maseru in January 2017, they were also trained on budgeting, record keeping, formation of IGAs (e.g. poultry and piggery projects), and how to generate profits by selling products when there is market.

While the SPRINGS Technical Officer in Top village in Menkhoaneng CC reported that beneficiaries on CGP and SPRINGS combined *“do not have much marketing skills as SPRINGS has not gone deeply into the marketing training as SILC has just been a year”*, it appeared that the income generating and financial management skills received already is having an impact on beneficiaries. As previously discussed, a large majority of male and female beneficiaries in Menkhoaneng CC mentioned during FGDs wanting (or planning) to form small-scale IGAs, such as rearing chickens and growing more cash crops, such as potatoes and beans to sell in bigger markets (see market engagement). Female beneficiaries in Top village in Menkhoaneng CC explained that they *“plan to grow potatoes and vegetables and sell to a bigger market”*. They mentioned that *“the potatoes are ready and they are waiting for it to be ploughed”*. While male beneficiaries – also in Top village - reported *“planning to buy a tent for funerals and one they can hire out during festivals and funerals”*. Similarly, beneficiaries in Tenosolo received training on income generating skills in October 2017 - *“they have only been taught marketing skills, so they have not started thinking large-scale”* (SILC Field Monitor), and a small number of beneficiaries expressed the desire to set up *spaza* shops to sell soaps, candles and matches in the community. Beneficiaries also mentioned wanting to develop more skills to be able to invest in *“poultry*

and piggery projects that will flourish and bring in more money” or “small businesses like vegetable and potato production to be able to generate more income that would last longer and sustain households”, especially when they start the second year of SILC in Menkhonaneng CC and once they share out their money in Tenosolo CC.

In sum, through training provided by SPRINGS, CGP beneficiaries engaged in both interventions now have knowledge on financial management including saving, borrowing and how to budget, as well as income generating skills. Beneficiaries view these new skills as beneficial to both their SILC group operations, and at the same time, directly to their own household economy. The impact of the financial education has been that CGP beneficiaries engaged in SPRINGS are able to begin to save – even if it is small sums of money – which is important considering that CGP beneficiaries in CGP alone sites reported being unable to save.

4.1.4 Variations in Market Engagement and Market Activities

The findings indicate a few cases of small-scale businesses being set up in Maisa Phoka CC as result of CGP alone - in Ha Teketsi village, a female beneficiary used both her CGP transfer and pension to buy material to crochet tablecloths she planned to sell for M70 each. For the most part, IGAs struggled to flourish in Maisa Phoka CC. For example, in Ha Makakamela village, a female beneficiary had to close her *spaza* shop as people bought goods on credit and could not pay back. Similarly, female beneficiaries in Ha Makakamela village engaged in poultry projects a few years ago, but stopped after a member bought six chickens on credit without paying back. They were unable to contribute any additional funds to replace those chickens and continue the project. There was also the additional issue of trust – as they could not trust other members who purchased chickens on credit to pay back.

Market engagement in both Ha Teketsi and Ha Makalakame villages was mainly through selling surplus vegetables – usually spinach and other green vegetables - individually within their community. Most beneficiaries who produced vegetables sold it for around M6 a bunch. While surplus vegetables had always been sold within the community - by those who are able to - CGP beneficiaries reported being able to sell more than in the past. A few CGP beneficiaries in Ha Teketsi village reported also selling their surplus to the market in the main town - *“I grow and sell muroho (green vegetables) in the village for M6 (a smaller bundle) and I also sell for M10 (a bigger bundle) to women from town who come to the village to buy from us”* (male beneficiary). None of the male CGP beneficiaries who reported selling vegetables to women from town go to the market in the town to sell. The issue of trust came up again as there was a fear that whoever represented their group in town would only sell their own vegetables and not the others.

CGP alone appears to have contributed to bringing a positive change in the wider local economy by increasing expenditure as beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC reported *“buying more when they receive their CGP money”*. Expenditures however were targeted mainly to local nearby towns (ranging from 5 to 22 kms from villages), rather than the local

community²⁷, with CGP beneficiaries spending most of their transfer in the main market in towns, usually on payday. They also bought goods in bulk – providing opportunities for increased economic activity among shop owners in town during this period. Male and female beneficiaries and opinion leaders also noted that shop owners in town bought more products in bulk, usually around CGP payments - as they knew the money arrived every quarter, and reported there were more variety and quantities of goods. Additionally, as beneficiaries reported hiring taxis that costs between M12 and M13 for the return trip to go to the paypoint on paydays, this also indicated a boost in business for local taxi owners during payday.



Photo 5 FGDs with male beneficiaries using the programe impact analysis tool in Mocheng village, Tenosolo CC | ©FAO Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed

While beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC purchased some of their immediate needs from *spaza* shops in the community, such as matches or candles, this was rare as shops were not as well stocked as in the main markets in town and also usually sold higher priced goods. For example, in Ha Makakamela village, 12.5 kg of maize meal was around M40 in town and

²⁷ As mentioned in a 2014 OPM report on the CGPs impact on the local economy, “beneficiaries constitute a very small percentage of the total population of the Community Councils ... (which) minimise the potential for significant impact of spillover effects at the CC level especially as the amounts of transfer are small and made only every quarter”.

M50 if bought from *spaza* shops in the community. CGP beneficiaries reported it was still cheaper to hire a taxi for a return trip on paydays and then purchase goods in shops in town than in *spaza* shops in the community. Although opinion leaders in Ha Teketsi village reported “*prices in shops have increased because owners think CGP money has provided enough money for people to buy*”, overall beneficiaries in both Ha Teketsi and Ha Makalakame villages, as well as opinion leaders in Ha Makalakame village attributed the price increase to “*high inflation rates and too much drought*”. Female and male beneficiaries in Ha Makalakame village for example, discussed how the drought made it harder for some households to produce vegetables, leading them to buy from the local shops.

Regarding the CGP and SPRINGS combined sites, SPRINGS encouraged SILC members to engage in vegetable production and other cash crops in order to generate additional income and improve household livelihoods. In Menkhoaneng CC, beneficiaries sold surplus vegetables within the community, usually from keyhole gardens. Similarly, in Tenosolo CC, during an FGD with female beneficiaries, three women discussed selling a bunch of vegetables within the community usually between M5 and M7, but only when the production from their keyhole gardens was good. While CGP beneficiaries are able to diversify, and increase, their income through the sale of surplus vegetables from keyhole production, FGDs and KIIs revealed that beneficiaries often sold the same vegetables, such as spinach to community members, which could potentially lead to market saturation of similar vegetables being sold in the community thereby creating an oversupply of vegetables.

Tenosolo CC had the added challenge of the villages being distant from the central market for when there is oversupply in the community, which further limited their ability to sell their vegetables and generate additional income. A SILC Field Agent in Tenosolo CC mentioned that sometimes beneficiaries did not have customers to sell their vegetables to in the community, so the vegetables went off. Aware of these challenges, male and female beneficiaries all reported wanted to produce more and diverse vegetables and look for markets outside their community so they could sell to larger business owners. In Tenosolo CC, where majority of beneficiaries also have aspirations to engage in different types of IGAs, one challenge as observed by the SILC Field Monitor was the location of the villages - “*there is not a lot of traffic here like you find in town and so people are reluctant to sell products as they may not find customers*”.

While there were no market clubs in Maisa Phoka or Menkhoaneng CCs (see Annex One on market clubs), in Tenosolo CC there were two, which were in existence prior to CGP and SPRINGS presence in the community. The first located in Tholang village²⁸ mainly produced potato seeds and started in the late 1990s with government assistance²⁹. The second, in Ha Labane village started more than five years ago, were members of Potato Lesotho Association (PLA) and produced potatoes in large quantities. These two market clubs had recently received training from SPRINGS on identifying appropriate markets to sell their produce. This, according to the members of the market club in Tholang village, was extremely useful as they had been struggling in recent years due to a lack of storage facilities and markets – “*we send the potato seeds we produce to Marakabei where there is storage before it is sent to Maseru where the market is, but in 2015, the potato seeds got rotten because of lack of market near us and so they were returned to us*”. The members of

²⁸ As stated in the methodology section, village clusters in Tenosolo CC had as much as seven villages.

²⁹ The GoL provided them with potato seeds on credit and MoAFS gave them training on how to produce potatoes.

the market club also reported no longer receiving government assistance – “*the government used to assist us with a truck to transport the seeds to Maseru, but last year [2016] they now said we should be independent and find our own transport*”. Piggybacking onto existing marketing clubs has shown to be an effective approach adopted by SPRINGS, adding value to help resolve their marketing constraints.

CGP and SPRINGS combined also appeared to contribute to the wider area local economy by increasing expenditure. Beneficiaries in Tenosolo and Menkhoaneng CCs also purchased goods in the main markets in their respective towns. However, unlike Maisa Phoka CC those in Menkhoaneng CC were not restricted to purchasing the bulk of their goods once a quarter and on payday. In Tenosolo CC, due to the mountainous terrain and the time taken to get to the town (up to 4 hours if walking), some beneficiaries reported going to markets in town only once a month. Beneficiaries also noted shop owners in town bought more and diverse products in bulk, usually around CGP payments, as well as when shop owners knew SILC groups would be sharing out their money. For example, in Menkhoaneng CC, female beneficiaries stated that shopowners bought groceries, such as rice, sugar and salt in large quantities.

Similar to Maisa Phoka CC, in Menkhoaneng CC beneficiaries rarely shopped in local *spaza* shops as they were not well stocked and had higher prices. Prices were also said to be higher as a result of inflation and droughts, than due to price hikes by shopowners. The case was the opposite in Tenosolo CC where *spaza* shops in the community were better stocked - due to the terrain beneficiaries found it time consuming getting to the markets in the main town. *Spaza* shops in the villages in Tenosolo CC were also an important source of income for shop owners, as raised by a shop owner during an FGD with opinion leaders in Mocheng village, who reported that business was good for her – and other shop owners in the area – on pay day. In addition to goods, such as matches, paraffin and candles, she also stocked up on soap, oil, salt and maize meal. While prices in *spaza* shops in Tenosolo CC were also higher as a result of the location of the villages (higher transport costs for goods delivered), in this district, most beneficiaries spent their transfers locally in their villages. The scattered and remote villages in this location meant they were further from main towns and transport to the main town was costly – M30 for a return trip by taxi according to female beneficiaries in Letlapeng villages. Further the prices of goods in the main town were reported not to be considerably cheaper to justify the cost of the transport. For example, candles were M4 in *spaza* shops and M2 in town.

In sum, CGP and SPRINGS combined has led to an increase, albeit small, in market engagement via the creation of small IGAs, with beneficiaries having aspirations to start producer groups rearing chickens or selling potatoes to bigger markets in town.

SPRINGS also encouraged SILC members to engage in vegetable production and other cash crops in order to generate additional income and improve household livelihoods. Additionally, beneficiaries can use additional income from SILC groups to purchase a diversity of seeds for keyhole gardens, which in turn strengthens sustainability of the gardens. However, beneficiaries often sold the same vegetables to community members, which could risk leading to market saturation of similar vegetables sold in the community. CGP and SPRINGS combined also appeared to contribute to the wider local economy by supporting existing marketing groups, increasing expenditure and enabling beneficiaries to

purchase goods much more regularly - at least once or twice a month, but mostly in nearby towns. Beneficiaries in Menkhoaneng CC purchased some of their immediate needs from village-based *spaza* shops but mainly shopped in the main markets in town; however, beneficiaries in Tenosolo CC purchased more from *spaza* shops due to the distance to main towns - causing high transport costs and typically meeting higher prices of goods in town, which did not justify costs of transport.

4.1.5 Changes in Risk-taking

Beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka, Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CCs reported experiencing shocks, such as droughts, serious injury or death of household members or relatives, and theft (of crops or livestock).³⁰ However, risk-taking, such as investments in new enterprises differed across all three sites, with the least amount of risks taken in the CGP alone site, Maisa Phoka CC.

In Maisa Phoka CC, CGP played a crucial role in changing beneficiaries risk-coping practices by enabling them to meet some of the educational and food needs of their children. CGP households were able to consume more food (see household nutrition), buy basic household items and meet the school needs of their children (see household income and expenditure). As discussed earlier, CGP households explained being less reliant on relatives and neighbours, but still relying on casual labour and piecework. Opinion leaders in Ha Makalakame village in Maisa Phoka CC explained that people were still afraid to take risks such as making small investments to set up IGAs especially with CGP transfers as it was meant for children's needs. Female beneficiaries – also in Ha Makalakame village – further explained being scared to invest their CGP transfer in starting small businesses, as the CGP transfer was not only small and unreliable, “*it does not come regularly*”. A small number of CGP beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC however felt comfortable in contributing to funeral societies, which provided crucial support to households at times of death, such as provision of food and coffins. However, as discussed earlier, beneficiaries had always been members of these societies prior to CGP – which had a very small impact on their membership.

Minimal risk-taking was also observed in the comparison villages where respondents reported only contributing to burial societies, which provided support in times of death. Female respondents in Macheseng village – the comparison village in Tenosolo CC, for example, explained a lack of money as a reason why people were still afraid to take risks. Additionally, as mentioned by opinion leaders in Tale – the comparison village in Maisa Phoka CC, “*while people come together to help during times of death and at funerals, for the most part people do not help each other*”. As such, people are also scared to take risks to invest in starting projects in groups due to potential conflicts working in groups.

Coping strategies and risk-taking appeared to be improved in the CGP and SPRINGS combined sites. Beneficiaries in Menkhoaneng CC noted a positive coping measure as

³⁰ Earlier qualitative research carried out by OPM (2014) in Lesotho found numerous examples of individuals and households receiving support from neighbours and relatives living in the community to deal with unforeseen shocks. This included in-kind assistance in the form of food and clothing, as well as for some household's remittances from non-resident members mainly living abroad. Social cohesion was also strong in communities during times of death as community members worked closely together during this period.

being able to have vegetables from their keyhole gardens, even during droughts, as they required less water. This also meant that beneficiary households were well-fed and able to eat more times a day for improved nutrition (see household nutrition). For many of the beneficiaries in Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CC, SILC provided them the additional income needed to strengthen their resilience. In complement, social cohesion among communities also appeared to be improved in CGP and SPRINGS combined sites as keyhole garden construction were said to bring people together during construction (see keyhole gardens). Beneficiaries were also able to borrow from SILC groups – instead of loan sharks - during times of shock or when the CGP transfers were delayed – enabling them to take greater risks. One outstanding example of risk-taking in the study was reported by a female beneficiary in Mahlabatheng village in Menkhoaneng CC who borrowed M5000 from her SILC group, and set up a bank account where she was saving the money, which will be mainly used if there are any deaths in the family.

As mentioned in earlier sections, borrowing larger sums from SILC groups was more pronounced in Menkhoaneng CC where SILC groups were more established and larger in numbers. In Tenosolo CC, however, beneficiaries that were members of SILC believed they would take more risks in the future, such as setting up small businesses once they had shared their SILC contribution.

Aware of the importance of burial societies in communities in Lesotho, SPRINGS also encouraged SILC members to set up social funds that can be accessed to address small shocks, such as sickness or damage to homes caused by winds or fire, or a death in the family. Contributions to the social fund ranged between M2 and M5 in each sitting – they met twice a month. While no examples were provided by beneficiaries of how the SILC social funds had been used and helped households and livelihoods, evidence provided on burial societies was robust - indicating that such schemes enabled beneficiaries to feel “*less burden*” and “*worry less about contributing to funerals*” as they were provided with a coffin to bury the deceased, money to buy food and rent tents, chairs and tables during the funeral; or as in the case of Tenosolo CC, contributed towards mortuary fees.

In sum, risk-taking, albeit small, is most prevalent in Menkhoaneng CC, the early cohort of CGP and SPRINGS combined - where beneficiaries are accessing loans, saving more and setting up bank accounts for security. Multiple income streams, including CGP transfers, SILC and IGAs, ensure diverse sources of food and income security, particular in situations of stress. This security is resulting in reduced negative coping strategies, positively albeit gradually effecting the household economy and overall wellbeing, showing indication of strengthening overall household resilience. On the whole, beneficiaries in CGP alone (Maisa Phoka CC) and the more recent CGP and SPRINGS combined sites (Tenosolo CC) did not take risks, claiming insufficient funds to do so, and believing they have minimal social network support – although in Tenosolo CC social networks were improving as a result of SILC groups and keyhole construction.

4.2 Impacts on Household Nutrition, Dietary Knowledge and Practices

This research theme examines causal effects of the combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions on the household nutrition – specifically the hypothesis is: **households**

benefitting from combined CGP and SPRINGS programmes have improved their dietary practices, nutritional knowledge base and consumption patterns towards healthier diets, resulting in enhanced infant and young child care practices in particular and improved household wellbeing.

4.2.1 Changes in Diet, Knowledge and Consumption Practices and Engagement with Support Services

Evidence from Maisa Phoka CC - the CGP alone site indicates that CGP transfers have improved food security of beneficiary households and children by increasing food availability and improving food access due to the ability to purchase more food. Non-CGP households in the comparison communities, on the other hand, experienced high levels of food insecurity due to both droughts and high levels of unemployment.

In Ha Teketsi village in Maisa Phoka CC, opinion leaders observed that beneficiaries were able to buy food with the transfers and also able to eat food more times a day – from once or twice a day to at least three times a day. CGP beneficiaries also reported improvements in dietary diversity, as they no longer ate papa with only cabbage, and were able to buy food, such as wheat meal (to make bread) eggs, beans, chicken pieces (heart, liver, feet), tomatoes and potatoes. Beneficiaries also stated that children aged 6 – 23 months were able to eat more regularly – four to six times a day, or “*on demand*”, and their diets now consisted of milk and eggs (e.g. having porridge with milk). These changes in diet, consumption and the diversity in what beneficiaries ate, however, were observed for no longer than two weeks after receiving the CGP transfer - before things go back to eating mainly papa and cabbage, until they received the next transfers. Maize meal and cabbage was for the most part still a staple in beneficiaries’ diets.

Female beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC mentioned getting majority of their nutrition and health information from nurses in clinics and village health workers or the radio, where they were taught to wash hands before preparing food and to wash dishes before and after using it, including boiling bottles being used by young children. This also included information on how to prepare nutritious food and good hygiene - according to a KII with a Nutritionist and the Area Technical Officer, cooking demonstrations on recipes and how to prepare nutritious meals were usually done in the village by the resource centre. Extension workers also provided additional information, such as the nutritionist who works with NGOs like World Vision to promote good hygiene at pre-schools. Opinion leaders in Ha Makakamela village in Maisa Phoka CC additionally noted that child nutrition, hygiene and child care gotten at clinics was mainly for pregnant women and lactating mothers, with Village Health Workers making door-to-door visits on diet for HIV positive and lactating mothers. Beneficiaries reported that nutrition and hygiene information they have accessed from clinics and nurses have brought about a change in diets in the community and had positive impacts as “*children are no longer having unnecessary diseases*”.

FGDs in Tale – the comparison village in Maisa Phoka CC – further indicated that health and nutrition information is received from clinics and Village Health Workers. According to opinion leaders, between 2013 and 2015 rural water supply built toilets in their village and gave community members information on washing hands after using the toilet and before handling food. In terms of dietary practices, opinion leaders explained that in 2016 seeds were provided– by the MoAFS - and community members were able to grow carrots, beans

and beetroots, which led to a slight change in what they ate. This suggests the potential value-added of seed provision for healthier diets. Some households still had some vegetables and beans available through post-harvest storage - however, the majority of households now mostly ate papa and cabbage stock. For respondents in Ha Topisi – the comparison village in Menkhoaneng CC – a change in diet had been as a result of droughts, making it extremely difficult to produce as much vegetables as they used to.

Changes in diet appear to be improved in CGP and SPRINGS combined sites – most of which beneficiaries attributed to a combination of their keyhole gardens that ensured access to a variety of vegetables (see keyhole gardens) and also to increased income that ensured they were able to purchase a diversity of food (see changes to household expenditure). With the money saved from their keyhole gardens, as well as additional money borrowed from SILC groups, they were also able to buy nutritious food such as meat, eggs and milk. Female beneficiaries in Mahlabatheng village in Menkhoaneng CC further reported that they no longer needed to go to the shops everyday to buy vegetables as they now produced them from their keyhole gardens. There also appeared to be a spillover effect, as more members of the community had also begun to construct keyhole gardens, which also meant increased food availability in the community.



Photo 6 Process of drying Maize. Mahlabatheng village, Menkhoaneng CC | ©FAO Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed

While SPRINGS is more recent in Tenosolo CC, CGP beneficiaries engaged in SPRINGS also reported a change. Children, for example, could have bread and tea in the morning, porridge with sugar, fruits like banana, yoghurt and potatoes, and have rice, beetroot and meat – which they could not have before. Beneficiaries also reported no longer having to

gather wild vegetables from fields or mountains. A SILC Field Agent also reported the changes in diet, as a result of increased incomes from SILC - “ ... *you’ll see them from town with many plastics – rice, milk, eggs included in the plastics. They (CGP beneficiaries) didn’t eat rice and meat regularly, but now they eat a variety*”.

Beneficiaries, particularly in Menkhoaneng CC, reported feeling healthy and strong since being part of both interventions, always knowing they would have something to eat and so feeling a little less vulnerable. Children were also said to be able to concentrate more in school and were also able to feel like other children in the community - children “*grow well*”, “*we can see they are growing and coming bigger*”, “*they attend school and are able to eat before attending school and performance improves*”, “*they are able to play when they are school because they are eating well and they are no longer getting sick easily*”.

In addition to the above-improved aspects of food security, beneficiaries on both CGP and SPRINGS reported improved nutritional knowledge, good sanitation and health – as compared to CGP only beneficiaries. Opinion leaders in Top and Mahlabatheng villages in Menkhoaneng CC, for example, explained that beneficiaries on both interventions have learned about a variety of vegetables - as they were given seeds by FAO. Beneficiaries in Tenosolo CC also reported receiving a lot of information from SPRINGS on how to use the keyhole gardens to plant rape, spinach carrots and beetroots, which enabled them to diversify what they ate. They also received nutrition information, such as different recipes prepared using a variety of vegetables and the nutritional effects of the vegetables they eat as well as information on food processing. Beneficiaries, according to the SPRINGS Technical Officer, were also given pamphlets written in Sesoto on good nutrition. As the Field Monitor for SPRINGS in Tenosolo CC noted, “*People are also equipped with skills on food preservation involving drying of vegetables, such as beetroot and preserving in bottles - through training provided by SPRINGS in July 2017*”. Beneficiaries also mentioned getting some information from nurses in clinics and village health workers. For example, in Tenosolo CC nurses from St James Mission came in October 2017 to talk about healthier lifestyles and living, and to check HIV and diabetes status.

Sisters of Charity also gave training to caregivers on how to prepare food and food preservation through CCFLS. However, only one village cluster in the study – Top and Mokoallong villages – had CCFLS.³¹ Female beneficiaries engaged in CCFLS in Top village were given training on nutrition and how to feed children aged 6 – 23 months, with their children’s weight monitored continuously for up to 6 months, as well as hygiene training. They also reported improved knowledge regarding infant and young child nutrition. The female beneficiaries were more knowledgeable about aspects of complementary feeding, such as how to prepare and keep hygiene of the complementary foods, as well as frequency of complementary feeding. The impact they indicated was that their children were able to eat more nutritious food - prepared using vegetables from keyhole gardens, and eat more regularly during the day. A CCFLS Field Agent in Menkhoaneng CC reported noticeable changes in children among those caregivers that engage with CCFLS, specifically weight gain, as well as more caregivers visiting clinics regularly, taking children to clinics when they were unwell and no longer skipping annual immunisations. From the Field Agent’s perspective it was as a result of children being referred to clinics by CCFLS Field Agents if

³¹ While CCFLS training was present in Tenosolo CC, this was not yet implemented in the village clusters selected for this study.

after examining growth charts of children during follow-ups they continued to remain underweight. This made caregivers gain more understanding of the importance of visiting health centres when children fall ill.

Findings further indicated that CCFLS Field Agents played a paramount role by serving as the prime source of complementary feeding information for caregivers engaged in CCFLS.³² CCFLS Field Agents in both Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CCs did raise a number of challenges however. For example, during winter and harvesting months it was hard to find participants. Field agents also often had to use their own money to buy ingredients, as not all participants wanted to use vegetables from their keyhole gardens – as this, they felt, was meant for their own consumption and they also have the perception that they will be provided vegetables for the entire CCFLS training. Finally, caregivers often had difficulties with the recipes once they finished the training as caregivers often could not afford all the ingredients.

In sum, CGP and SPRINGS combined sites have experienced improved diet as a result of a variety of vegetables from their keyhole gardens and increased income enabling them to purchase a diversity of more nutritious food. This has also spilled over to the wider community, as a vast number of community members have keyhole gardens. Additionally, more positive impacts appear to have happened in CGP and SPRINGS combined sites as a result of their improved access to nutrition and health information.

4.2.2 Keyhole Gardens

Keyhole gardens existed in all research sites in this study, including comparison communities, and were not new initiatives – as the MoAFS has been promoting them. However, there were differences in uptake of keyhole gardens.

Box 4.3 what are keyhole gardens?

A keyhole garden (so-called because of its shape) is a round raised garden, supported with stones. Underneath, the first layer of soil has been dug out, levelled and covered with multiple layers of locally made compost (manure, organic waste, scrap metal, wood ash, plant waste, yard sweepings, etc.). A central basket made with sticks and filled with grass and leaves serves for irrigation purposes: water is poured in it, allowing for its dispersal through the whole enclosed garden. A small pathway leading to the central basket allows a person to easily work the garden without bending and the soil surface is sloped to allow runoff.

Keyhole gardens are built in places where it is difficult to build normal gardens (rocky areas, shallow arid/or compacted soils, etc.), near the entrance of dwellings to facilitate their watering with household waste water. Keyhole gardens are made with low-cost locally available materials. Compared to regular vegetable gardens, keyhole gardens require less labour (ideal for elderly, children or sick persons), less water and no costly fertilizers or pesticides. A keyhole garden also has important comparative advantages: its structure ensures soil fertility for 5 to 7 years; it can produce food all year round even under harsh temperatures; it can support the production of at least 5 varieties of vegetables at a time - thus supporting dietary diversity; and it is so prolific that its produce is more than enough to feed a family of 8 persons. Crop rotation and growing of insect-repellent plants are important to balance nutrient demands, fight insects and plant diseases, and deter weeds.

³² In Menkhoaneng CC, since July 2016 CCFLS have been educating the community on nutrition, recipes, household hygiene and proper sanitation.

Source: FAO, 2008

The wide majority of beneficiaries (CGP alone and CGP and SPRINGS combined), as well as respondents in comparison villages were aware and clear on some, but not all benefits of keyhole gardens – namely including having vegetables all year round, preserving moisture and using less water. However, not all had keyhole gardens. One of the main reasons was that *“it requires a lot of work ... they have to collect a lot of stones to build it and they do not have in the village – it was used to build the latrines”* (male informant, Tale village, Maisa Phoka CC).



Photo 7 Keyhole garden with shade net of CGP and SPRINGS beneficiary from household case study in Mokhoallong village, Menkhoaneng CC CC | ©FAO Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed

Evidence indicates that beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC and the comparison villages were least likely to construct and use keyhole gardens, with beneficiaries reporting the aforementioned labour and manpower required to build them, as well as lack of materials to construct the keyhole gardens and the scarcity of water to maintain those keyhole gardens that have been constructed. One of the main challenges as explained by a male informant from Tale village (Maisa Phoka CC) was that *“it requires a lot of work ... we have to collect a lot of stones to build it and we do not have this in the village – they are used to build the latrines.”* There were also issues around follow-ups once constructed. As reported in Ha Teketsi village in Maisa Phoka CC, while the extension officer from MoAFS initially made home visits and follow-ups, these ceased over time – for reasons beneficiaries were unsure of. CGP beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC (and indeed in Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CC) also received seeds (including beans and maize) - as part of a vegetable seed package - and nets from FAO in 2015/2016, but not many beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC reported

producing vegetables from it or using the nets provided. One reason for the limited use of nets among beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC could likely be a lack of full understanding of their value for ensuring seeds do not get dried from the sun or get affected by frost. However, as noted in a 2015 impact evaluation on the links between the CGP and the FAO-Lesotho Linking Food Security to Social Protection Programme (LFSSP), labour-constrained households were more likely to increase the use of seeds, while beneficiaries reduced seed purchases, most likely because the LFSSP provided free vegetable seeds (Dewbre *et al.*, 2015).

Findings from Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CCs indicate that the specific SPRINGS value-added to keyhole gardens for beneficiaries has been providing them with the skills on how to properly construct and maintain them. Male beneficiaries in Mahlabatheng village in Menkhoaneng CC discussed gaining these skills, such as being able to read plans to build a keyhole garden, how to water vegetables grown in the keyhole gardens, how to make their own manure through mulching, how to prune fruit trees, and skills on how to make homemade pesticide (*koqolofiloale*). FGDs with female beneficiaries in Tenosolo CC further corroborated that SPRINGS provided clearer and more accurate information on keyhole gardens beneficiaries - *“at first when we constructed them, we didn't really know how to do it – we only saw from other villages. We also didn't really know how to grow vegetables and SPRINGS gave us training on how to construct and how to grow a variety of vegetables – before SPRINGS we would only plant one vegetable at a time”* (female beneficiary, Letlapeng village). The SILC Field Supervisor in Tenosolo CC who explained that before SPRINGS, *“most were failing and people weren't growing anything on them, but after Caritas came many new keyhole gardens were built and older ones refined”* supported this.



Photo 8 Mahlabatheng village, Menkhoaneng CC ©FAO Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed

Female beneficiaries also reported being able to grow more varied produce such as spinach, onions, carrots, rape and beetroot to support family nutrition and health – commenting also on the free seeds provided by FAO in 2015 that they planted to grow their produce. As discussed in previous sections, keyhole gardens were viewed as improving household food security, through constant vegetable production. Beneficiaries participating in the combined programmes also reported being able to save money by not purchasing vegetables and using the extra money on other consumables. They also reported being able to generate income by selling surplus produce, so supporting other household needs. However, as discussed earlier beneficiaries often sell similar vegetables within the community leading to an oversupply of the same vegetables in the local market. An additional benefit of SPRINGS for keyhole garden construction was that in order to alleviate the high labour demand for construction, it brought people together as they collaboratively constructed them: *“one can construct it individually, but people were advised/encouraged by Caritas to do it in groups to help each other and 3-15 people can be in a group to construct a key hole garden”* (Opinion Leader, Mocheng village, Tenosolo CC).

As one of the challenges of keyhole gardens - as observed in Maisa Phoka CC - is the lack of follow-up support, SPRINGS addresses this constraint by training Lead Farmers to play a role in this (in addition to follow-ups conducted by CRS Field Agents). Trained Lead Farmers, as explained during by a female Lead Farmer in Letlapeng village in Tenosolo CC, who received training in March 2017, then share what they have learned with SPRINGS beneficiaries in the community. The training included how to construct and maintain keyhole gardens, the best time to plant vegetables, management of vegetables and post-harvesting methods, while follow-ups included monitoring if gardens have sufficient water, providing advice on where and how to use soil and manure, etc. Sustainability of keyhole gardens is strengthened over time through these follow-ups provided by trained Lead Farmers.

There still remain some challenges to keyhole gardens according to informants. In Tenosolo CC, for example, beneficiaries mentioned bigger animals destroying their vegetables, especially when no one was at home. Another constraint mentioned was pests, hail, drought and frost, but people have nets to help with this. Additionally, female beneficiaries in Mahlabatheng village in Menkhoaneng CC also complained that *“the structure of keyholes is not easily constructed ... and it demands man power with women especially from female headed households”* - indicating the value of *Matsema* groups for keyhole construction.

In sum, beneficiaries participating in the combined programme explained that keyhole gardens have enabled households to eat more and nutritious foods with the vegetables, such as spinach, onions, carrots, rape and beetroot grown in keyhole gardens. Keyhole gardens have improved household food security year-round, producing vegetables even in winter. Beneficiaries further reported being able to save money by not purchasing vegetables and using the extra money on other consumables. They confirmed they were able to generate income by selling surplus produce, therefore providing for other household needs. Sustainability of keyhole gardens is strengthened over time with beneficiaries using additional income from SILC groups to purchase seeds, and with follow-ups provided by trained Lead Farmers (trained members of the community) - supporting construction and maintenance of keyhole gardens, vegetable production management, and post-harvesting methods. However, an oversupply of similar vegetables could lead to market saturation in the communities. These savings often pay for children’s school fees. As well,

establishing the gardens has reinstated and/or sometimes generated new *Matsema* (social cohesion) groups based on local cultural norms of unity and cooperation that work together to help those vulnerable households (including beneficiary households) to build keyhole gardens.

4.2.3 Access to Services and Information

In Maisa Phoka CC, access to services and information³³, particularly citizen outreach services – a SPRINGS initiative aimed to strengthen local service provision (see Annex One) - did not occur on a regular basis. For example, in Ha Teketsi village opinion leaders noted that service providers visited once a year at the Chief's place – the most recent one took place in October 2017 where they were visited by Lesotho correctional service, police, army and agricultural officers. As part of the access to services and support, the health centres talked about HIV and AIDS, the nutritionist encouraged vegetable production, good nutrition, animal keeping (chicken) and planting fruit trees, and the police and army speak on crime prevention in the community. Male beneficiaries discussed receiving sensitisation from UNICEF in 2016 on how to use the CGP money. Beneficiaries in Ha Makalakame village in Maisa Phoka CC reported the Ministry of Home Affairs undertaking birth certificates registration in their community in 2015. Beneficiaries accessed additional services such as health care and identity documents in town – often using their CGP money for the transportation fare. However, there was often the uncertainty of a successful outcome for some trips. For example, female beneficiaries in Ha Makalakame village reported having to make additional trips to the main town after registering for their birth certificates, needing additional documents resulting in failure to access certificates on the first visit.

Some irregularity in access to other services and information via citizen outreach services was also observed in the CGP and SPRINGS combined sites; findings also reveal questionable attribution specifically to SPRINGS of prevailing access. For example, in Menkhoaneng CC in Mahlabatheng village, the councillor mentioned in 2015 the community received the following outreach services – nutrition information from nutrition officers, health check-ups, immunisation, HIV testing and other services, such as testing for diabetes and blood pressure. However, the councillor could not state unequivocally if this was a result of SPRINGS. Other available services female beneficiaries had access to in the past included birth registrations/certificates and national IDs. Similarly, in Tenosolo CC, male and female beneficiaries observed that while Agricultural Extension Workers provided education on good ploughing practices and police on crime prevention majority of the services such as identity cards and birth certificates or health care were accessed in the main town. It was also reported in both Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CC there were outreach services by nurses coming once a year from the health centres or clinics in the main town, such as immunizations and dental hygiene, but these used to happen before SPRINGS. A KII with a Lead Farmer in Letlapeng village in Tenosolo CC stated that new services were coming to the community as the NGO, Lenasa - which had not been in the community before - had come in October 2017 to advise community members on getting tested for HIV.

³³ This section focuses on other services, particularly citizen outreach services, accessed in the research sites beyond health and nutrition information and services discussed previously.

According to opinion leaders in Top village in Menkhoaneng CC, there were intentions to organise well-being days by MoLG – which was integral to SPRINGS under its aim to improve access to services through Citizen Service Outreach Days, but they never happened – for reasons unknown to them. KIIs with a CRS Field Agent in Menkhoaneng CC confirmed that Sisters of Charity trained the MoLG twice - in 2016 and 2017 - on how to implement well-being days. This training provided support to the MoLG to expand the Citizen Service Outreach Day in the CC. The Field Agent was also unable to state clearly why the well-being days had not yet taken place in Menkhoaneng CC – noting that CRS' role was to “*train and build the capacity of MoLG staff to enable them to organise the outreach events on their own*”. Similar observations were provided by the CRS Programme Manager who explained that “*CRS is not responsible for organising service days - CRS' mandate is to train MoLG staff and capacitate them so they can conduct these events on their own*”. Key informant interviews with Extension Agents from various other Ministries suggest that staff capacity and availability of resources to effectively service CCs could likely be one reason why service days have yet to be fully implemented.

In sum, access to other services and information does not seem to have been noticeably improved by CGP alone or CGP and SPRINGS combined, as it appeared in all sites that support services visited infrequently, on average at least once a year to provide services, such as health check-ups, immunization, HIV testing and information on community policing. While MoLG staff were trained in Menkhoaneng CC, the citizen outreach days have not yet been implemented, for reasons that remain unclear - but likely linked to staff capacity, availability and resources. The majority of the respondents in both CGP alone and CGP and SPRINGS combined, travel to the closest main town to access services and information (outside of basic health and nutrition), which results in additional costs, time and uncertainty of a successful outcome when making such a trip.

4.3 Impact of Implementation Performance on Household Vulnerability

This research theme examines causal effects of the combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions on programme operations - specifically the hypothesis is: ***combining cash transfers (CGP) and livelihood programmes (SPRINGS) through effective coordination and implementation reduces household vulnerability, and improves household social and economic well-being - with particular benefits for children - more than implementation of one programme alone or without either.***

4.3.1 Perceived Impacts and Effects of CGP and SPRINGS Combined

The findings of this study indicate the value-added of CGP and SPRINGS combined included: i) increased income and access to finance through engaging in SILC groups; ii) improved knowledge on savings, borrowing and budgeting for SILC members as a result of financial education training provided by SPRINGS; iii) the ability to invest in starting and setting up some small businesses using money saved in/borrowed from SILC groups and the knowledge from financial education; iv) improved food security and diversity in diet for longer periods due to a combination of vegetables grown in keyhole gardens and increased

income from SILC groups; and v) strengthened knowledge base on nutrition, hygiene, and (for care-givers through CCFLS), best practices on childcare and feeding due to educational training and classes. Being more recent in Tenosolo CC, the impact of CGP and SPRINGS combined was less pronounced, but there was a perception among beneficiaries that SPRINGS could bring about changes to beneficiaries lives, particularly once they shared their money from SILC (see Box 4.4).

Box 4.4 CGP and SPRINGS combined – improve beneficiaries' livelihoods

Mme Nchase in Liphokoaneng village, Thaba Tseka district is 57 and lived with her grandchild who is 10-years-old and has lived with her since she was born. Her husband passed away in 2001 - he worked in the mines. Before her husband died, Mme explained that she was well off, but after he died people stole her stokvel, her animals and other things. Mme was enrolled in CGP 4 years ago (2013) and started participating in SPRINGS in 2017 when she joined a SILC group in January 2017. SPRINGS she explained "*helps her a lot as CGP doesn't come regularly*". As a member of a SILC group, and depending on her situation, she could borrow up to M300 for the hospital, food or funeral schemes. With both CGP and SPRINGS Mme stated, "*I am able to buy things for my grandchild, pay for transport to hospital when I am unwell*". **Before SPRINGS, Mme explained that she was not able to borrow money**, indicating the different access to finance between beneficiaries on CGP alone and on the combined interventions.

Mme explained that while **CGP is used on her grandchild, it also was not enough**: "*she is still in primary school and I don't pay school fees, but her trousers are M150, jersey M90, and coat M250, and I receive M360 a quarter from CGP. So I have to go to SILC to borrow money to be able to supplement the CGP money*". With the additional money she was able to buy groceries and the money she received made a difference, "*Things are still hard, but I am less stressed and it is not as hard as before*". Mme also noticed a difference with her grandchild with both programmes, "*she is even happier*". She reported observing her grandchild **playing more with other children in the community and also smiling more**.

While they are yet to share the money from her SILC group, indicated her aspirations to set up a small-scale business, she is expecting M500 and intends to invest it to buy liquid soap, sell and buy more stock to increase her money. She had received encouragement and advice from SPRINGS on savings and investing – **a crucial element of SPRINGS financial education**, and she believed "*it is important to gain new skills and learn new things to better herself*".

Mme explained some of the challenges she has experienced as a woman living on her own with her grandchild – "*it's quite dangerous in the villages and I can't always feel free. Local boys break and enter into my home – they stole potatoes from my garden and when I put it inside my home, they broke the windows and stole it*". Mme noted, however, that the additional income from SPRINGS enabled her to replace the potatoes and other things that have been stolen – revealing the importance increased income and access to finance from being on the combined interventions has for dealing with shocks and stresses. Additionally, she and her grandchild were able to eat healthier foods, as she was now able to buy meat, mostly chicken, and they no longer needed to buy vegetables as she had seeds for her keyhole garden – **also another crucial component of SPRINGS through its homestead gardening package**.

Mme stated that "*I wasn't used to struggling, but then my husband passed*", but since being on both programmes, "*I am able to live the life I used to, my grandchild is healthier and able to focus more in school and she is fed*".

A prominent impact of the combined programmes, as perceived by a majority of male and female beneficiaries met in Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CCs has been less tension and conflict in communities, particularly as beneficiaries "*are able to work together in the community by building keyhole gardens and contributing money in SILC*" (male beneficiary, Mahlabatheng village, Menkhoaneng CC). An opinion leader in Mocheng village in Tenosolo

CC also observed “*there used to be very little social cohesion among community members, but it has brought peace and love in the community and togetherness as one can borrow money from SILC groups without criticism*”.

CGP and SPRINGS combined also appeared to have brought about less stress in beneficiary households, as CGP beneficiaries “*are now able to have access to money ... and are able to pay off any debts through SILC*” (opinion leaders, Mahlabatheng village, Menkhoaneng CC), and worry less about delayed CGP payments. This is also attributed to a reduction in dependency linked to reduced borrowing from neighbours, friends and relatives, improved ability to better meet household needs, increased school enrolment – particularly high school children - and better results among children in school, and healthier and happier children who were able to eat more and healthier food regularly due to a more constant supply of vegetables from keyhole gardens and less expenditures on vegetables. Beneficiaries also reported now being more knowledgeable on nutrition and hygiene.



Photo 9 Walking with Mme Nchase after household case study. Liphokoaneng village, Tenosolo CC | ©FAO Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed

Another impact centred on beneficiaries being more aware of, and practicing, saving – with beneficiaries in both Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CCs aspiring to save more to be able to start up businesses. Finally, FGDs with beneficiaries that are also SILC members in Mahlabatheng village in Menkhoaneng CC reported feeling that with SPRINGS, if CGP phased out they know they would still be able to sustain their livelihoods.

While SPRINGS did not operate in Maisa Phoka CC, there was a *fato fato* (food for work) programme (funded by USAID and implemented by World Vision) involving dam construction - two of which had been built at the time of the fieldwork – that ran from October 2016 to April 2017. While children, the elderly and those who were ill were unable to engage in the programme, the programme was open to anyone in the community (i.e. both CGP and non-CGP beneficiaries) as long as they showed up and registered interest during the first *pitso* that announced the programme. Households that participated on the programme worked once for 15 consecutive days and were provided maize meal, beans and oil at the end of the 15 days.

While not all CGP beneficiaries took part in the *fato-fato* dam project, those that did reported an improvement in their household nutrition and consumption patterns for that period. First, households were able to have something to eat while they were working on the dam project, which “*helped a lot*” (female beneficiary, Ha Makalakame village). Male beneficiaries in Ha Teketsi village reported eating better during this period - 3 to 4 times a day as opposed to before the *fato-fato* when it was 2 times a day. A street vendor who also participated in the programmes explained how his family was “*able to eat a little bit better*”. Also, CGP transfers were used to buy other types of food, such as sugar, salt and wheat meal during the food for work programme. Similar changes were observed by opinion leaders in Ha Teketsi village, who reported that the *fato-fato* programme helped CGP beneficiaries to eat better and households had more food as their CGP transfers were used to buy other food items, such as wheat meal. This example evidences the value-added of cash-plus programmes linked with other interventions, including other social assistance programmes.

In sum, SPRINGS combined with CGP has led to increased incomes and access to finance, improved nutrition and information and awareness around nutrition and health; improved knowledge on savings, borrowing and budgeting; and improved food and diversity in diet. The impact of this has been less tension in communities and less stress in beneficiary households. Evidence suggests that the realisation of impacts generated by CGP and SPRINGS combined support varies over time, and that longer durations of support appear to yield more visible effects. Further, findings suggest that the combination of the CGP cash plus SPRINGS may lead to more sustainable effects over time, particularly regarding poverty reduction and improved nutrition.

4.3.2 Unintended Effects of CGP and SPRINGS Combined

Evidence from the FGDs and KIIs indicates a number of unintended effects around the combined programmes in the research sites. It is important to note, however, that regarding CGP only in Maisa Phoka, there were issues around mismanaged funds, and views that the CGP transfers were being used for “improper” purposes, other than children’s welfare, as well as some current beneficiaries feeling there were tensions in communities caused by the programme when some beneficiaries were no longer on the programmes while others remained.

Looking specifically at CGP and SPRINGS combined, one unintended consequence was exclusion and jealousies because of the initial focus of only CGP beneficiaries engaging in

the pilot phase of SPRINGS in Menkhoaneng CC - “*SPRINGS was not open to everyone, but now that anyone can join SPRINGS there is no more jealousy among those that did not also receive CGP money*” (female beneficiary, Top Village). This exclusion of non-CGP beneficiaries in SPRINGS “*initially did not sit well within the community as many could not understand why they could not be part of SPRINGS, as they felt they deserved to be part of SPRINGS*” (mixed FGD with SILC group members, Top village). This exclusion of non-CGP beneficiaries from the programme added to the already existing tensions of community members excluded from CGP – even though they perceived that they were also deserving of being included in CGP. This policy was changed with SPRINGS now being open to all community members. Animosity between CGP and non-CGP beneficiaries were not present in Tenosolo CC because from the beginning, SPRINGS was open to all community members.

In Tenosolo CC, the take up of SPRINGS among CGP beneficiaries was lower, and slower, than in Menkhoaneng CC. Fewer CGP beneficiaries engaging in SPRINGS could be due to the programme still being new in the district. This could explain the apprehension among CGP beneficiaries to take part in the programme, particular joining SILC groups. As explained earlier there was also a perception of SILC groups as a scam and not to be trusted – as beneficiaries could lose any money invested. Beneficiaries were still unclear and uncertain of its value-added, and if the small investments they made using money from their small CGP transfers would have a positive impact on their livelihoods and household needs. A CRS Technical Officer in Menkhoaneng CC raised a second, and very important, cause of slow uptake, which was due in part to CGP beneficiaries perception that participating in SPRINGS could lead to beneficiaries no longer receiving their CGP transfers.

Another unintended effect centred on the distribution of nets for keyhole gardens. While seeds were given by FAO to all in the community (as part of a starter pack), nets to protect their seeds from sun or frost were only distributed to CGP beneficiaries. As such, those CGP beneficiaries on SPRINGS with keyhole gardens have experienced greater vegetable production, such as a female CGP and SPRINGS combined beneficiary in Tenosolo CC who used her shade nets in winter to prevent frost falling on her vegetables and was able to produce more vegetables this year than she had in the previous year. As non-CGP beneficiaries did not receive nets, there was greater risk their keyhole gardens would not be as successful. As reported during FGDs with mixed SILC group in Top village in Menkhoaneng CC, the drought affected keyhole gardens without nets, with some households addressed this gap by sewing cabbage bags together to make nets.

In sum, CGP and SPRINGS combined have led to unintended effects generated largely by issues of exclusion and misperception. These include: (i) initially excluding non-CGP beneficiaries from SPRINGS, which added to the already existing tensions of community members excluded from CGP; (ii) low participation in SPRINGS among some CGP beneficiaries due to the perception that they will be removed from CGP if they engage and gain income resulting in improved levels of household economy; (iii) low numbers of SILC groups in the newer SPRINGS site due to lack of awareness of its value-added and perceptions it cannot be trusted; and (iv) varying keyhole production levels between CGP and non-CGP beneficiaries on SPRINGS due to the provision of shade nets for CGP beneficiaries only.

4.3.3 Programme Local Support Mechanism

Evidence suggests that despite CGP being an unconditional cash transfer programme, there was strong messaging from MoSD staff, notably in Maisa Phoka CC on how the money should be spent – on the needs of children. This was often during payment days around payment points – for those beneficiaries who did not receive mobile payments. This often meant that beneficiaries invested in children – their education in particular. Although, households also spent on food. One of the impacts of the messaging was that in Maisa Phoka CC beneficiaries were less likely to invest in savings. There was also a misperception among CGP beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC that they would be removed from the programme if the money was used in alternative ways that did not meet the needs of children.

Chiefs or local councillors in the communities monitored how the CGP payments were used – often making home visits or nominating proxies in the community to do so on their behalf. They also informed CGP beneficiaries on payment dates. In Tenosolo CC, beneficiaries explained that sometimes there was miscommunication on payment dates, which often meant beneficiaries, missed out on their payment for that quarter but would get double payment later. Delayed or missed payments added constraints to households' ability to sustain their livelihoods.

In Menkhoaneng and Tenosolo CC, there was a wider set of messages, particularly to address income generation, poverty reduction more widely, and improved nutrition. Field Agents and Field Monitors provided male and female beneficiaries messaging and communication on keyhole gardens, SILC groups, financial education, income-generating skills, information on health and nutritional practices and food preservation – all of which indicated positive impacts on CGP and SPRINGS combined beneficiary households. SPRINGS also conducted regular follow-ups in support of SILC groups, keyhole gardens and CCFLS.

Regarding coordination between CGP and SPRINGS, in the initial stages – when SPRINGS was being introduced into the community, there was communication between the two programmes - *“the first thing we did when we arrived is introduce ourselves to the council and tell them we were working with Ministry of Social Development”* (CCFLS Field Agent, Menkhoaneng CC). CGP beneficiaries were also sensitized and made aware that they could use the CGP money to invest in SILC and buy seeds, which in turn would create additional money for them to invest in their children. This is in sharp contrast to Maisa Phoka CC where beneficiaries were often advised to form groups or associations, but given little advice or support on saving or investing their CGP transfers (see access to finance). There is also *“a lot of monitoring in SPRINGS”*, as further explained by a SILC Field Agent in Mahlabatheng village in Menkhoaneng CC – *“I do data collection, such as who is owing how much, number of members in groups, how much they are making. I fill the data form in each group and then compile the report and send it to the supervisor of the ED (Electoral Division)”*.

During a KII with a CCFLS Field Agent in Menkhoaneng CC a number of implementation challenges confronting the combined programmes at the field level were raised. This included getting all CGP beneficiaries to engage in SPRINGS, particularly as discussed above, they perceived that being part of SPRINGS may lead to being taken off CGP.

Another constraint limiting participation as perceived by the CCFLS Field Agent was due to the nature of SPRINGS as a livelihoods programme, as opposed to hand outs: “*what we offer as SPRINGS is education. We don’t give seeds or money ... and so they think that we are giving them work and with that they won’t get more money from CGP. It’s also hard as they expect something from us – certain incentives, but we try and make them understand that they can go further with the little CGP money they have and if you can be involved in SPRINGS and with CGP, you can be better off*”.

A final challenge, raised by a Field Supervisor in Menkhoaneng CC was the high number of SILC groups to monitor – “*there are now 84 SILC groups I am supervising in Menkhoaneng so the coordination can be difficult*”. As the Field Supervisor explained, each SILC Field Agent is meant to supervise six SILC groups, but they often have as many as 14 groups, which often made the work of the Field Agent harder than intended. This was also observed in Tenosolo CC, where a SILC Field Agent reported she supervised ten groups – although she reported that they were told from the beginning they could form at least seven groups. **In sum, local programme support from SPRINGS personnel with involvement of local leaders have played a crucial role in optimizing benefits for CGP beneficiaries engaging in SPRINGS.** In the combined programme locations, there was a wider set of messages, particularly addressing income generation and poverty reduction more widely, and improved nutrition. CGP beneficiaries were sensitized and made aware that they could use the CGP money to invest in SILC and buy seeds, which in turn would create additional money for them to invest in their children. SPRINGS Field Agents and Field Monitors also provided beneficiaries with constant technical messaging and follow-up support, for example on keyhole gardens, SILC groups, financial education, income-generating skills, health and nutritional practices and food preservation – all of which showed positive impacts.

4.3.4 Changes in Household Poverty

Overall, the findings indicate that while CGP alone has enabled beneficiary households to cater to the needs of children, particularly their education and buying food – it is often too little to make a long-lasting impact. In both Ha Teketsi and Ha Makalakame villages in Maisa Phoka CC, male and female beneficiaries and opinion leaders reported an improvement in children’s nutrition– from eating only papa and water to having vegetables - and a reduction in diseases among children - diarrhoea, vomiting, malnutrition. The *fato fato* programme in Maisa Phoka CC was said to have brought a positive change as households were guaranteed more food during that period. While children were healthier, happier, less hungry and concentrated more in school, and people on the programme were able to borrow less from others, beneficiaries often mentioned that CGP payments had only slightly reduced poverty in their households, and even less so in their communities – as there were still many vulnerable households. CGP beneficiaries in Maisa Phoka CC were also not investing in savings – or productive assets, as they perceived their CGP transfers as being too small and meant to be spent on children’s needs. Debt was also still prominent and high.

In the older CGP and SPRINGS combined site, Menkhoaneng CC, there was more access to vegetables through keyhole gardens, more children were able to attend high school as fees could be paid through money from SILC, and there was more investment in savings, productive assets including IGAs and more awareness and practice on saving and budgeting. Beneficiaries in Menkhoaneng CC also noted that CGP on its own did not bring

about as radical a change, as they had to wait at least three months to receive the transfer and often were in debt while waiting - *“If CGP could be stopped anytime they would still be able to survive from what they learned from SPRINGS”* (male beneficiary, Top village).

Health and nutrition also appeared to be better in Menkhoaneng CC, with beneficiaries reporting a reduction in hunger because of keyhole gardens and improved access to nutrition information. It is believed that poverty had gone down among households that were members of SILC groups and had keyhole gardens as they had access to a diversity of vegetables from their keyhole gardens and were also able to spend the money saved from not buying vegetables on other types of food, such as milk and eggs. There was improved social cohesion in communities – people worked together in constructing keyhole gardens and in SILC groups and *Matsema* groups helped the elderly and those who are ill or living with disabilities to construct. There was also evidence of spillover effects to the wider community, as more members of the community had also begun to construct keyhole gardens, which also meant increased food availability in the community.

In Tenosolo CC as SPRINGS was still relatively new, there were less observable changes, but an optimistic perception that things would change as a result of SPRINGS - *“we only started this year (2017) and we really cannot talk about changes except being able to access loans (from SILC), but we will see at the end of the year when we divide the money”* (male beneficiary, Letlapeng village). CGP beneficiaries engaged in SPRINGS also believed they would be able to buy assets, such as blankets when they shared out. Some beneficiaries in Tenosolo CC participating in both programme interventions have already noticed some changes – with keyhole gardens being constructed, SILC groups being formed and the training they received on saving, borrowing and budgeting. A councillor in Mocheng Village also observed that while small in number, CGP beneficiaries on SPRINGS were now better able to buy goods, such as paraffin and toiletries for their households. Similarly, a SILC Filed Agents reported that in the groups he leads, members *“usually tell me they are able to have cash at all times because of SILC and can use it on the needs that they have in their family”*. For female beneficiaries in Tenosolo CC, one of the strongest benefits of the combined programmes was at least visibly decreasing inequalities: *“one can no longer draw a big line or demarcation of the poor, poorer, poorest and the wealthy as more children have uniforms and clothes and look like other children. There is also less dependency and reliance among community members as we are able to have more food from vegetables from the keyhole gardens”*.

In sum, CGP and SPRINGS combined has played a role in addressing CGP beneficiaries’ livelihoods and household needs. It has led to a reduction in household vulnerability among beneficiaries, particularly those who have been engaged in both interventions for longer – and seems to be creating a perception of decreasing inequalities, resulting in improved social cohesion. It has played a central role in improving the social and economic well-being of children by ensuring they are able to eat healthier food more times a day and attend school. While these changes are observed among beneficiary households, with less change in the larger community, there is also evidence of spillover effects in the community. A vast number of community members have begun to construct keyhole gardens - increasing food availability in the community, and to engage in SILC groups - leading to an increase in income and access to finance.

5 Conclusion

This qualitative research examined the impact of linkages between CGP and SPRINGS combined in three main interrelated areas: (i) household income, market engagement, resilience and local economy impacts; (ii) nutrition and consumption; and (iii) operations, notably regarding combined programmes. The study consisted of an analysis of three sites in Leribe and Thaba Tseka districts: a CGP alone site, an earlier CGP and SPRINGS combined site both in Leribe district, and a more recent CGP and SPRINGS combined site in Thaba-Tseka district. Additionally, there was a 'light' comparative analysis of sites that have not received either CGP or SPRINGS support to analyse conditions of people outside coverage of the programmes.

Main qualitative methods employed included: FGDs with participatory tools, KIIs, and in-depth household case studies to obtain views, experiences, perceptions and opinions of main areas of inquiry. The study adopted an open-ended, iterative and inductive approach central to *qualitative analysis* – in order to broaden the understanding of impacts on different actors, both intended, unintended and unexpected, and capture the types and complexity of processes leading to decisions and impacts (Pozarny, 2017; see also Garbarino and Holland, 2009; Pozarny and Barrington, 2016 on advantages of qualitative methods). Daily research team debriefings were conducted after each day's fieldwork, facilitating in-depth systematic review of findings to capture key conclusions. Three synthesis-day sessions were held at the conclusion of each research site to consolidate evidence and develop research conclusions. Community feedback sessions were conducted to validate findings and preliminary conclusions, offering community members an opportunity to add last observations. These meetings also enabled ownership and sharing of the findings with communities met. The research leads to the following conclusions:

Household income, market engagement and resilience and local economy impacts:

This research theme examined causal effects of the combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions on the household economy – specifically the hypothesis is: ***combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions increases and stabilizes household income, resulting in strengthened economic security, resilience and market engagement - all of which also benefits the community-wide economy.*** In summary, **research findings suggest that this hypothesis is partly true** – that combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions resulted in:

- increased income and greater stability of income levels – largely through formation of SILC groups, which led to increased access to finance. This additional household income, although still used on children's educational needs and to buy more food, was also invested in productive assets and/or to set up small-scale businesses and IGAs;
- diversified income streams - generated by CGP transfers, SILCs and IGAs, as well as vegetables from keyhole gardens. Multiple sources of income were particularly important in situations of stress, but may also present risks of their own, such as market saturation due to selling similar vegetables within the local community;
- greater risk taking over time, particularly with longer duration of involvement in SPRINGS, due to having a more secure and stable income;
- improved knowledge and practice on savings, borrowing, budgeting and income generating skills as a result of financial education training provided by SPRINGS –

resulting in higher savings over time, a modest, but positive effects on debt reduction and an increase in more savings and investments in starting IGAs;

- SILC groups accessing more formal financial institutions, particularly in the context of a longer duration in the programmes. This enabled beneficiaries to open accounts, take out loans for larger IGAs or register as formal associations due to organizational, financial and business support from Extension Agents;
- Sustainability of SILC groups strengthened over time through trained community-based SILC Field Agents who train newly formed SILC groups in areas such as budgeting, saving, borrowing, and record keeping;
- contributed to a positive change in the local economy by increasing expenditures – enabling beneficiaries to spend more money more regularly in markets in main towns, and in some cases in village *spaza* shops, enabling shop owners to buy more products in bulk with more variety and quantity of goods. The combined programmes have also supported existing market groups to access commercial entry points. Combined programmes have no impact on prices of goods, which fluctuate as a result of drought and inflation;
- indications of improved resilience and reduced negative coping strategies - being less affected by the delays and irregularities in CGP quarterly payments, depending less on others in their community (family members or neighbours) for assistance, relying less on irregular and often low-paid piecework and casual labour for income, and consuming more nutritious food more consistently - eating more times a day.

Household Nutrition, dietary knowledge and consumption impacts: This research theme examined causal effects of the combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions on the household nutrition – specifically the hypothesis is: ***households benefitting from combined CGP and SPRINGS programmes have improved their dietary practices, nutritional knowledge base and consumption patterns towards healthier diets, resulting in enhanced infant and young child care practices in particular and improved household wellbeing.*** In summary, **research findings suggest that this hypothesis is mostly true** – that combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions results in:

- improvement in nutrition and diet by eating more times a day - attributed to keyhole gardens ensuring constant access to a variety of vegetables, money saved from no longer needing to buy vegetables and the additional income from SILC groups which are used to purchase a diversity of more nutritious food. This has resulted in healthier, stronger and happier children that perform better at school, eat a variety of food 'on demand' and no longer worry about having something to eat;
- improved nutritional knowledge and practice, good sanitation and health - through educational training and classes on nutrition and hygiene; for caregivers of children aged 6 – 23 months best practices on childcare and feeding through CCFLS training on how to prepare food using a variety of vegetables from keyhole gardens and food preservation strategies. This has been a positive impact effecting both beneficiary and wider community members;
- improved knowledge and skills - evidenced in practice - on how to properly construct and maintain keyhole gardens, enabling beneficiaries and community members to grow more varied produce, thereby improving household food security;

- indications of improved social cohesion through keyhole garden construction as community members come together to construct them through the support of *Matsema* groups come together to construct them;
- Sustainability of keyhole gardens can be strengthened over time with beneficiaries using additional income from SILC groups to purchase seeds, with follow-ups provided by trained Lead Farmers supporting construction and maintenance of keyhole gardens, vegetable production management and post-harvesting methods;
- minimal impact on access to other types of support services and information through citizen outreach services, appearing to occur on average only once a year in the communities. This has implications of additional costs, time and uncertainty of a successful outcome when beneficiaries are obliged to make trips to towns to access services.

Combined programme operations: This research theme examined causal effects of the combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions on programme operations - specifically the hypothesis is: **combining cash transfers (CGP) and livelihood programmes (SPRINGS) through effective coordination and implementation reduces household vulnerability, and improves household social and economic well-being - with particular benefits for children - more than implementation of one programme alone or without either.** In summary, **research findings suggest that this hypothesis is true to some extent** – that combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions results in:




- less stress in beneficiary households – due to increased incomes and access to finance, reduced borrowing from neighbours, friends and relatives, increased school enrolment particularly among high school children, improved knowledge and practice on savings, borrowing and budgeting, improved food and diversity in diet – combined with improved nutrition and information and awareness around nutrition and health;
- a broader set of messages, particularly addressing income generation and poverty reduction more widely, as well as nutrition - all of which indicate positive impacts on CGP and SPRINGS combined beneficiary households. CGP beneficiaries are sensitized on using the CGP money to invest in SILC groups for example, in turn generating additional income for them to invest in their children among other investments;
- a reduction in household vulnerability, particularly those who have been engaged for a longer period of time – which seems to be creating a perception of decreasing inequalities, resulting in improved social cohesion;
- slight reduction in poverty in CGP only beneficiary households, although less perceived change in the wider community. More visible poverty reduction among CGP households that were members of SILC groups and had keyhole gardens, and evidence of spillover effects in the community, e.g. vast replication of keyhole garden construction and engagement in SILC groups;
- variance in impacts over time – longer durations of support appear to yield more visible effects. Findings suggest that the combination of the CGP cash plus SPRINGS may lead to more sustainable effects over time, particularly regarding poverty reduction and improved nutrition;
- increased awareness among some beneficiaries that with SPRINGS, if CGP phased out, they would still be able to sustain their livelihoods - indicating that cash plus

programmes may lead to more sustainable effects over time, particularly regarding poverty reduction and improved nutrition;

- need for more awareness and attention on unintended consequences: first, attention to inclusion of non-CGP beneficiaries in SPRINGS interventions is vital - reducing tensions around CGP and promoting community livelihoods overall; second, ensuring clear messages that CGP beneficiaries who participate in SPRINGS are not at risk of CGP removal - thus eliminating fears that participation will not mean being taken off CGP.

Overall, the study has the following conclusions.

Table 5.1 Findings on the research hypotheses

Research theme	Hypothesis	Conclusion	
Household economy	Combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions increase and stabilize household income, resulting in strengthened economic security, resilience and market engagement - all of which also benefits the community-wide economy.		Partly true. Combined interventions have led to an increase and stability of incomes largely through access to SILC groups, and with additional income generated from selling surplus vegetables from keyhole gardens. Financial education has led to additional investments in SILC groups, savings and plans to save more to be able to invest in productive investments and small IGAs. Only a small number of beneficiaries have set up IGAs, such as poultry groups and piggery projects. Multiple income streams, including CGP transfers, SILC and IGAs ensure diverse sources of food and income security, particular during periods of stress. Risk-taking appears more evident with longer durations in SPRINGS.
Dietary practices and nutritional knowledge	Households benefitting from combined CGP and SPRINGS programmes have improved their dietary practices, nutritional knowledge base and consumption patterns towards healthier diets, resulting in enhanced infant and young childcare practices in particular and improved household wellbeing.		Yes, true. Beneficiaries are able to eat better and more times a day, with a diversity of food. Keyhole gardens provide a constant supply of vegetables for consumption, and also sale. Money saved by own production of vegetables is used to buy food, of higher nutritional value than previously. Health and nutrition information from SPRINGS have also added value to previous information and messages from nutritionists and nurses in the community.
Programme Operations	Combining cash transfers (CGP) and livelihood programmes (SPRINGS) through effective coordination and implementation reduces household vulnerability, and improves household social and economic well-being - with		To a modest extent, true CGP and SPRINGS combined has resulted in increased CGP beneficiaries' sensitisation in using transfers for productive investments and in SILC groups to generate additional income streams to meet children's needs and improve livelihoods. Not all CGP beneficiaries participate in SPRINGS interventions due to fears that participating will cause their removal

	<p>particular benefits for children - more than implementation of one programme alone or without either.</p>	<p>from CGP. Less tension and increased cohesion in community has transpired, and reduced stress in households. Perceptions among some beneficiaries that if CGP phased out, they could sustain their livelihoods with SPRINGS support. Marginal evidence only of spillover effects in the local community - most purchases in nearby towns.</p>
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6 Recommendations

The study raises a number of important lessons and recommendations for consideration for the Government of Lesotho (GoL), Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS), including extension workers, and other key stakeholders. From the findings and conclusions presented above, there are a number of key lessons learned in support of potential expansion of the CGP and SPRINGS combined intervention model – particularly in light of the possible envisaged community development model of social assistance. The recommendations are presented in order of priority and importance:

Promote and intensify CGP beneficiaries’ engagement in SILC for improved resilience and livelihoods: the research team highlights this issue as priority. Based on evidence from the qualitative research, SILC groups provide CGP beneficiaries increased and stable incomes enabling them to purchase additional food for household needs, invest in setting up small-scale businesses, maintain savings and plan for long-term needs. Participating in SILC also results in beneficiaries’ reduction in debt (particularly prompted by delayed CGP payments). CGP plus SILC intervention support shows potential to gradually reduce poverty levels sustainably, improve livelihoods and promote more resilience over time, eventually alleviating the need for cash transfer support. This is largely due to the creation of multiple income streams that can generate diverse sources of food and income security, particularly vital during periods of stress. It is recommended that the MoSD and implementing partners provide continuous support to encourage CGP beneficiary engagement in SILC groups and emphasise linking CGP beneficiary households with SILC as a way of strengthening their capacity to generate additional income and access to loans, including through both informal and formal institutions. **MoSD district staff can achieve this by:**

- **messaging:** encouraging and actively promoting CGP beneficiaries (e.g. at paypoints and other events) to participate in SILC groups - with assurance that achieving increased incomes will not necessarily lead to immediate removal from CGP;
- **promoting/communicating benefits of SILC to all community members:** by providing information to beneficiaries and wider communities on multiple advantages derived from SILC, notably catalysing productive income-generating investments and increasing knowledge and skills in financial education - all contributing towards achieving more resilient and improved livelihoods;
- **supporting scale up of investments:** by assisting CGP beneficiaries as well as other members already active in SILCs to scale up their investments into larger-scale enterprises (for example commodity-based projects) - and connecting them with producer organisations and trade associations at local, district and national, levels (e.g. piggery and poultry associations). This would broaden access to market opportunities and services, including technical assistance and formal financial institutions (e.g. to finance production inputs).

Provide continuous support for food and nutrition security and improved livelihoods through keyhole gardens and other forms of homestead gardening, and CCFLS support: this advice, following above, is considered the second priority of importance. Based on evidence from the qualitative research, keyhole gardens benefit

beneficiaries in terms of food security, nutrition, health, income generation and savings. They also can strengthen cohesion, building on traditional support groups and values (through *Matsema* groups). It is recommended that CGP complementary interventions are geared to provide continuous support towards achieving sustainability of improved keyhole gardens within communities by working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS) extension workers and community and district stakeholders, including local authorities, traditional leaders and health workers. **MoAFS Extension Workers can achieve this by:**

- **setting up linkages** to enable continuous and consistent effective follow-ups by Lead Farmers, including providing regular refresher training and education to Lead Farmers. This is essential to support the maintenance and sustainability of keyhole gardens within communities following project phase out;
- **supporting diversification** of garden produce, particularly in cases where beneficiaries in the same community sell similar vegetables, to promote local availability of diversified vegetables and increased income from local market exchanges.

In complement with keyhole garden support, the CCFLS capacity development should continue and be systematically implemented. This would promote improved dietary practices among infants and young children and particularly support improved consumption - linking up with keyhole vegetables.

Strengthen support to local service providers for improved access to services: this is the last recommendation of priority among the three. Based on evidence from the qualitative research, although SPRINGS pilot aims to promote and strengthen access to government services and service providers, access has remained low. This is largely due to limited staff capacity and availability of resources to effectively service Community Councils (CCs), commonly remote and dispersed in Leostho. Increased access to services for beneficiaries, as well as all rural populations at large, is critical to addressing inclusive poverty reduction – including supporting social, human, economic and more specifically labour market integration. It is recommended that the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) and implementing partners can improve access to multi-sectoral services of combined programmes, as envisaged in the citizen outreach model (one-stop-shop) piloted by SPRINGS, by continuing to advocate for and encourage different institutions operating in diverse sectors such as education, health, agriculture and labour, to work in greater cooperation at local levels. **MoLG can achieve this by:**

- **intensifying advocacy and training** to service providers (government and non-government) on the value-added of collaboration: encouraging a combination of various types of multisectoral support (e.g. production, nutrition, marketing etc.) towards improving livelihood outcomes, resilience and reducing poverty at community levels;

encouraging concrete linkages among programmes, for example through incentivising services/programmes to include beneficiaries on combined interventions

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Annex One: SPRINGS Component Packages³⁴

Increased income through SILC and financial education (open to all community members): To ensure families engage in savings and lending activities and have improved their financial management skills, Field Monitors (two per CC) and Field Agents are recruited, oriented and trained. Field Monitors provide training, quality monitoring and support and Field Agents deliver the SILC intervention directly to groups of 15 to 20 individuals. Each field agent is expected to support at least six SILC groups at a time. Field agents train newly formed SILC groups in a set of nine training modules (average of one module per month), including in budgeting (tracking income and expenses), saving and borrowing, and record keeping. Using CRS' standard "Marking Basics" and "Seven Steps of Marketing" curricula, SPRINGS also provides marketing clubs with training on how to identify local markets, negotiate prices, arrange transport to market, and liaise with buyers.

Improved nutrition through keyhole gardens (open to all community members): SPRINGS trains lead farmers, who support 10-15 households, in keyhole garden construction, planning and maintenance. Lead farmers, in turn, demonstrate what they have learned in each community to encourage uptake of keyholes. Lead farmers also provide food preservation training to households, as well as continuous support in the community. Lead farmers, and others from the community also form *Matsema* groups - community-based groups that provide guidance and labour to households interested in constructing keyhole gardens. Lead farmers also receive a basic orientation to nutrition to promote linkages of keyholes to improved nutrition at the household level and are provided visual information on the benefits of keyhole gardens and food preservation to household nutrition.

Improved nutrition awareness and child care practices through CCFLS (open to all community members): SPRINGS works to improve caregivers of children 6 – 23 months knowledge, confidence and adoption of recommended infant and young child feeding and care practices through CCFLS - a preventative approach against malnutrition that links dietary diversity with crop diversification. CCFLS promotes the notions of food processing, preparation and preservation techniques to increase food availability and smooth consumption especially during the lean season. CCFLS activities are closely linked with keyhole garden activities, as they capitalize on the availability of vegetables and other locally and seasonally available foods (fruits, field crops, animal products).

CCFLS field agents are trained on the CCFLS model including recipe demonstration and food preservation and work in collaboration with community health workers to introduce the CCFLS model to communities and encourage participation in the programme. CCFLS takes place at least twice a year (lean and harvest season) over 12 consecutive days. CCFLS field agents convene caregivers and their children meet for about two hours in an agreed venue within the community. Each sessions includes activities that contribute towards preventing malnutrition, such as participatory cooking demonstrations; participatory food processing, preparation and preservation sessions; reinforcing appropriate health and hygiene messages in a group setting; and reinforcing optimal child feeding and care practices. Following CCFLS sessions, CCFLS field agents will conduct four follow-up home visits (1, 2,

³⁴ From CRS-UNICEF Proposal (2015), CRS Presentation (October 2017), KIIs with CRS Field Monitors and Field Agents (October – November 2017)

3 and 6 months after training) after CCFLS to monitor the child's progress and ensure children are healthy.

Improved access to services through Citizen Service Outreach Days: CRS works in partnership with UNICEF, to provide technical assistance and support to the MoLG to expand the Citizen Service Outreach Day. This includes designing service training manuals serving as a guide for the training and a resource for those organizing the events, such as Child Health Days. It also includes training MoLG staff on conducting multi-sectoral meetings where different service providers can collaborate to plan a successful outreach event. The training includes an understanding of the value of different sectors in implementing and sustaining effective outreach events, and builds MoLG staff skills in planning, organizing and facilitating multi-sectoral team meetings. Finally, MoLG staff are trained on how to organize and execute services days.

It should be noted that while CGP beneficiaries are encouraged and advised to engage in SPRINGS, it is not mandatory for CGP beneficiaries to participate in SPRINGS interventions, such as SILC groups and keyhole gardens. Participation in CCFLS - which is also open to all community members - is based on the weight and height of children, with caregivers of those children aged 6 to 23 months that are below the average weight and height of their age enrolled.

Annex Two: Research Hypotheses and Areas of Inquiry

	Research Hypothesis	Areas of Inquiry
1	Combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions increase and stabilize household income, resulting in strengthened economic security, resilience and market engagement - all of which also benefits the community-wide economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes (perceived and experienced) in household income, including income stability, and effects/impacts on beneficiary households/members; types of changes generated, causes and views of these changes (disaggregate between CGP and SILC when possible) - Following above, if relevant – expenditures and investments made from increases in income, e.g. productive assets, IGAs, livelihoods, child care, well-being, education, livelihoods - and impacts; - Changes in access to finance with particular focus on savings and internal lending groups (SILC) (e.g sources, reasons, modalities) and impacts (including gender and women’s empowerment implications) - Changes in skill sets and related activities, with particular emphasis on income generating skills, financial management and marketing/value chain integration (e.g. business plans, market clubs), and impacts – also examine any further aspirations concerning new skills - Changes and perceptions of changes in community-wide market activities—and its interface with programme interventions (e.g. availability and diversity of goods and services – including S&L, prices, competition etc.) and perceived causes and effects of these changes; - Changes in perceptions and attitudes concerning risks and in risk-sharing/networks, social assistance associations among community members, particularly focused on beneficiaries and relations with others, and resultant resilience (also examining inclusion effects).
2	Households benefitting from combined CGP and SPRINGS programmes have improved their dietary practices, nutritional knowledge base and consumption patterns towards healthier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceived changes in diet (including diet content, diversity etc.) as well as in knowledge and consumption practices - and perceived motivations and driving factors for these changes;

	<p>diets, resulting in enhanced infant and young child care practices in particular and improved household wellbeing.</p>	<p>views/experiences/attitudes about impacts of these changes, with particular focus on children (examine expenditures, consumption practices, preservation and post-harvest methods etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uptake of keyhole garden systems; perceived benefits, trade-offs and impacts (note any household expenditure changes on food) - Changes in exposure/engagement with support services (formal and informal) regarding diet diversity, nutrition, hygiene and child care – with particular focus on community complimentary feeding and learning sessions and follow ups (CCFLS) – and views on these changes and impacts (including long-term) - Changes in access to services and information more broadly (examining specifically citizen outreach services) – reasons and processes for these changes, and impacts at household and community-wide levels
<p>3</p>	<p>Combining cash transfers (CGP) and livelihood programmes (SPRINGS) through effective coordination and implementation reduces household vulnerability, and improves household social and economic well-being - with particular benefits for children - more than implementation of one programme alone or without either.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of CGP grant with CGP + SPRINGS combined interventions, and perceived effects and impacts (examining changes in income stability, livelihoods, nutrition status) - Beneficiary views/experiences of specific SPRINGS added-value to the CGP (specify effects of combined intervention), changes since SPRINGS start up - Effectiveness and perceptions of programme local support mechanisms from the two programmes: coordination, overlap, messaging, communications, home visits, monitoring - Unintended or negative effects from combined programmes on beneficiary household, community (e.g. economy, social relations, leadership etc.) - Views and perceptions and experiences on changes in household poverty among beneficiaries

Annex Three: Fieldwork Road Map

DAY 1	Brief introduction at District level (KII with informants of relevant ministries/and CRS officer)	
	Village Cluster 1 (subteam 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions with village Chiefs/leaders • 1 FGD with men/women opinion leaders/resource persons • 1 FGD with men – driving factor matrix tool • Confirm fieldwork FGD/KII for next three days Evening debrief	Village Cluster 2 (subteam 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions with village Chiefs/leaders • 1 FGD with men/women opinion leaders/resource persons • 1 FGD with men – driving factor matrix tool • Confirm fieldwork FGD/KII for next three days Evening debrief
DAY 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FGD with women - driving factor matrix tool • 1 FGD with men using programme impact analysis tool Evening debrief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FGD with women - driving factor matrix tool • 1 FGD with men using programme impact analysis tool Evening debrief
DAY 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FGD with women (female-headed if possible) using programme impact analysis tool • 1 KII with CRS agent or MoA extension agent (involved in SPRINGS) • 1 KII with SILC officer/agents or CCFLS field agents) • 1 Household in-depth case study Evening debrief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FGD with women (female-headed if possible) using programme impact analysis tool • 1 KII with CRS agent or MoA extension agent (involved in SPRINGS) • 1 KII with SILC officer/agents or CCFLS field agents) • 1 Household in-depth case study Evening debrief
DAY 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FGD with SILC group (or marketing club promoted by SPRINGS) • 1KII (a lead farmer for keyhole gardens) • 1KII (head of/lead of a market club) • Brief community validation/feedback if time Evening debrief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FGD with SILC group (or marketing club promoted by SPRINGS) • 1KII (a lead farmer for keyhole gardens) • 1KII (head of/lead of a market club) • Brief community validation/feedback if time Evening debrief
Day 5	Comparison community	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FGD with men/women opinion leaders – brief overview discussion • 1 FGD with women, using driving factor matrix tool • 1 FGD with men, using driving factor matrix tool 	
DAY 6	Team consolidation and synthesis half day and travel to next site	

Source: Adaptation from FAO PtoP/OPM studies. Note: The precise order of FGDs and KIIs may vary slightly depending on availability in communities.

Annex Four: Research Respondents Met in the Field (including key qualitative research methods used)

Pilot (Qiloane CC)	Menkhoaneng CC	Maisa Phoka CC	Tenosolo CC
<p>Ntlo-Kholo Village</p> <p>Female beneficiaries (FGD - 13p)</p> <p>Male beneficiaries (FGD - 6p)</p>	<p>Mahlabatheng Village</p> <p>Opinion leaders: 5p (FGD - 1 M, 4 F)</p> <p>Female beneficiaries: 13p (FGD1 – 7p/FGD2 – 6p)</p> <p>Male beneficiaries: 11p (FGD 1 – 5p/FGD 2- 6p)</p> <p>SILC Group (FGD - 7 F)</p> <p>KII: 4p (FGD - 2 M, 2 F) (CRS Supervisor, SILC Field Agent, Pre-school teacher, Deputy Principal)</p>	<p>Ha Teketsi (Kuenaneng), Ha Mokotjo and Literapeng Villages</p> <p>Opinion leaders: 14p (FGD - 5M, 9 F)</p> <p>Female beneficiaries: 17 (FGD1 – 8p/FGD2 – 9p)</p> <p>Male beneficiaries: 8p (FGD 1 – 5p/FGD 2- 3p)</p> <p>CGP and Old age pension (FGD: 2F, 1M)</p> <p>KII 4p (FGD 4F) (Support group member, Nursery teacher, Nutritionist, Area Technical Officer)</p>	<p>Letlapeng Village</p> <p>Opinion leaders: 6p (FGD - 4F, 2M)</p> <p>Female beneficiaries: 10p (FGD1 – 5p/FGD2 – 5p)</p> <p>Male beneficiaries: 8p (FGD 1 – 4p/FGD 2- 4p)</p> <p>Market club (FGD - 2F, 4M)</p> <p>KII: 4p (FGD - 3M, 1F) (CRS Field Monitor, SILC Field Supervisor, Councillor, CCFLS Field Agent)</p>
	<p>Top and Mokhoallang Village</p> <p>Opinion leaders: 7p (FGD - 3M, 4F)</p> <p>Female beneficiaries: 18p (FGD1 – 9p/FGD2 – 9p)</p> <p>Male beneficiaries: 7p (FGD 1 – 3p/FGD 2- 4p)</p> <p>SILC Group: 7p (FGD - 1 M, 6F)</p> <p>KII: 4p (FGD 2M, 2F) (MoA Extension Agent, CCFLS Field Agent, SPRINGS Technical Officer, Lead farmer)</p>	<p>Ha Makalakame Village</p> <p>Opinion leaders: 7p (FGD - 6M, 1F)</p> <p>Female beneficiaries: 19 (FGD1 – 9p/FGD2 – 10p)</p> <p>Male beneficiaries: 8p (FGD 1 – 4p/FGD 2- 4p)</p> <p>Support group workers: 7p (FGD - 7F)</p> <p>KII: 4p (FGD - 3F 1M) (School teacher, Support group worker, Village health worker, Former councillor)</p>	<p>Mocheng Village</p> <p>Opinion leaders: 5p (FGD - 3M, 2 F)</p> <p>Female beneficiaries: 16p (FGD1 – 8p/FGD2 – 8p)</p> <p>Male beneficiaries: 8p (FGD 1 – 4p/FGD 2-)</p> <p>Market club: 8p (FGD: 2M, 6F)</p> <p>KII: 4p (FGD - 3M, 1F) (Field Agent), Leader Farmer, CCFLS Field Agent, Chief)</p>
	<p>Ha Topisi Village (Comparison)</p> <p>Female FGD: 8p</p> <p>Male FGD: 6p</p> <p>Opinion Leaders FGD: 10p (8F, 2M)</p>	<p>Tale Village (Comparison)</p> <p>Female FGD: 10p</p> <p>Male FGD: 8p</p> <p>Opinion Leaders FGD: 8p (8F)</p>	<p>Macheseng Village (Comparison)</p> <p>Female FGD: 10p</p> <p>Male FGD: 10p</p> <p>Opinion Leaders FGD: 7P (2M, 5F)</p>

Total Informants Met: 345 (Male- 123 /Female - 222)

Annex Five: Training Schedule

TRAINING AGENDA

QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY ON THE IMPACTS OF LESOTHO CHILD GRANT (CGP) AND SUSTAINABLE POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH INCOME, NUTRITION AND ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES (SPRINGS)

25TH – 28TH OCTOBER 2017

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY 25 TH OCTOBER	
Session	Topic
09.00 – 10.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome, introductions and ground rules Overview of the training, pilot and fieldwork plans Briefing on the FAO social protection research approach; rationale for qualitative research Sharing experiences of qualitative research (including tools)
10.30 – 10.45	Tea Break
10.45 – 13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key concepts: social protection (including social cash transfers), livelihoods, food security, well-being - and benefits of programme coherence. Rationale and overview of the Lesotho Child Grants Programme (CGP) and the Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government services (SPRINGS) – objectives, implementation, targeting, coverage
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued discussion as needed The programmes theory of change - strengthened impacts with programme linkages The evaluation study: areas of inquiry, three research hypotheses, key research questions and probing questions
15.30 – 15.45	Tea Break
15.45 – 17.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue discussion on hypotheses/questions/probing Overview of the 3-week fieldwork process
DAY 2: THURSDAY 26 TH OCTOBER	
09.00 – 10.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap of Day 1 and Overview of Day 2 – any issues for further clarification Overview of fieldwork roadmap– entry into the district, communal council and the community Fieldwork protocols: conduct; ethics; positionality; FGD protocols and facilitation Research techniques: open-ended questions & importance of probing; data collection, notetaking & management (including daily debriefs, consolidation, synthesis days)
10.30 – 10.45	Tea Break
10.45 – 13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-depth review of the guiding questions and practice session in small groups of Guiding questions (local Sesotho language adaptation)

13.00 – 14.00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the use of Participatory Tools: a means to stimulating discussion • Participatory tool 1: Driving factor matrix tool and probing questions: Group practice
15.30 – 15.45	Tea Break
15:45 – 17:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory tool 2: Programme impact analysis tool and probing questions: Group practice
DAY 3: FRIDAY 27TH OCTOBER	
09.00 – 10.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap of Day 2 and Overview for Day 3 – any issues for further clarification • Continue discussion and group practice on question guide and tools as needed.
10.30 – 10.45	Tea Break
10.45 – 13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap up on question guide and tools as needed
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest Speakers and discussion
15.30 – 15.45	Tea Break
15.45 – 17.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for pilot day – objectives, roles and responsibilities (and preparations of materials and logistics)
DAY 4: SATURDAY 28TH OCTOBER	
09.00 – 13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief (5 minute) recap of pilot plan (if needed) • PILOT – Exercise in one treatment community (an opportunity to test guiding questions and tools and teamwork)
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group reflection on the pilot exercise – what went well, what were the key challenges, what could be done differently? • Debrief – data analysis • Continue analysis as necessary, what areas requiring revision?
15:30 – 15:45	Tea Break
15.45 – 17.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any outstanding issues – areas requiring revisions and practice • Final remarks on field training and research programme • Travel logistics and organisation

*training guide available on request

Annex Six: Terms of Reference – Team Leader (Lesotho Qualitative Case Study on Impacts of Lesotho CGP and SPRINGS)

Location: Home based, Maseru, and Lesotho- other locations

Specific Overview of Qualitative study - the FAO-supported impact evaluation: The study at hand aims at examining impacts of linkages between the Lesotho Child Grants Programme (CGP) and the Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government services (SPRINGS). The qualitative study is embedded within a wider impact evaluation using a mixed method approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative study will look at three main inter-related areas of impacts, which will be explored through testing three main hypotheses: (i) Combined CGP and SPRINGS interventions increases household income and strengthens its economic security, resilience and market engagement - all of which benefits the community-wide economy; (ii) Households benefitting from combined CGP and SPRINGS programmes have improved their nutritional practices and consumption patterns towards healthier diets, resulting in enhanced infant and young child care practices in particular; (iii) Programme linkages between CGP and SPRINGS that are operationalized through effective coordination and timely and well performing implementation reduces household vulnerability and social exclusion and improves household social and economic well-being, with particular benefits for children.

Consultancy objectives: The consultant, as a Team Leader will support the coordination, implementation and writing and finalization of the qualitative research study report; this includes, develop the qualitative guide and tools, finalize site selection/sampling, integrating any quantitative questions into the qualitative methods as appropriate, leading the field research process including debriefs, and writing the final report.

Activities of the consultancy: Under the overall supervision of Senior Rural Sociologist, as well as with collaboration of other national partners (e.g. FAO-Lesotho), the Consultant will carry out the following duties and responsibilities – allocated days and location for each phase indicated in brackets:

- **Phase I – Preparatory work (home-based /estimated 10 days).**
- **Phase II – In country training of local researchers and qualitative fieldwork (Maseru and different locations / estimated 27 days):**
- **Phase III – Report finalization of the Case Study (home-based /13 days).**

Expected outputs:

- Finalization of qualitative field guide
- Carry out qualitative training and fieldwork
- Finalization of qualitative study report

Qualitative case study on social cash transfers and livelihood support in Lesotho

Lesotho country case study report

This qualitative study examines the impacts of strengthening the linkages between the Lesotho Child Grants Programme (CGP) - the national social protection programme supporting poor households with children 0-17 years - and the Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government services (SPRINGS) pilot project, implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) through UNICEF with European Union financing.

The study explores operational features of these two programmes as well as their impacts on household economic security and resilience, nutritional knowledge, dietary practices and infant and child care. It aims to provide insight and understanding of the added benefits from combining social assistance through a regular and predictable cash transfer with a livelihood support intervention targeting poor rural households. The report examines in-depth the causal links and channels that create those impacts and ends with recommendations to support the potential expansion of these interventions.

Food and Agriculture Organization of
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**Social Policies and
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