

## **BARRIERS TO HEALTHY EATING AND FOOD SECURITY AMONG RECIPIENTS OF THE TARGETED CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMME (TCCTP)**

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2012

**Background:** Food security refers to access to adequate, safe and nutritious food to meet the needs of individuals. All persons do not experience the same level of food security. Food-secure households do not live in hunger or fear starvation. The Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) in Trinidad and Tobago allows for food-insecure individuals to have better access to their basic needs – food.

**Objective:** To determine how effective the TTPCard Programme is at realizing its objective of improving food and nutrition security among vulnerable participants.

**Design:** The type of study design used was a cross-sectional study. The data collection method used was primarily quantitative methodology. The research instrument used was a questionnaire, which contained both open- and close-ended questions. Data was collected during the months of March and April 2012. All participants were from the Social Welfare Head Office located at St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain in the north western region of Trinidad and Tobago. A non-random sample of sixty (60) participants in all who were currently on the TCCTP and on the application list were selected through a process of “convenient sampling.”

**Results :** Bread and cheese had the highest rates of consumption, with rice being the second most commonly consumed staple. Protein sources came mainly from cheese, milk and beans. Vegetable consumption was adequate (5-7 times weekly) by roughly half of the sample unit, with fruit consumption being less frequent (1-3 times weekly) by a higher percentage of persons (63-68%). Price was found to be the main reason determining food and beverage selection by 70% of participants. A similar percentage of persons (68.3%) were also found to be food insecure. Unemployment was significantly associated with an increased risk of food insecurity.

**Conclusion:**The Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (TCCTP) is effective to an extent at improving food security. Although many persons are still food insecure, persons are eating from all food groups albeit sometimes in sparse proportions such as the case with chicken and fish. They are eating other items to make up the recommended amounts as in the case of protein. No significant differences were found between persons who were on and off the programme, which is targeting the right clientele.