UKRAINE DFID-FUNDED INGO CONSORTIUM

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

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This case study report forms part of the findings from a Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) study on inter-agency collaboration for the delivery of Cash Transfer Programmes (CTPs). The relationship between various forms and levels of inter-agency collaboration for the delivery of CTP and the efficiency and effectiveness of these programmes was examined via four case studies. For further details on the study scope, methodology and findings across cases, please refer to the full study report.

The Ukraine DFID INGO Consortium was selected as a case study to illustrate the consortium form of inter-agency collaboration for multi-purpose cash assistance, with formal relationships and a single funding flow across members. It is distinctive from other cases in that the consortium structure and CTP approach were developed for a single UK Department for International Development (DFID) grant, and the collaboration did not extend beyond this first project period (17 months).

Key findings from this case study include the following:

- Collaboration and coordination can result in significant costs to members, which are not necessarily offset by cost saving through sharing of functions or operational resources.
- The time and costs involved in establishing a consortium do not seem to allow for efficiency or effectiveness gains in the short term.
- Delays faced by consortium members illustrate the existence of a potential trade-off between consistency and timeliness of inter-agency CTPs.
- The consortium model seems to be effective by improving members' potential outreach, both in terms of beneficiary numbers and geographic scope.
- Collaboration within a consortium requires dedicated administrative and programmatic capacity (human resources), from as early on as possible in the programme design stages.
- The consortium model was effective in that it enabled improved resilience to external factors. This includes both flexibility to cope with access constraints and strength to advocate for an improved cash response in a CWG hindered by politically-motivated inter-agency struggles.
- Despite their formality, consortia do not necessarily promote higher levels of collaboration or consistency. Funding seems to be a critical incentive that donors can rely on to promote collaboration, although this needs to be sustained throughout implementation to be effective.

1 CRISIS AND CTP CONTEXT

The Ukraine Cash Consortium was set up in response to the **tensions that started in November 2013 and led to a full outbreak of conflict and the annexation of Crimea in April 2015**. As of mid-2016, sporadic fighting was continuing in the area separating Ukrainian government forces and separatists, along the 'contact line'. Civilians have paid a high price. Over 8,500 people have been killed and at least 18,000 injured. OCHA estimated **3.1 million people remained in need of humanitarian assistance**.[1] International aid agencies were, for the vast majority, not previously present in Ukraine and had to set up capacity in a context where most local stakeholders were new to humanitarian aid, and to cash. Humanitarian assistance was concentrated in government-controlled areas (GCA) and near the 'contact line'. **Needs were considered greatest in non-government-controlled areas (NGCA)**, but only a small number of international organisations eventually obtained permission to work in those zones.

As a middle-income economy with strong (yet bureaucratic) financial infrastructure, functioning markets (except in NGCA) and a long-standing government-led, cash-based social safety net, **Ukraine presented many conditions for an effective cash-based response**. Cash assistance was rapidly rolled out by UNHCR (as early as June 2014), ICRC, WFP and IOM through sectoral (but often unconditional) cash-transfer programmes primarily linked to winterisation, shelter and FSL objectives, and through ECHO- and OFDA-funded NGO winterisation and cash-for-shelter/NFI programmes (late 2014). Apart from a small DRC pilot, however, **no multi-purpose cash-assistance programme had been implemented before the setup of the consortium**. In a span of 18 months, **cash assistance volume reached a significant scale** with aid agencies providing about US$55 million in cash and US$6.5 million via vouchers (out of a total funding of US$285 million in 2015, including operational and coordination costs).[2]

2 CONSORTIUM FORMATION AND EVOLUTION

In early 2015, DFID approached DRC to request the creation of an NGO consortium for a cash and protection intervention. In a context of limited prior INGO presence or experience of operational inter-agency collaboration, DRC, NRC, Save the Children (SCI), People in Need (PIN) and HelpAge International (HAI), who had recently contributed significantly to establishing the NGO Forum in Ukraine, started working on a joint funding application. In what has been described by some respondents as **'a forced marriage' between agencies that had no history of operational collaboration, nor necessarily the intention to implement MPG programmes** (in this case NRC and HAI), DFID provided **GBP5 million for a joint MPG and protection programme implemented by these five partners.**

The consortium was clearly established with a view to accessing this DFID funding, and was not built on a broader intention to collaborate at field-level, or a longer-term vision for joint CTP – hence the **consortium becoming known simply as 'the DFID NGO Consortium', with an identity clearly linked to this DFID grant**. Actors eventually did consider leveraging their collaboration within a consortium for fundraising, but by that time a consortium approach no longer made much sense due to very significantly reduced funding availability, which did not call for, and could not continue supporting, operational capacity for five different agencies (following the migrant crisis in Europe, and a loss of access in NGCA). From an efficiency perspective, the value of such an investment of costs (and time) for developing and building consortium structures for a single, 11-month programme (which was eventually extended to 17 months) and six-month assistance period to beneficiaries, has been questioned by respondents. It should be noted that the proportion of funds allocated to programme activities for this project stands at 58% (£2,798,298) of the total budget (£5,000,000).[3]

Among consortium members, SCI and DRC seem to be the only agencies who benefited in Ukraine from the in-country support of global cash experts and advisers, who were deployed multiple times between December

[1] 2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO).

[2] ODI research paper on cash in Ukraine.

[3] Consortium feedback to DFID questions on proposal.

2014 and April 2015 to conduct rapid market assessments and cash feasibility studies. These aimed primarily at identifying relevant modalities for assistance in both GCA and NGCA, as well as to develop a first Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB). These two assessments formed the basis of the DFID Consortium cash programme design.

3 ERM COLLABORATION STRUCTURES

The consortium collaboration structure is modelled on the Lebanon Cash Consortium (LCC) (**primarily a geographic split of responsibilities, with some 'technical leadership' responsibilities**), due largely to the prior experience of global cash advisers in the development of LCC structures that were felt to have largely proven their value. This includes **a steering committee** (at Head of Mission level), **a technical group** (separate for cash and protection) **and four dedicated staff members** (Head of Consortium, Deputy, Admin/Finance Officer and Cash Specialist), while the protection coordinator was also one of the members' project managers, and so not fully dedicated to consortium work. The consortium was led by DRC as DRC had been approached by DFID about this potential funding opportunity.

Efforts were made to introduce greater leadership and accountability for technical aspects, hence the introduction of a technical lead agency. The agencies (four only, as HAI did not initially intend to deliver on the cash component) were each responsible for the delivery of cash assistance in a separate geographic area (which, according to some respondents, 'took a long time to agree') on the basis of joint tools and standards developed at country level. Coordination, as well as representation vis-à-vis the Cash Working Group (CWG) and Ukrainian authorities was led by DRC as consortium lead. Tool and methodology development was centralised within the framework of technical groups, each led by a specific agency:

- **Targeting and verification** (design of household survey, vulnerability criteria, centralised database and beneficiary lists) involved all agencies (as linked to protection) and was led by DRC.
- **Market monitoring** (design of market monitoring tools, SMEB/transfer values, analysis of markets, modality recommendation per area) was led by SCI.
- Management of the **cash delivery process** (Operational SOPs, distribution SOPs and financial and admin documentation) was led by SCI in GCA and DRC in NGCA.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)** was centralised in terms of methodology development, data management, analysis and reporting (to be led by NRC, but later taken over by the cash specialist), and decentralised in terms of data collection (by geographic area of intervention).

While this appears to be a **potentially cost-efficient setup, with shared functions, centralisation and split of technical work**, the actual distribution of work resulted in only two agencies carrying most of the technical work, which might in practice have limited these potential gains.

4 PROGRAMME DESIGN FEATURES

Due to limited available technical expertise in-country, proposal development (for the CTP component) was led largely by SCI and DRC, with field input from PIN (one of the very few agencies able at the time to operate in NGCA). As is evident from the technical group's work-plan and the proposal itself, **a number of issues had yet to be resolved and clarified at the time of proposal submission** (partly due to lack of alignment within CWG – see below). As such, **design features evolved significantly since the initial programme launch, and were not consistently applied by all consortium members**.

Levels of collaboration: The table below shows the degree of collaboration achieved by consortium partners across the various stages of the CTP project cycle.[4]

[4] As defined by the CTP collaboration framework developed under the ERC project 'Increasing the Uptake of Multi-Purpose Cash Grants in Emergency Responses'.

CTP project cycle (ERC matrix)	Degree of collaboration (ERC matrix)	Comment/Notes
Needs assessment	Information sharing	Partners drew on needs assessments that had already been conducted by their agency in potential target areas, and no coordinated or joint needs assessments seem to have been conducted.
Market analysis	Harmonised design and highly collaborative implementation	Initial market assessments were conducted separately, but coordinated between DRC and SCI. Follow up market assessments conducted during the project relied on the use of a shared tool, with data collection by each agency in their area, and joint analysis.
Operational feasibility Analysis	Information sharing	Consortium was established after operational feasibility was assessed by the various members.
Modality selection	Information sharing	A joint framework was developed, but it appears to have been used with mixed results, as one agency opted for in-kind winterisation support instead of MPG, despite other agencies considering that the joint framework indicated the appropriateness of cash.
Funding	Harmonised design and highly collaborative implementation	One single funding stream managed through the lead agency was available for this programme. It should be noted, however, that some members successfully applied independently for CTP funding during the project period. This additional funding was not channelled through the consortium, or discussed formally between members.
Targeting & vulnerability selection	Harmonisation of design	An integrated targeting framework was developed to harmonise beneficiary selection. However, this was flexible enough to enable each agency to adjust selection based on their individual mandate, reportedly resulting in the possibility for different agencies to select different households based on the same targeting dataset.
Contracting FSPs & CDM	Harmonisation of design	Drawing on the same initial mapping of potential delivery mechanisms and associated costs (conducted prior to consortium setup), all partners but one relied on the use of remittances. Each negotiated separate agreements (with the same rates).
M&E	Harmonised design and highly collaborative implementation	Partners developed common tools, with each agency collecting data in their area, feeding a common database and joint analysis. Strong M&E reports were produced, although the need for compromise resulted in questions being removed from the PDM and an outcome indicator for the programme not being measured.
Protection	Not applicable	The programme included two separate cash and protection components, which were coordinated and managed independently. As a result, the degree of collaboration on the protection component was not reviewed within the framework of this case study.
Exit strategy/Link to SP	No collaboration	Given the highly bureaucratic nature of the Ukrainian government-run social safety net, and challenges faced by humanitarian CTP actors in linking their interventions with this initiative, it appears that consortium members opted not to work together on exploring potential links.

Modality and delivery mechanism selection: Based on initial market assessments, consortium members prioritised at proposal stage the use of unconditional cash transfers, reserving the ability to use vouchers or even in-kind assistance where markets or financial institutions might not be functional (primarily envisaged in NGCA). The proposal identified bank transfers as the optimal delivery mechanism, as these were 'most likely to lead to a greater inter-agency debate on optimal methodology, efficiency, cost, ease for beneficiaries.' The **selection of modalities and delivery mechanisms for different areas was envisaged as a dynamic process, to be informed by a structured framework including a variety of shared tools** (market analysis overview, delivery mechanism review, VfM template and risk register).[5] This was due to the fact that while financial infrastructure appeared to be strong in GCAs (despite some bureaucratic challenges), it was quasi-inexistent in NGCA, which presented a major operational challenge. This framework clearly **allowed for selecting the optimal modality and delivery mechanism based on considerations of efficiency and effectiveness**.

It appears, however, that **this process was not followed effectively, which resulted in significant inconsistencies in the selection of modalities for intervention**. Notably, potentially because of the absence of a dedicated cash-team, one consortium agency opted not to implement a cash-based response, and instead launched an in kind winterisation response. This seems to have been due to markets and financial infrastructure being considered by that agency as unsuitable in target areas, although a market assessment analysed with other partners was reported to indicate that cash was feasible. This decision was reportedly made despite objections from other members that a winterisation focus fell outside the scope of proposal objectives, and a decision by all other members to opt for a cash modality. In contrast, while another member did not initially intend to implement the MPG component, the limited access to target NGCA areas, delays due to bureaucracy, and a change in leadership led to a change of perspective and the implementation of an MPG component. This was, however, not aligned with other MPG actors (overlap in some geographic areas, three months of assistance instead of six, different targeting criteria prioritising the elderly).

All agencies were doing MPG, but one **followed the recommendations of the CWG and used the same delivery mechanism**, which involved a switch to remittances after it was found that banks would automatically withdraw funds from beneficiary accounts if these were in debt. The exception to this by one agency (HAI) is justified by the fact that they targeted primarily elderly beneficiaries who were less able to travel to banks to claim remittances, and so were targeted using post office cheques.

It should be noted, finally, that the consortium and the CWG each conducted a separate market assessment, which seems like a duplication and not necessarily efficient.

Transfer amount: The **development of a Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) and the setting of a transfer value seems to have been highly challenging** in the Ukraine context due to considerations of agency mandates and political considerations. An initial estimated SMEB was rapidly put together by a consortium member based on secondary data analysis, and the proposal noted clearly the need to review this in the coming months based on market analysis findings. The proposal also noted that 'The current agreed transfer value at Kyiv level (40 USD per person for 3 months) will not meet multi-purpose outcomes at this point'. The consortium proposed a revised SMEB for CWG review early June, although endorsement was not possible until late summer (August/September) due to resistance from other agencies: initially other clusters (who were concerned that their 'sectoral cash' would be integrated into the SMEB) and later some donors who questioned the evidence base behind the recommended revised SMEB.

This increase of the SMEB (and so of the transfer value to US$34/person per month) was clearly only possible due to strong collaboration within the consortium, and between the consortium and the CWG. **The consortium was instrumental in providing an evidence base for this increase** and for considering inflation. This in turn is expected to have **significantly improved the impact of MPGs for beneficiaries, and so the effectiveness of the programme**. However, long discussions around transfer values were a key factor in causing delays, as donors and consortium members were uncomfortable moving forward in the absence of an agreed CWG standard.

***Targeting and vulnerability selection*:** **At the time of proposal writing, there was limited clarity on the targeting and vulnerability analysis framework to be used** by consortium members. The need to align with other cash actors was noted, as were perceived limitations of criteria currently in use in-country (which were

[5] The Market Analysis overview and Delivery Mechanism review pre-dated the consortium and had been endorsed at CWG level.

based on global assumptions, and not SMART).[6] Two options were proposed with varying degrees of complexity, but both **allowed for an objective score to be assigned to beneficiary households across consortium members through the use of a shared registration tool and centralised database**. This type of mechanism is clearly the best way to ensure an efficient allocation of consortium resources across all target areas, based on need alone (as defined by members, with necessary caveats) and not geographic location or preferences of the agency providing assistance, which facilitates coordination (avoiding the need for agencies with complementary mandates to both operate in the same areas).

Unfortunately, however, such a centralised scoring and selection mechanism were never finalised, and **consortium members opted instead for a common framework that was flexible enough to enable each member to select beneficiaries based on their mandate** (for instance with HAI placing more emphasis on the elderly, SCI on families with children, or PIN on shelter conditions). It was reported by respondents that with the same beneficiary data, different agencies could have selected different beneficiaries as 'most vulnerable', which was not seen as a major issue by consortium members. This framework was based on existing practice of other cash actors, though the CWG did not propose a clear vulnerability analysis and beneficiary selection process. **Discussions later took place within the consortium to adjust inter-agency vulnerability criteria** following a protection WG presentation on vulnerable groups being overlooked (i.e. young unemployed people without access to state social welfare), but this was never completed given the low likelihood that the programme would extend.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): The M&E framework and structure at design stage seems sound and effective, with a **centralised agency responsible for methodology development, data management and analysis, and each agency responsible for data collection within agreed parameters**. This allows for cost-saving of M&E staff in various agencies (though not data collection staff), as well as for a study of programme outcomes across agencies, in a more objective and effective way. M&E was seen by a number of respondents as one of the main success factors of the consortium, and of the collaboration, although it was largely driven by the cash specialist.

However, despite initial plans to this effect, **one of the two main outcome indicators outlined in the proposal for the MPG component** ('Percentage reduction in income-expenditure gap for 7,455 extremely vulnerable households in target areas') **was never measured**. This is reportedly due to the fact that, following delays in implementation, members no longer had sufficient time and resources to allocate to envisaged M&E data collection, and so a number of initially envisaged questions were removed from the Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) form. Furthermore, it was **not clear to what extent the PDM findings had been discussed and analysed between members**, given that these became available relatively late in the implementation.

Link between cash and protection: Although the programme design offered opportunities for synergies between cash and protection components of the grant, it appears that **both project components were essentially run separately, with little interaction between MPG and protection teams or efforts towards mutual reinforcement**. The cash specialist (dedicated to consortium coordination) had little to no idea regarding protection achievements, and vice-versa. Some respondents highlighted the fact that **activities implemented under the protection component were less harmonised between members than cash activities**. They noted that the value of having worked together as a consortium for the protection side was less clear than for the cash component, notably as a result of the absence of a dedicated protection coordinator.

Exit strategy: The programme was conceived in a context where Ukraine had a long-standing and well-established social safety net. Initially, then, **synergies were sought in terms of transfer amount alignments, as well as attempts to consider access to social welfare when selecting beneficiaries**. However, flaws in the national safety-net programme quickly became apparent (transfer amount not adjusted for inflation for decades, bureaucratic barriers to access for many IDPs, long delays), and so **attempts to align and link CTP with this mechanism were gradually dropped both within the consortium and the CWG**.

[6] 'In order for the data to be captured quantitatively and systematically (objectively) at household level, the MPG Technical Group must liaise with interagency coordination mechanisms to further define some of the criteria – for example, determining what constitutes a "job profile of low need," "relatives on the verge of exhaustion," "nothing left or accessible," etc.'

5 PROGRAMME OUTPUTS, RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

Between December 2015 and March 2016, DFID consortium agencies provided **multi-purpose grants to 7,522 individuals** with the goal of 'reducing negative coping mechanisms' among vulnerable populations. While initially the programme targeted 25,000 beneficiaries for MPG, this was clearly tentative (as indicated in the proposal) and required adjustments as design features evolved (six months instead of one month of assistance initially planned, increased transfer amount, shift from NGCAs, etc.). Overall, **project outputs seem to have been satisfactorily achieved, as do the main objectives**.

PDM findings show that **the approach used for the distribution of MPGs was effective**, with beneficiaries largely satisfied with MPG as a modality, as well as with the delivery mechanism (remittances), which did not lead to any significant issues in withdrawing the cash (travel time was acceptable, as was waiting time at the bank and access to markets). With regard to the transfer amount, the majority of beneficiaries considered that 660 UAH per person per month was sufficient, and **the majority of funds was spent on covering a wide range of basic needs as per their priorities** (mostly on medicines, food, NFIs, heating, and rent). A small number of beneficiaries saved the grant for future use, including purchasing productive assets, building materials, clothing, food, heating fuel, or to pay for utilities and rent, showing MPGs also served as an instrument for households to cope with future shocks. **One of the two main outcome indicators (40% reduction in income-expenditure gap for 7,455 extremely vulnerable households in target areas) was not measured** due to delays in the evaluation, and limited available resources remaining to complete the exercise, indicating some challenges around M&E coordination.

In terms of coping mechanisms, when percentages for all negative coping mechanisms are aggregated, data show that on average there was **a reduction in reliance on negative coping mechanisms for 79.95% of households**. Shelter results show a major impact in the total number of households that resumed the use of heating, while other beneficiaries reported returning to their homes after finishing home repairs. There was a significant reduction in the number of households that stopped skipping meals; several others increased either the quantity, quality, or both of food, and the most dramatic gain was registered in the number of households that resumed care for chronic diseases. Similar trends were observed for economic related negative coping mechanisms as households stopped borrowing money for daily expenses, stopped using their savings, and stopped selling or pawning productive and non-productive assets. As for negative coping mechanisms related to children, families who reported sending their children to live with family member or a foster home stated that after receiving the grant their children returned home.

The timeliness aspect is perhaps where the consortium faced its most significant challenges. Despite a programme start date in May, and plans for the cash assistance to cover October to March, **first disbursements did not take place until December 2015, well into winter**. This resulted in the need for a non-cost extension. While these delays can partly be attributed to external factors (the transfer amount was only agreed at the CWG level in August, and the freeze on operations in NGCAs in August/September led to a need to review target areas and beneficiary selection), delays were also reported as being linked to slow decision-making within the consortium, as well as an inconsistent prioritisation among members and consortium leadership.

6 WIDER CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AND CONSORTIUM ADAPTATION

Beyond the context described in Section 1 above, **the humanitarian environment itself was generally conducive to MPG programming**. Donors were aligned in support of cash: ECHO, DFID, OFDA and SIDA policies all state clearly the relevance of cash, and donors coordinated closely (despite some constraints as in the case of the SMEB) to try to ensure consistency and coordination – although each had their partners of choice whom they continued to fund throughout the end of 2015. The HRP in 2015 included cash components under individual sectors, but **in 2016 a separate line and budget amount was added specifically for MPG, under the strong push**

of the HCT (and HC and OCHA). After the loss of access in NGCAs and the start of the migrant crisis in Europe, however, funding to the Ukraine response reduced significantly.

That said, there were significant challenges, and **a key strength of the consortium model was in its ability to concentrate resources and capacity into a single voice when coping with external challenges and coordination issues**. This strength and the effectiveness of the model can be illustrated in the face of a number of contextual constraints.

Cash coordination architecture: A major challenge for MPG promotion was **the 'political' struggle regarding cash coordination, and the need for MPG vs. sectoral cash**. This is extensively documented in the study of CTP in Ukraine led by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), so the focus here is on the impact on the consortium. While consortium members largely focused on technical cash coordination, this political dimension affected the effectiveness of their work in at least two ways. First, they felt **unable to engage fully in technical discussions with some UN agencies because of the political implications**. For instance, it was felt that being critical of the existing vulnerability criteria, which were felt to need revision, could create risks for some member agencies in their relationship with UNHCR beyond cash coordination. Second, their **efforts to improve the quality of the cash programme were hampered and delayed by political debates**, as illustrated above with the SMEB.

That said, as noted by DFID's Project Completion Review (PCR) and a number of respondents, **strong collaboration and engagement between the consortium and the CWG leadership** (also DFID-funded) **was instrumental in overcoming some of these political challenges, and so ultimately benefited the effectiveness of the cash response**. This was the case with the inclusion of the MPG line in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), with the SMEB debate, and in other instances where the consortium reportedly led the technical work of the CWG, leaving the coordinator to focus on policy issues and plugging some significant technical capacity gaps in country. Resources were also shared between the CWG and consortium in that the CWG coordinator served as cash specialist for the consortium (with DFID and OCHA's approval) until a recruitment was completed. That being said, it remains unclear whether the value in this support lies with the consortium model itself, or whether strong individual members of the CWG might not have been able to provide the same result. **While the political weight of the consortium was of value, its technical strength did not necessarily lie in numbers**.

Bureaucracy and access challenges: These are the two main challenges to the cash response in Ukraine identified by the ODI study. **Bureaucracy (primarily linked to banking regulations and agreements with financial institutions) was a constraint for consortium members**, most significantly for HAI whose protection activities were significantly delayed due to registration issues. This resulted in a shift to cash assistance that was only marginally aligned with other consortium members.

In terms of access, the consortium model was invaluable as noted by DFID's PCR: 'The distribution of food and non-food items in NGCAs was severely compromised by the decision of de facto authorities to expel a number of DFID implementing partners. […] DFID approved a request from the Consortium to reorient some distributions to vulnerable households inside government-controlled areas based on continuing humanitarian need in these areas. Consortium partners were also able to transfer some responsibility for distributions to one partner who retained access: reducing the risk that purchased items would be wasted. This approach has worked well and meant that distributions have "caught up" after initial delays caused by the barring of international agencies from non-government areas.' This clearly shows how **the consortium model (and a single grant across agencies) allowed for flexibility in responding to access challenges, where otherwise items pre-positioned might have been wasted, and outcomes for most affected populations in NGCA could still be achieved** (although respondents provided similar examples of caseload shifts for other programmes outside the scope of the consortium, so a contractual relationship is not necessarily a pre-condition for this).

Beyond this re-allocation of caseloads, **the re-distribution of target areas in light of this change of situation was done between consortium members to avoid any geographic overlap** (with the exception of HAI who switched to MPG later on) was another way in which consortium members ensured a more efficient response to the shifting context by coordinating closely (the CWG members never achieved such a division of target areas).

7 PERCEPTIONS AROUND EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

This section aims to summarise the views shared by respondents regarding specifically the impact of collaboration on efficiency and effectiveness. Findings have been anonymised at their request, except where publically available documents are directly quoted.

Respondents believed the consortium model to be **less cost-effective and slower than individual agencies being funded directly**, highlighting the cost of coordination (in terms of time and resources). On noted that 'doing it together was probably more expensive than doing it separately, as had to set up parallel systems/layers'. Another felt it was '**quite clear that the consortium did not allow for economies of scale, and could not grow to a point where it would**' due to significant changes in context that questioned its relevance (including notably the loss of access in NGCA altogether and significant reduction in donor funding).

In its PCR, DFID notes that 'Cash disbursements have proven to be a highly effective and efficient mechanism for providing flexible assistance to vulnerable households in Ukraine, where supporting markets exist. […] The value of the NGO consortium model was mixed. Partners reported that **the initial stages of establishing and mobilising the consortium model added some complexity**. DFID assesses that while this model did have added-value, **it may not be the most effective approach in a short-term response** where the benefits of a consortium approach are not realised until after a lengthy mobilisation process is complete.'

The **inconsistent use of joint tools was noted by respondents, and is likely to have affected effectiveness**. More than a failure of the consortium to set coordinated standards, this was seen by one respondent to be a **failure in sharing of lessons learnt, as agencies with less cash expertise did not, eventually, adopt learning and best practices** from other agencies with stronger cash expertise. The drastically reduced funding to the Ukraine response in 2016, reportedly prevented any potential development of the consortium, and removed incentives to push for stronger programmatic consistency. The **absence of consortium coordination during proposal development** was also felt to be a factor in explaining the limited levels of harmonisation achieved.

The value of the consortium was also highlighted as **enabling better outreach, both in terms of scale (number of beneficiaries) and geographic scope**. It was felt that from a fundraising perspective, single agencies working individually would have been unlikely to mobilise sufficient resources to serve as many beneficiaries. Furthermore, working together in a consortium pushed members to agree a split of geographic areas, which would reportedly not have been possible through coordination in the CWG.

One respondent reported that the some of the most helpful outcomes of the consortium members' collaboration were on 'agreeing the SMEB' and 'holding workshops to determine who was working where, which delivery mechanisms to use.' Both functions seem more related to ensuring a technically-sound and coordinated cash response than to operational delivery. As such, they highlight the **value of a consortium in promoting a more effective response in a context where political blockages within the CWG prevented effective technical discussions**. This was confirmed by other respondents who consistently stressed the role of the consortium in advocating for an effectively coordinated MPG response.

8 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Coordination between members was highlighted by various respondents as a significant cost, due to the need for various layers of management, as well as the slow agreement around coordination processes and technical tools. No elements pointing towards cost saving through shared functions or operational resources were reported by respondents.

Given its short lifespan (a single project), the value of time and costs investments in the setup of the consortium can be questioned. It seems clear that the fact that the **consortium was disbanded before having reached 'maturity' did not allow for efficiency or effectiveness gains** that may have arisen over time.

Consortium members faced **significant delays in launching the delivery of cash grants**, due to both internal and external factors. Some of these factors are linked to the consortium setup, illustrating the **potential trade-off between consistency and timeliness** of inter-agency cash programmes.

It seems that the consortium model contributed to the programme's effectiveness by enabling a **level of outreach (beneficiary numbers and geographic scope) that could not have been achieved individually by member agencies**. This is due to the fact that the consortium was an effective resource-mobilisation tool, and that members achieved a geographic coordination through collaboration (agreeing areas of intervention per agency) that would not have been feasible within a broader CWG.

The **presence of a dedicated coordination unit seems to have been essential** in enabling these effectiveness gains, and achieving the potential value of a consortium. The improved collaboration on cash compared to protection illustrates this, and the role of the Cash Specialist in promoting consistency among members and with the CWG. It seems **preferable for these joint resources to be in place from as early on as possible in the programme design stages**, as many future discrepancies were attributed by respondents to lack of agreement and clarity during proposal development. Earlier alignment of programme tools and approaches may also have enabled a more timely delivery.

The consortium model also **contributed to effectiveness gains by enabling members' interventions to be more resilient to external factors**. It provided the **flexibility needed in terms of geographic coverage to respond to a dynamic and changing context**: one agency's loss of access could be addressed by another agency, ensuring maintained access in a challenging context. Consortium members, **by aligning advocacy messages and providing technical services to the CWG, also seems to have significantly and positively influenced the wider cash response** in Ukraine at a time when mandate considerations by sector-lead agencies were hindering the work of the CWG. The consortium may even have added speed to technical discussions – likely reducing the time negotiations would take in the CWG without an already agreed consortium approach. This was linked largely, it seems, to shared perspectives and interests with the OCHA CWG Coordinator.

The absence of a shared vision between members prior to and during programme design affected their ability to work together, and resulted in **limited levels of collaboration and consistency, despite the formality of the consortium model**. Members targeted based on their individual mandate, did not agree on the appropriateness of the cash modality, and did not provide the same length of assistance. Some agencies operating outside of the consortium in fact reportedly harmonised CTP approaches with some consortium members more than members of the consortium among themselves. While the **initial funding availability (on the condition that a consortium be established) pushed members to collaborate, the subsequent reduction in funding removed incentives to effectively harmonise approaches** and maintain collaboration throughout implementation.

Sources:

- Consortium project documents, including the DFID proposal and annexes (as of 30 April 2016)
- Consortium Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) report (final programme report not available)
- DFID programme documents related to the Ukraine response in 2016 (Business case, Project Completion Review)
- 2015 and 2016 consolidated needs overviews and response plans for Ukraine (Humanitarian Needs Overview, Humanitarian Response Plans) and OCHA Humanitarian Bulletins
- Donor policy documents (ECHO Humanitarian Implementation Plans 2015 and 2016, USAID factsheet on Ukraine assistance, SIDA strategy for 2016)
- ECHO, IOM and UNHCR press releases regarding their cash transfer programmes
- ODI, The politics of cash: a case study on humanitarian cash transfers in Ukraine, 2016
- CaLP Cash Atlas
- UNHCR Review of cash coordination in Ukraine (November 2015)

Key Informant Interviews:

- Louisa Seferis (DRC Global Cash Advisor, involved in consortium setup)
- Ruth Aggiss (Researcher for related ODI and Cash platform studies, previous Ukraine CWG Coordinator)
- Hector Vivero (previous consortium Cash Specialist)
- Pierre Vischioni (DRC Head of Programmes in Ukraine)

The Cash Learning Partnership

Recent global initiatives have reaffirmed the potential for Cash-Transfer Programmes (CTP) to effectively and efficiently meet a wide range of disaster-affected populations' needs while preserving dignity and choice. Although much work has been done in advocating for the benefits of CTP and enhancing its use in humanitarian action, relatively less research has explored the means through which cash transfers can be delivered to maximise their potential. With the increasing funding gaps faced by humanitarian actors globally – compounded by increasingly protracted crises – demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness has become critical to ensuring the best possible allocation of limited resources to meet the needs of crisis-affected populations.

While there are different, strongly held views about how to organise stakeholders to maximise efficiency and effectiveness, evidence about how well different delivery models provide quality CTPs in different contexts – including governance and collaboration arrangements – is scarce. For example, which is more efficient and effective: diverse competitors responding to harmonised specifications or a single delivery mechanism able to access economies of scale? In which contexts, and under what enabling environments? What collaboration mechanisms maximise quality, coverage and consistency of delivery?

This study tests the commonly held assumption that greater collaboration results in greater efficiency or effectiveness. It establishes drivers and measures of efficiency and effectiveness in CTP delivery, characterises different models of collaboration for cash delivery and assesses these different models against the measures of efficiency and effectiveness.

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