

# The Global Cash Forum: The Cash Reform in Action

*July 2017*

This report summarises current developments in Cash Transfer Programming (CTP), as captured at the recent **Global Cash Forum**, held in Geneva in June 2017 (the [full report is available online](#)).

In recent years, CTP has emerged as one of the most significant innovations in humanitarian response. Major donors and agencies have made public commitments to increase its use, for instance through the Grand Bargain. Now, work is under way to build the sector-wide capacity to turn those commitments into action.

*“Your forum really brought home the value of having CaLP pull together the full range of stakeholders and to function as an ‘honest broker’ to consider the many elements that are at play when planning and executing cash programming.” Paula Reed Lynch, Bureau of Population Refugees & Migration, US State Dept*

The **Global Cash Forum** brought together 200 key actors with 30 speakers and more than 500 online participants, representing leading thinking and practice in CTP from across the globe. Participants included UN agencies, small and large NGOs, donors, private sector actors, academics and specialist consultants. Collectively, the forum addressed the substantial issues that will enable the sector to achieve the potential of cash programming.

The Forum, organised by the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) and designed to complement other initiatives such as the Grand Bargain, featured a wide range of lively discussions and a [keynote speech by Androulla Kaminara](#) (Director, DG ECHO) on ECHO’s vision for the future of cash programming in humanitarian response.

CaLP is grateful for financial support for the Forum from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.



Access the [full report online, here](#).

All recordings and content from the Global Cash Forum can be found on CaLP’s website:  
[cashlearning.org/what-we-do/global-cash-forum](http://cashlearning.org/what-we-do/global-cash-forum)

## Key Messages

The vigorous discussions at the forum can be summarised in seven key messages:

1. **Momentum for the cash reform is strong and getting stronger.** There is huge commitment at all levels across the humanitarian sector to use cash and vouchers to provide aid more efficiently and effectively. Billions of dollars more aid will be delivered as cash and vouchers in the next few years. This will play a crucial role in enabling limited resources to achieve more for people in crisis, in response to rising humanitarian needs.
2. **Cash and voucher programmes need to be carefully designed for each operating context.** Design relies on detailed analysis and sensitive judgements, the same as other forms of aid. Cash and voucher programmes have to be integrated into wider humanitarian action. They are neither simple nor always the right tool for every response.
3. Humanitarian actors are currently **upgrading their organisations and approaches to integrate cash transfer programming** into how they work. This includes donors, operational agencies, host governments and the private sector. It is work in progress, and will require time and investment to complete.
4. **Cash can play a key role in strengthening humanitarian assistance.** It disrupts existing ways of working. It shines a spotlight on current weaknesses and can help address some, but not all, of them. Looking ahead, it is expected that there will be:
  - Greater use of the private sector to deliver cash and vouchers, using existing and new technologies.
  - Greater use of unrestricted, multi-purpose cash grants, cutting across sectors.
  - Greater use of large scale cash programmes, where possible, and reduction in overlapping programmes delivered by agencies working independently.
  - Improved coordination of cash programmes across sectors and actors, with greater leadership by host governments.
  - New funding and operating models, where organisations collaborate on the basis of shared standards or principles, while each focuses on its core strengths. This will include greater use of shared operational mechanisms, and more independent monitoring.
  - Continued synergy with associated reforms, including the Grand Bargain and others, for instance on transparency, reducing duplication and bridging the humanitarian-development divide.
5. There are **different views about how cash can reform international humanitarian aid.** On the one hand, existing agencies can use cash to improve what they do. On the other, cash can potentially be used to reduce duplication and cost, open the door to new actors and drive wider reform. Reform could be achieved in ways such as establishing common delivery mechanisms for use by multiple agencies, or actively promoting unrestricted cash and large scale delivery by single actors. Navigating these options will depend on the context of each response and the political will for associated reforms, informed by emerging evidence and on-going dialogue.
6. **The cash reform is at a significant and exciting stage.** The humanitarian sector is learning more about how to use cash and vouchers at scale, in different contexts, and for different purposes. There are many examples of good practice and powerful case studies to draw from, and many gaps in experience and evidence to fill. There are also challenges, such as: involving national actors, revising business models, managing risk, balancing efficiency with

effectiveness, and maintaining trust across stakeholders. The need for progress is urgent, for both practical and political reasons.

7. The [Global Framework for Action](#) sets out a clear collective roadmap of six global objectives, based on existing commitments, that will make the cash reform happen. As the global partnership for cash transfer programming in humanitarian aid, CaLP plays a crucial role in bringing actors together to deliver those objectives and address the actions outlined below.

*Note: for clarity, in this report the term ‘Cash Transfer Programming’ is used as defined by [CaLP’s Glossary](#), to refer to both cash and voucher programmes.*

## **Proposed Actions**

This report records the key actions that were proposed by international leaders during the Global Cash Forum. They provide powerful suggestions on practical next steps for the cash reform, reflecting the breadth and depth of discussions. They are not presented as being comprehensive or formally endorsed by Forum participants. They should be considered alongside existing commitments summarised in the Global Framework for Action, and have been organised accordingly.

### **Global Objective 1: Funding**

- 1a Continue to actively promote cash transfer programming to decision makers across the humanitarian sector, as a proven, effective and efficient method of providing humanitarian aid.
- 1b Strengthen support for cash transfer programming among politicians and the tax-paying public in donor countries, based on an honest and balanced approach rather than “cash evangelism”.
- 1c Ensure that the funding and opportunities associated with the cash reform are accessible to national and local actors.
- 1d Identify opportunities for donors to work together to accelerate the adoption of cash transfer programming and address obstacles.

### **Global Objectives 2 and 3: Routine consideration and Capacity**

- 2a Provide sustained leadership within organisations to integrate cash transfer programming in areas such as: support by senior management, building staff capacity, preparedness, upgrading procedures and systems, developing relationships with new partners and building cash into existing guidance and funding cycles.
- 2b Provide clearer requests to private sector firms about specific services and products required for humanitarian action.
- 2c Establish a budget line for multi-purpose cash grants as a standard component in Humanitarian Response Plans.

### **Global Objective 4: Quality**

- 4a Develop operational standards for cash transfer programming.
- 4b Agree a set of high level principles among operational agencies and donors to guide the way forward on cash transfer programming.
- 4c Increase the use of single transfers to beneficiaries that cover as many needs as possible and reduce inefficiencies created by multiple transfers.

## Global Objective 5: Coordination

- 5a Improve collaboration between governments and humanitarian actors to use and strengthen social protection systems for humanitarian response, and to bridge humanitarian and development approaches.
- 5b Design cash and voucher programmes in the expectation that agencies will share operational mechanisms for activities such as: assessing needs, delivering cash and vouchers, monitoring and managing complaints.
- 5c Develop standards for common delivery mechanisms, that any agency can establish and different agencies can use to deliver cash based assistance.
- 5d Clarify how cash transfer programming fits into the formal coordination system and how high quality coordination for cash transfer programming can be predictably resourced and implemented in humanitarian responses.

## Global Objective 6: Evidence and innovation

- 6a Continue to innovate with new operational models, programmatic approaches and technologies, and actively share lessons in order to drive learning and practical solutions in different contexts.
- 6b Develop new models for funding overheads and core functions within operational agencies, beyond the current charge of a flat percentage of total programme costs, which is no longer viable in large scale cash programmes.
- 6c Continue to identify synergies between cash transfer programming and related humanitarian reforms, for instance across the Grand Bargain and other initiatives.
- 6d Continue dialogue to resolve collective challenges, share experience and build collective capacity and standards for better cash transfer programming across the humanitarian sector.



Access the [full report online, here](#).

All recordings and content from the Global Cash Forum can be found on CaLP's website:  
[cashlearning.org/what-we-do/global-cash-forum](https://cashlearning.org/what-we-do/global-cash-forum)