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Indonesia told us what we already knew – and more

HUMANITARIAN CASH & VOUCHER BASED PROGRAMMING & LINKAGES TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

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Asfiani was pregnant when the 7.4 magnitude earthquake hit Central Sulawesi in Indonesia in late September last year. She and her husband lost their home but not their lives in the disaster that killed 4,340, destroyed 70,000 homes and left tens of thousands of already vulnerable people internally displaced.

The couple were taken in by relatives but struggled to find food and healthcare in the aftermath of the disaster. Together with the provincial and national government World Vision and our partners worked to make sure life-saving emergency-response work was strengthened by pro-active humanitarian safety nets by linking to government-led social protection programmes with targeted financial transfers. This meant women like Asfiani were able to address their needs beyond basic survival.

This kind of social protection approach, involving a number of different stakeholders working together, has been explored for more than 13 years with lessons taken from Sierra Leone, Malawi, Turkey and Lebanon. What we saw after the Indonesian disaster helps us to learn even more about how to continually improve our humanitarian cash and voucher work.

We continue to see, sadly, a lack of coordination, parallel structures and inconsistent policy frameworks. This results in social protection interventions, failing to target the most vulnerable children.

LESSON: Rapid coordination is critical

An ability and agility to coordinate in the aftermath, and even better, *before* disasters, makes a difference. Less than two weeks after the disaster, the national cash working group, of which World Vision is a member, activated a group in the provincial capital Palu. We were already on the ground working in development, which meant we could speedily provide technical expertise to the provincial government.

More than 5,700 people are reached through a multi-purpose cash assistance programme that aims to address families' basic needs while enabling them to make choices, address basic needs as they recover, and building their resilience to future shocks as they, for example, transition from emergency to temporary shelter then permanent, disaster-ready housing. This work was supported by the Government of Indonesia who endorsed the programme, and enabled the provincial government and inter-agency groups to work on standardised protocols and mechanisms for better service provision, transparency and links to longer-term tailored support.

The International Labour Organisation recently **assessed 38 social protection mechanisms** and found verification, follow-up of eligibility and actual enrolment were weak points in the implementation of Social Protection mechanisms.

World Vision uses a digital beneficiary registration system, **Last Mile Mobile Solution**, which allocates a unique single identifier, eliminating duplication and inconsistencies. As we registered people into the cash assistance programme, which we combined with our **Ultra Poor Graduation** approach, we linked them with the Government of Indonesia's "Family Hope" Social Protection Programme. Families with children, who were poor prior to the earthquake were immediately targeted.

Families with children, who lived above the poverty line prior to the disaster but due to the impact of the event now fell below, were also targeted. Working in collaboration with the government means they have a ready-to-use registry to more effectively and efficiently design, target and deliver responses to future events.



Asfiani holding her proof of identity, a requirement for participation in the multipurpose assistance programme in Central Sulawesi (photo by: Melya Findi Astuti)

LESSON: We need to see a coherent framework of child rights-based standards, principles and indicators

Inconsistent or non-existent policy and implementation frameworks for safety nets to immediately provide assistance during and after disasters, result in families not only being **forced to flee**, but lacking access to basic assistance, health and education. The lack of robust frameworks contributes to fractured humanitarian cash and voucher programmes and social protection systems, not fully considering specific patterns of child poverty and vulnerability and recognizing the long-term developmental benefits of investing in children as well as the obligation to fulfill their rights.

It is a complex undertaking to identify potential links and gaps, which the most vulnerable children often fall through given their mobility, often invisibility, and the fluidity of their contexts and needs. But it is vital, in order to build **social protection programming that is**

child-sensitive, and recognises triggers, and promotes prevention and problem-solving strategies.

LESSON: Humanitarian and social accountability mechanisms for rights-based approaches offer a real opportunity

We know, from our experience in nearly 70 years of responding to disasters, and confirmed by our work following the earthquake in Indonesia, that informing people about their rights and engaging them appropriately on all aspects of programming is essential. And it needs significant strengthening.

World Vision programmes worldwide have tested, applied and scaled up humanitarian and social accountability mechanisms that ensure the voices of children adequately heard and acted upon. Children often have a very clear understanding of impending shocks. World Vision's **Citizen Voice and Action** work helps children use their voice into decision making processes that help determine appropriate responses. Children and youth surveys among migrant and refugee children show a high level of digital literacy and use of social media, **only asking for the opportunity to be heard by decision-makers.**

LESSON: Planning and funding needs to be agile and less restricted

We continue to see children having unreliable access to services, with multiple service providers often working in parallel. Long-term planning and the option of multi-year funding will help to effectively address gaps in assistance when and where it is most needed. Complementarity and sequencing of assistance with recovery and longer-term social protection support is not difficult but requires strong coordination. It relies on joint beneficiary registries and long-term investment. And it's needed now more than ever, as seen in the recent World Bank study *Humanitarian Capital*, which highlights the need for pre-crisis investment to save humanitarian costs.

Before and during times of crisis, a shock-proactive cash and voucher programme tailored for humanitarian and linking towards social protection purposes can provide both immediate relief and help tackle underlying poverty. It works best when it is **market-based**, government-facilitated, and multi-stakeholder coordinated and flexible. It has to become the norm so that when disasters strike women like Asfiani, she has the support she needs to recover and rebuild her life.