Final Report
MPG Monitoring Toolkit Development and Guidelines

April 2018

Tufts Research Team: Kate Hirschboeck, Andre Heard, Lindsay Gardel, and Katy Johnson

Table of Contents

Danish Refugee Council Contributors
Louisa Seferis, Global Technical Advisor – Economic Recovery
Azim Noorani, Roving Technical Advisor – Economic Recovery
Brennan Webert, Protection Advisor

Executive Summary

Project Overview

The Danish Refugee Council and a team of graduate students from Tufts University's Feinstein International Center have worked in partnership to develop and pilot a monitoring toolkit to support the further uptake and implementation of multipurpose cash grant (MPG) programmes. This monitoring toolkit is part of a wider 'MPG Toolkit' produced in 2017-18 by the ECHO Enhanced Response Capacity (ERC)-funded Consortium for the uptake of quality, collaborative, multi-purpose grants ('ERC Consortium'). The creation of the toolkit included a desk review and consultation with ERC Consortium, regional, and pilot country partners; initial tool development; and successive rounds of piloting and tool revision in Borno State, Nigeria, and Jijiga, Ethiopia between June 2017 and March 2018.

The monitoring tools include:

- Household survey (HHS)
- Community group discussion template (CGD)
- Key informant interview template (KII)

Additional tools include:

- Tool guidance (Nigeria)
- Training materials for enumerators (Nigeria)
- Enumerator feedback survey (Nigeria)

Tool development and piloting process

- The team drew heavily from existing Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) resources, including the CaLP Monitoring4CTP Guidance, and Operational Guidance and Toolkit for Multipurpose Cash Grants. The monitoring toolkit is designed to be used in conjunction with other components of the MPG Toolkit produced by the ERC Consortium, in particular the Basic Needs Assessment (BNA) developed by Save the Children.
- The monitoring toolkit went through four rounds of revisions, after it was piloted with four cash transfer programmes run by different NGOs: two in Nigeria and two in Ethiopia.

Background of the ERC Consortium project

The ERC Consortium, led by Save the Children, brings together humanitarian aid organizations with respective strengths in cash transfer programming, with the goal of increasing the uptake of MPGs in emergency response. Together, ERC members work to 1) create an enabling environment, 2) provide timely technical support to facilitate harmonized design of MPGs, and 3) evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of MPGs to meet humanitarian needs.

From spring 2017 through 2018, ERC Consortium members worked to develop and pilot tools in northeast Nigeria and the Somali region of Ethiopia to support future MPG programming. Within the ERC Consortium, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) was responsible for developing and piloting the monitoring tools for MPG programming in northeast Nigeria and the Somali region of Ethiopia.

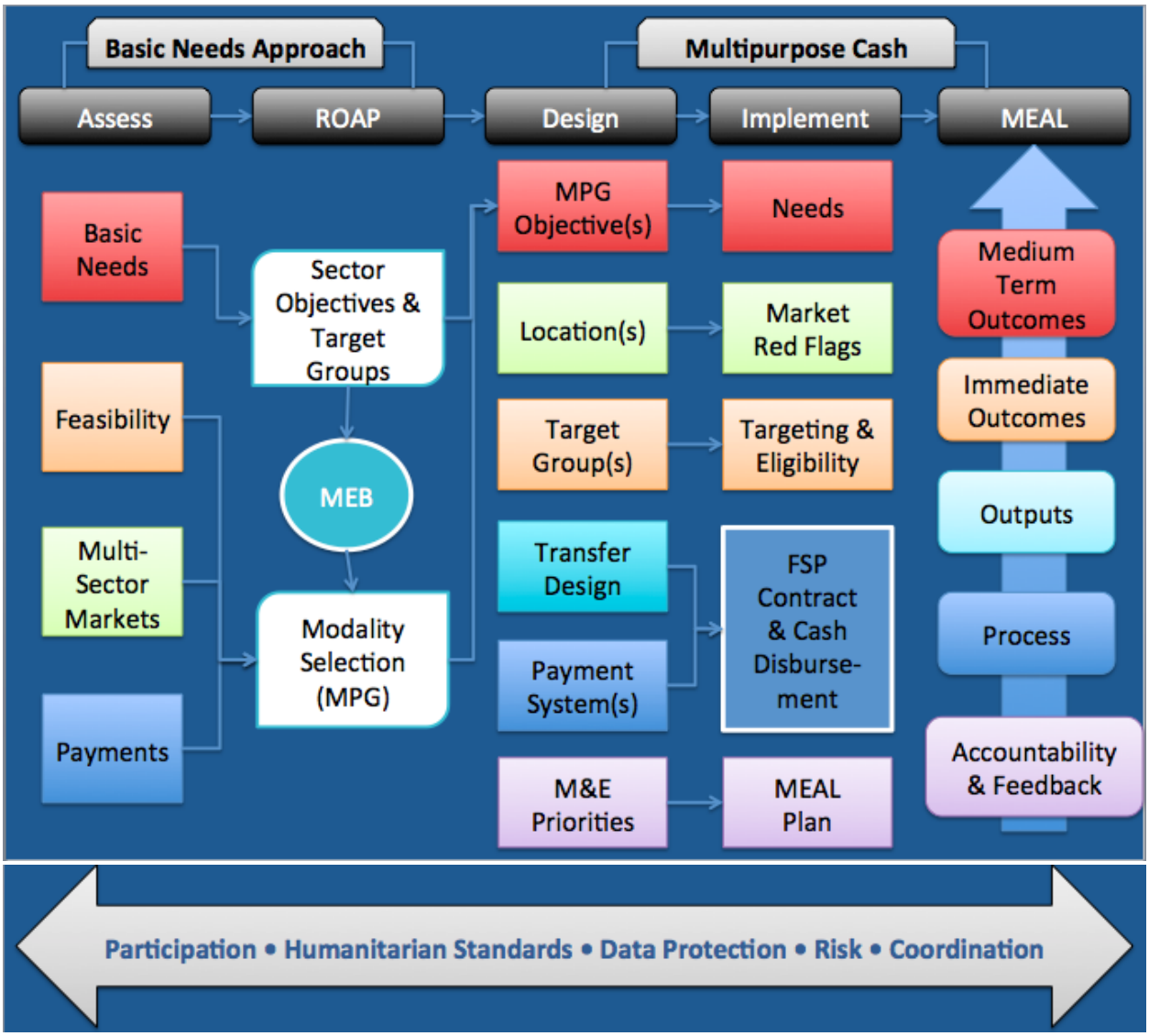
Purpose of the Toolkit and this Guide

This toolkit is designed to serve as a core resource for developing and conducting monitoring of MPG programmes. The tools themselves serve as templates and should be adapted to the local context and objectives of the specific MPG programmes to be monitored. Particular care should be taken to align monitoring tools with the overall programme design, needs assessment, context analysis, and baseline data. The guide contains suggestions for tool adaptation, along with anecdotes and insights from the experience of developing and piloting the tools.

The MPG Monitoring Tools

The tools include a **household survey**, **community focus group template**, **and key informant interview template**. The toolkit is designed to capture a snapshot of beneficiary basic needs following the introduction of MPGs, as well as to provide feedback on the quality of the MPG programme itself.

Most basic needs-oriented multi-purpose cash programs will typically begin with a basic needs assessment and analysis, and an operational environment analysis. (For an overview of the basic needs approach and other relevant assessments, please refer to other ERC Consortium tools outlined in the diagram below). This helps program designers and implementers understand beneficiary needs, the severity of those needs, and the feasibility of cash assistance to help meet those needs. These form the basis for MPG-based programme design, which includes assistance modality selection; delivery mechanism / payment platform, amount and frequency; program duration, and beneficiary targeting. This assessment and analysis also informs what forms of complementary support are needed to help a beneficiary population meet basic needs.



Once an MPG programme has been designed and implementation begins, programme monitoring – undertaken in parallel with and as a key component of implementation – can yield important information around beneficiaries' ability to meet basic needs, programme quality and process, and protection issues. Key questions include:

Meeting basic needs:

- To what extent are people able to meet their basic needs?
- What barriers are they facing in meeting their basic needs?
- Is cash helping people overcome those barriers (is cash an appropriate *modality*?)
- How are beneficiaries spending cash assistance?

Programme quality and process:

- Is programme implementation resulting in any unforeseen or unnecessary burdens on beneficiaries?
- Is the transfer mechanism (*how* people received cash) appropriate for the context?
- Did the programme target the correct beneficiaries?

Protection:

- How is cash affecting household and community dynamics, in both positive and negative, intended and unintended ways?
- Do people feel safe retrieving and spending cash?
- Are people with special needs able to access and spend cash?
- Did beneficiaries encounter fraud or abuse as a result of receiving cash assistance?
- Is cash helping people reduce their reliance on negative coping strategies?

A monitoring plan in isolation cannot answer these questions comprehensively. However, a contextually adapted and appropriately implemented monitoring process can give a sense of progress towards project objectives; provide a platform for interaction with beneficiaries and local communities to solicit their perspectives and preferences for future assistance; help programme staff flag areas for more in-depth investigation and plan for necessary course-correction; and provide useful data for a formative or summative evaluation of the programme (especially if data is collected on a regular basis to give an impression of how needs are changing over time).

PART I: Monitoring Toolkit Overview

A. Indicators

The monitoring toolkit uses a mixed-methods approach, using multiple approaches to develop a more complete picture of each indicator where appropriate. For a complete list of monitoring issues, and indicators related to both process and outcomes, see CaLP's Monitoring4CTP Guidance, from which these indicators were drawn.

1.1

Indicator category	Indicator description	Data Collection Tool	Aligned Questions
Medium-term outcome	Proportion of HHs able to meet basic needs	HHS, KII, CGD	HHS D1; KII 1,2,3; CGD 1, 2
Medium-term outcome	Changes in use of negative coping strategies (contextually defined)	HHS	HHS F
Immediate outcome	Recipient HH's ability to spend the cash/vouchers	HHS, CGD	HHS D2-D4; CGD pro-piling exercise
Immediate outcome	HH expenditure and utilization patterns	HHS, CGD	HHS D2-D4; CGD pro-piling exercise
Process	Percentage of grants available on time	HHS	HHS E11
Process	Percentage/number of interviewed households reporting difficulties accessing cash	HHS	HHS E7-E11
Process	Number of reported incidents of fraud	HHS	HHS E6, E16-17; KII 9
Process	Recipient's ability to access the cash	GGS, KII	HHS E7-E11; KII 5A, 6,7,8; CGD 7
Process	Performance of the delivery mechanism	HHS, KII	HHS E7-E11; KII 8
Process	Reports of increased tensions within or between communities as a result of the intervention	KII, CGD	KII 12; CGD 5
Process	Changes in intra-household dynamics and tensions as a result of the CTP	HHS, KII, CGD	HHS E13
Process	Reports of feeling at risk of e.g. harassment, insecurity, or abuse, due to the CTP	HHS, KII, CGD	HHS E14; KII 10,11; CGD 6

Process	Community leaders and local authority representatives understand the project targeting criteria	KII	KII 4,5
Process	Beneficiary understanding of project, targeting criteria, distribution process, and complaint and feedback mechanism	HHS, CGD	CGD 5A
Process	Beneficiary satisfaction with programme, distribution process, and complaint and feedback mechanism	KII, CGD	HHS E7-E11, D1 (preferred modality); KII 14; CGD 3,4,8,9

B. The Household Survey

The household survey covers beneficiary demographics, programme implementation and process, cash expenditure and utilization, and beneficiary ability to meet basic needs, as well as barriers to meeting those needs. During the pilot, the survey took approximately 30 minutes per beneficiary.

Survey Demographic questions

This section includes basic questions on respondent sex, marital status, and income.

Suggestions for adaptation: Over the course of successive pilots, the team narrowed demographic data down from "potentially interesting to have" to "need to have" in an effort to make the survey more light-touch. Necessary demographic data will depend on the programme characteristics and context. To decide what to include in the survey, ask:

- What variables are likely to result in differential impacts of cash assistance, that will help explain why MPGs are/are not effective?
- What vulnerabilities / characteristics might cause people to have difficulty utilizing the cash transfer, or might put them at risk as a result of the cash transfer?

For example, a transfer programme using text notifications and mobile money might want to ask about a respondent's literacy and numeracy level; a programme with ethnically diverse beneficiaries will want to ask about ethnic group identification; a programme with geographically dispersed beneficiaries might want to ask about distance to the closest market.

Including income data: Accurate income data is notoriously difficult to collect.[1] Given this, consider whether an understanding of beneficiary income is necessary for monitoring purposes. For example,

[1] See Deaton, A. (1997). The Analysis of Household Surveys. A Micro Econometric Approach to Development Policy. Baltimore, Maryland, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

income data is unlikely to be useful during a one-off transfer following an emergency. On the other hand, changing sources and levels of income over time might be useful for understanding the effect of a programme involving multiple transfers over a longer timeframe. If an accurate understanding of income really is needed for monitoring purposes, ensure questions about income are culturally relevant and the enumerator team has the necessary capacity and training to elicit accurate responses.

1.2 Notes from the Pilot: The challenges of collecting income data

During the Ethiopia pilot, we found it difficult to gather even basic income estimates and sources. Through conversations with the enumerator team, we learned that:

- Some beneficiaries were reluctant to share income data for fear of being disqualified for future assistance
- Our pre-conceived 'sources of income' categories did not match lived experience
- Income sources and amounts can be highly irregular
- Respondents sometimes calculated the monetary value of in-kind aid received when computing income
- Additionally, concepts of debt and savings didn't always translate – for example, we learned that some Somali pastoralists were including the value of underground seed banks as 'savings.'

Survey Process Questions

This section of the survey is intended to give insight into how beneficiaries experience the programme. The questions cover programme implementation and quality, as well as protection concerns.

Programme implementation quality:

- Whether the transfer was received by the right person, on time, and in the correct amount
- Wait times and travel times to receive transfer
- Costs incurred by beneficiaries in receiving the cash
- Awareness and utilization of complaint and feedback mechanisms

Protection concerns:

- Beneficiary perceptions of safety while retrieving and storing cash
- Who within the household made spending decisions

Suggestions for adaptation:

- **Consider the transfer delivery mechanism** (mobile money, paper vouchers, etc.). This survey was piloted with programmes utilizing direct cash transfers, and does not contain e-transfer specific questions. As part of the ERC Consortium, Mercy Corps has developed and piloted a Delivery Guide to assess payment mechanisms and financial service providers. The Mercy Corps Ethiopia Payment Mechanism Assessment Report demonstrates how a local contextual analysis of the regulatory and payments landscape, as well as beneficiary characteristics, can inform a monitoring plan for MPGs using e-transfers.
- **Align feedback mechanism questions** to the programme being monitored.

1.3 How can post distribution monitoring (PDM) fit into an overall monitoring plan? Guidelines from CaLP Monitoring4CTP:

"What should be included in a PDM survey/FGD [focus group discussion] will be influenced by the type of CTP transfer, frequency and length of the project. Longer-term projects in prolonged or slow onset crises may involve multiple tranches of cash transfers over multiple months. In such instances, PDM is likely to only focus on activity and output related issues. In a short-term project with only one or two tranches of transfers, you may only do one PDM that is more inclusive of outcome monitoring, e.g. the PDM survey/FGD may ask questions relating to expenditure (immediate outcome) and/or utilisation (outcome)." –CaLP Monitoring4CTP , p. 27

Survey Expenditure and Utilization Questions (Immediate Outcome and Medium-Term Outcome)

This section of the survey covers beneficiary ability to spend cash and meet basic needs, including:

- The extent to which people are able to meet basic needs
- Barriers people face in meeting their basic needs, and whether cash can help people overcome those barriers
- How beneficiaries are spending cash assistance
- Preferred assistance modality for meeting basic needs (cash, in-kind, or service provision)

Suggestions for Adaptation

- **Understand how beneficiaries think about needs and barriers:** Make sure the basic needs categories covered in the survey are culturally and contextually relevant.
- **Use qualitative data to inform survey adaptations**: Pre-survey qualitative work can help monitoring plan designers calibrate their categorization of basic needs to that of beneficiaries. Post-survey qualitative work—through the community group discussions and key informant interviews—can uncover further nuances (see Box 1.4).
- **Communicate with other teams who are also working to understand basic needs**: For example, if a basic needs assessment and analysis was carried out, this process likely uncovered important information around how the target population conceptualizes and speaks about basic needs and barriers that can be used to adapt monitoring tools.

C. Community Group Discussion and Key Informant Interview Templates

The community group discussions and key informant interviews are designed to capture the community-level experience, provide depth and richness to the data, and identify any blind spots that may have existed in the household survey. The community group discussion is designed to take approximately one hour, with 6-10 participants. The key informant interviews are designed to take approximately 45 minutes.

The community group discussion begins with a proportional piling exercise, where participants portion toothpicks indicating where the majority of money has been spent. This exercise aims to help beneficiaries

understand the terms for “basic needs” illustrated on the cards that will be critical throughout the discussion. It also engages participants early on in the discussion and can serve as an “ice breaker” to help participants feel more comfortable offering their opinions.

The subsequent questions in the CGD and KIIs are more thematic, covering:

- Ability to spend cash to meet basic needs
- Communication, targeting, and selection process
- Cash distribution process
- Safety
- Community dynamics

Distribution of toothpicks based on spending in basic needs categories in CGD with Action Against Hunger beneficiaries in the community of Sulumbri in Maiduguri, Nigeria

Suggestions for Adaptation

- Consider what basic needs categories (and images) are contextually relevant
- Adjust the focus of questions, or add new strands of inquiry, based on data from the household survey. For example, if a number of survey respondents indicated they prefer service provision to cash for meeting health needs, use the community group discussion to understand why this might be the case.

- When selecting "key informants," consider the roles of different community members and the unique insights they can provide. See the "Tool Implementation Guidelines" for considerations around who to include in key informant interviews.

1.4 Notes from the pilot: Different ways of talking about "basic needs"

Program staff and beneficiaries might think about "categories" of basic needs in different ways, which can make it difficult to interpret survey results, and can cause confusion during interviews or group discussions. For example, some of the Somali pastoralists consulted in Ethiopia shared that they thought of children's shoes and socks as "education needs," rather than clothing; and jerry cans as "water needs" rather than household items. The ways in which 'standard' needs categories overlap and combine across sectors should be explored through qualitative focus group and key informant interviews.

PART 2: Practical Suggestions for Using the Tools

General Implementation Guidelines

Build a monitoring plan: It can be useful to think through a monitoring plan methodically. Start by considering the decisions programme staff need to make. Then, consider what data is needed to guide each decision; how and from whom to collect the data; the frequency of data collection; who will make sense of the data; how data will be analyzed and communicated; who will use the data; and who will be responsible for and who will oversee data collection. Reducing the burden on beneficiaries should be top of mind throughout this process. When deciding what data to collect, consider if the data is crucial to informing decisions, or if it is solely interesting information to have.[2]

Consider how to sequence data collection: After several iterations, the DRC-Tufts team found it most useful to carry out the HH survey first, take several days to process and analyze the data (a quick spot check could be done if pressed for time), and then conduct community group discussion and interviews. This allowed the team to:

- Identify trends or aberrations in the data to explore more deeply through qualitative approaches
- Feed survey results back to beneficiaries to get their sense of whether the results are accurate – this can contribute to downward accountability and make monitoring more participatory.

Devote time and resources to translation: Consider languages early on in tool development. The best practice is to translate to the local language, and then back translate with a different translator back to the original language. Make sure to work with translators who understand the local cultural context and programme objectives (see Box 1.5). Translators without Borders is an organization which provides free translation services for humanitarian organizations and was an excellent resource during the first pilot.

1.5 Notes from the pilot: Translation challenges

One experienced enumerator shared that at times, he had to rely on the community-appointed guides leading them from house to house to work out how to convey 'concepts' like hygiene and energy. The enumerator spoke fluent Somali, but was not fully familiar with the pastoralist lifestyle in this particular community. Unfortunately, we suspect other enumerators might not have taken the time to work out these translation issues with their guides.

[2] *Designing for Results* (Church & Rogers, 2005) provides useful templates for developing a monitoring plan, deciding what data to collect and which decisions the monitoring should inform (see monitoring section on p. 81).

Implementing the Household Survey

Sampling: For a widely-used approach to selecting a random representative sample for monitoring surveys (probability sampling), see: ALNAP's *Multi-Sector Monitoring & Evaluation: A Practical Guide for Fieldworkers (2016).* The Nigeria pilot employed this approach; the Ethiopia pilot selected a random sample of beneficiaries to be surveyed, but not enough to make the sample representative. There is debate over whether and when monitoring surveys should to be statistically representative (that goes beyond the scope of this guidance. However, consider a **representative sample** when:

- You need to generalize results to the entire beneficiary population
- You have the time and budget to collect a representative sample, while maintaining data quality (ensuring enumerators are sufficiently trained; that data can be collected in accordance with best practices, etc.)
- Required by donors (often the case for PDM monitoring)

Consider a more **'light touch' approach** when:

- Monitoring data will be used as a "spot check" to inform course correction, or illuminate issues that need to be explored in more depth
- Reaching a representative sample will divert resources from qualitative, outcome-oriented information gathering (if staff feel this information will be valuable)
- Time and resources could be utilized more effectively by focusing on a purposive sample of harder to reach beneficiaries (see box 1.6).

1.6 Notes from the pilot: Sacrificing data 'representativeness' for data quality

While testing the tools in Araso, Ethiopia, one enumerator spent the entire day traveling by jeep to speak with five beneficiaries who lived far from the village center, while the other enumerators stayed nearby. This decreased the total number of surveys we collected, but gave us the chance to understand the perspective of some beneficiaries who might have experienced the programme quite differently due to their remote location.

Tips for selecting the survey respondents:

- If possible, call ahead to let beneficiaries know they have been randomly selected to participate in the survey. In the Nigeria pilot, this helped ensure the vast majority of the randomly selected individuals were included in the survey.
- In Ethiopia, the team relied on community members or IDP camp leaders to notify and bring selected individuals to be surveyed (or, in some cases, to notify enumerators that a selected individual was not available). This was convenient, but be aware of potential bias that might be introduced when "gatekeepers" essentially control who participates in the survey.

- It is also important to think through other context-specific logistical considerations, such as the availability of beneficiaries during a specific time or day of the week.
- During piloting, the DRC-Tufts team built in a 20% buffer (i.e. increased the random sample list by 20% over the actual sample target number) to ensure that even if some beneficiaries were not available, there would be enough respondents.
- However, it is important to think through why certain groups or individuals might not have been available, and how this might bias data (for example, young males may be working away from home during daylight hours).

Enumerator training for the HH survey: Based on feedback from enumerator teams, it is critical to develop a common understanding and approach to the following portions of the survey, and to double check that enumerators are comfortable with the translations.

- Number of HH members (what constitutes a household?)
- Special needs
- Income
- Basic needs – categorization

For complete enumerator training suggestions, please see the ERC Nigeria pilot monitoring toolkit.

Implementing the Community Group Discussions

Selecting participants: A non-random sample is generally most feasible. Nonetheless, the Community Group Discussions should still be as representative as possible, and staff should work with community leaders to ensure that participants are inclusive in terms of age, gender, and other dimensions relevant to the context (ethnicity, religion, displaced vs. host community, etc.). Community Group Discussions should take place in gender-segregated settings whenever possible, in groups of 6-10 participants.

Setting: Whenever possible, arrange participants to sit in a circle, and sit on the floor besides them. During the pilot, community members helping to organize the discussions sometimes arranged for the discussions to take place in a school, with the facilitator in a chair and participants at desks. This stilted discussion.

Encouraging participation: Most discussion groups conducted during the pilot were dominated by a few outspoken members; despite efforts to encourage everyone to participate (in one case, when a DRC facilitator asked a quieter member for his thoughts, he responded that the participants had agreed on their answers in advance of the discussion and had designated a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the group!) The following approaches might help promote broader participation:

- **In addition to organizing focus groups by gender, consider organizing by age (or other relevant dimensions).** In the pilot experience in Nigeria and Ethiopia, younger women in particular were reluctant to speak up in the presence of elders.
- **Use multiple opportunities to convey the purpose of the community group discussion –** to get the honest feedback and perspectives of a wide variety of community members. This can be

stressed to the community members or programme staff helping to organize the sessions, who can then relay this purpose to participants ahead of time.

- **Organize a separate discussion group for "cash committee" members:** During the pilot, the community leaders who helped to arrange the discussions often assumed the monitoring team would want cash committee input. While this input is valuable, it is important that other beneficiaries are not swayed by the presence of cash committee members during discussion.

1.6 Encouraging participation during community discussions: An interesting approach from an evaluation in Zimbabwe

At the start of each session, facilitators on the evaluation team asked the group to designate one member to take part in a one-on-one interview with another facilitator during the focus group discussion. The nominee was typically a leader who was comfortable sharing his or her opinions. This usually allowed for a productive one-on-one interview with an engaged and outspoken participant; while insuring they would not dominate the group conversation.

(Zimbabwe Cash First Humanitarian Response, 2015-2017, Oxford Policy Management)

Implementing the Key Informant Interviews

During the first several piloting rounds in Nigeria and Ethiopia, the DRC-Tufts team interviewed formal community leaders. However, the team broadened "key informants" to include non-beneficiaries and non-formal leaders in the final round of Ethiopia piloting.

"Informal" community leaders include those who might have a unique insight into community needs, spending patterns, protection issues and community dynamics. This could include healthcare providers, social workers, teachers, and shop owners. For example, a teacher from outside the community who is not a beneficiary but has particular insight into community needs and dynamics due to her daily work with families and children, might be especially cognizant of protection issues stemming from cash assistance.

Non-beneficiaries who *do not* participate in the programme are often left out of monitoring exercises. However, non-beneficiaries can offer a valuable perspective on how the broader community experiences the cash transfer. They might also be more candid in their responses. Non-beneficiaries can be asked questions like:

- Do you understand how beneficiaries were selected?
- Do you think the targeting was accurate? Was it fair?
- Has the programme affected relationships between community members?
- Are there any safety concerns people encounter when receiving or storing cash?

At the same time, there are ethical considerations when using people's time to monitor a program they are not directly benefiting from as individuals, so this approach requires a good working relationship with the community and may not be possible in some contexts. As with beneficiaries, take steps to ensure

respondent privacy is protected, that respondents understand they are under no obligation to participate, and that their participation is not tied to any future assistance.

1.8 Notes from the pilot: Expectations of future assistance

During the pilot, it sometimes appeared that beneficiaries tailored their responses around needs and spending to what they thought representatives from an NGO would want to hear. This not only affects the quality of information collected; it also suggests monitoring exercises can raise expectations of future assistance among community members that may or may not be met. The team assured one community leader that the purpose of the pilot was to gather information to better understand the program, not to plan for future programming. He responded "you say that, but this always means you are planning something." This poses a challenge to monitoring initiatives. Possible ways to approach this issue might include:

- Asking community group discussion or interview participants for specific examples
- Triangulating data
- Approaching the same question in multiple ways
- Conducting spot-check interviews with "average" beneficiaries, who might not feel the same pressure to represent the community's interests as a formal leader

Part 3: Areas for Further Development

Integrating Social and Economic Coping Strategies into MPG monitoring

Food-related coping strategy indices have been well-developed and widely used in humanitarian monitoring,[3] including as part of the ERC-Consortium piloted Basic Needs Assessment. However, cash assistance can also have an important effect on beneficiary well-being by reducing reliance on negative social and economic coping strategies (for example, selling productive assets, sending school-aged children to work, or engaging in dangerous or degrading work).

In the second pilot, the DRC-Tufts team dedicated a portion of the survey to understanding respondent engagement in negative coping strategies before and after cash assistance. This is an initial attempt to integrate coping strategies into a monitoring framework, with the anticipation that further thinking, collaboration and piloting will take place in coordination with ongoing interagency initiatives on expanding coping strategies frameworks and measurement beyond food security.[4]

Coping Strategies

Before: *In 2017 and prior to receiving cash, did members of your family rely on any of the following action(s) to meet basic needs?*

After: *Since receiving cash have family members continued to rely on or use the following actions?*

Strategy	Before	After
Selling productive assets	61%	18%
Buy goods/services on credit	33%	53%
Borrow money from family or friends	33%	27%
Use savings	11%	16%
Selling assets	11%	2%
Family members seeking work or migrating elsewhere	8%	12%
Spending less on healthcare	2%	2%
Begging (adults)	1%	1%
Removing children from school	1%	0%
Begging (children)	0%	0%
Risky or socially degrading work	0%	0%
Children working	0%	1%
Children sent elsewhere	0%	1%
Child married	0%	0%

Results from the coping strategies monitoring pilot in the Jarar Zone of Ethiopia. Respondents were drought-affected Somali Pastoralists who had received three cash transfers over the course of three months.

During piloting, the team identified the following challenges while collecting data on coping strategies, which should be incorporated into coping strategies work going forward:

Possible reluctance to answer sensitive questions: Those familiar with the cultural context (protection workers, programme managers, and experienced enumerators) voiced that many respondents would feel uncomfortable discussing certain coping strategies with strangers. During monitoring, it could be more appropriate to work with a smaller, specialized team of highly trained, empathic and culturally competent enumerators to ask about coping strategies, rather than attempt to capture the information via standard

[3] See the Coping Strategies Index (Maxwell, et al., 2008).

[4] As of May 2018, 2 upcoming initiatives include 1) the UNHCR-DRC global Memorandum of Understanding joint work on coping strategies, and 2) a research project led by Okular Analytics (inter-agency) to facilitate assessment and analysis of coping strategies. Both initiatives have potential links to ECHO partner work on coping strategies in the field, notably WFP in Turkey and the NGO Cash Consortiums in Somalia.

household surveys; or to collaborate with key informants like health or social workers to better understand reliance on negative coping strategies.

The subjective nature of some "negative" coping strategies: For example, during the Ethiopia pilot, the team learned through community group discussions and interviews that sending children to collect firewood or sending female children to work as domestic servants to supplement income was not seen as "risky" behavior. In many contexts the risk may very well be minimal, but it is important to understand beneficiary understandings of acceptable risk, and where those may come into conflict with humanitarian or organizational standards.

Translation and contextual issues: According to enumerators, many of the concepts simply did not translate clearly, especially "risky and socially degrading work" (see above). In the pastoralist Somali context, definitions of credit, borrowing, assets and savings did not have clear English counterparts, making it difficult to get an accurate understanding of some economic coping strategies.

Recall: The pilot asked respondents to think back to their use of negative coping strategies before the first cash transfer, three months prior. This is a significant amount of time, and beneficiaries likely do not think in terms of "before" and "after" the cash transfer when they recall personal details about their lives.

Attribution: Respondents use of negative coping strategies can change for reasons independent of cash assistance. For example, in the Ethiopia pilot the DRC-Tufts team noticed that more respondents reported family members seeking work elsewhere after receiving cash assistance than before, which those familiar with the context attributed more to seasonality (planting/work opportunities) than to the assistance. It is therefore important to understand how and why any changes took place through qualitative research, as well as ground coping strategies work in an understanding of the local context and conflict dynamics (for example, seasonal patterns influencing the availability of food).

As a result of this preliminary attempt to capture coping strategies beyond food security, DRC recommends to consider coping strategies within a "catalogue" or "library" rather than an index (such as the Coping Strategies Index) in order to better harmonize approaches to collecting and analyzing this information, while still capturing and prioritizing contextual nuances (such as those described above).

Participatory Monitoring[5] Approaches

The DRC-Tufts team collaborated with Ground Truth Solutions, an organization dedicated to amplifying beneficiary voices and helping social change organizations harness and act upon beneficiary feedback. Through this collaboration, the DRC-Tufts team identified several challenges to participatory approaches to MPG monitoring and worked with Ground Truth Solutions to suggest strategies to help tackle these challenges.[6]

[5] Participatory monitoring and evaluation is "a process through which stakeholders at various levels (i) engage in monitoring or evaluating a particular project, program, or policy; (ii) share control over the content, the process, and the results of the M&E activity; and (iii) engage in taking or identifying corrective actions." Definition from Karen Sirker and Kene Ezemenari. "Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: Principles, Action Steps, Challenges." World Bank Presentation. 2002.

[6] A special thank you to Kai Hopkins, Senior Programme Manager at Ground Truth Solutions, for providing remote support to the DRC-Tufts team, and to Dr. Elias Sagmeister, Programme Manager with Ground Truth, for facilitating the collaboration.

Challenge: "Gatekeepers" make it difficult to access and understand beneficiary perspectives during formal monitoring

Strategy: Integrate data collection into the wide range of formal and informal "touchpoints" between program staff and beneficiaries

For example, a program utilizing e-transfers could prompt beneficiaries to complete a quick SMS survey after accessing cash. Program staff could check in with beneficiaries as they wait in line for cash distributions. An agency running a complementary health program could request health workers to ask patients about the availability and affordability of medicine.

Consider facilitating a "mapping" process with program staff to identify these touchpoints: lay out the places, manners, and times in which beneficiaries come into contact with the programme or organization. Then, brainstorm with staff to generate the data and feedback that could be elicited through each of these touchpoints. Determine which data could be useful for monitoring purposes and incorporate into the monitoring plan.

It is not feasible to conduct in-depth interviews or complete surveys at each touchpoint, but quick spot checks can complement more formal data collection and provide a chance for beneficiaries to offer more candid perspectives.

Challenge: Placing a weight on "key informant" interviews limits the voices that are heard

Strategy: Broaden the evidence base to include those who have a unique vantage point into how beneficiaries experience the program

It can be helpful to ground the identification of key informants in the program's theory of change. Asking "what are we trying to achieve, and who has a role to play in it?" can encourage program staff to look beyond those who have obvious power and influence, and also consider who has a unique vantage point into the beneficiary experiences, processes, and outcomes that are key to program success.

For example, local shopkeepers play a role in supplying goods for purchase and have a unique perspective on what community members choose to buy. A staff protection officer might have insight into the prevalence of negative coping strategies, as well as if and how cash is helping people reduce their reliance on these coping strategies. Corroborate data – pay attention to when information across key informant interviews aligns and when there are discrepancies and investigate further as needed.

Challenge: Beneficiaries can be reluctant to offer feedback or participate in interviews and discussions

Strategy: Ensure questions are easily understood and culturally appropriate, and provide opportunities for engagement

People are more likely to engage when the questions they are being asked are easily understood and culturally appropriate. Make sure survey, interview, and community group discussion questions go through multiple rounds of piloting. Depending on time and resources, this can entail a formal piloting process, or simply running questions by program staff and several members of the beneficiary community.

Consider activities that "break the ice" and draw participants in. For example, the "proportional piling" activity described below can encourage participants to move around and discuss with one another as they work to portion out how cash was spent on basic needs. The end result also provides a useful common "touchstone" to focus conversation throughout the discussion.

Pay attention to the environment where community group discussions or interviews take place. A school room where the facilitator is seated at the front of the classroom can set a tone of "call and response" and stifle discussion. Some groups may feel most at ease sitting on the floor; in other contexts; this may feel uncomfortable or awkward.

Challenge: People are reluctant to share information around sensitive topics, like income, debt or negative coping strategies

Strategy: Consider the most appropriate tools, people, and processes for collecting sensitive information from beneficiaries, and adapt data collection accordingly

This can involve a tension between widely held monitoring "best practices" on one hand, and respect for beneficiaries and accuracy of information on the other. Data from independent monitors or enumerator teams is often considered more objective, but beneficiaries may be more likely to share accurate information with staff members or local community members they know and trust. A random, representative sample where enumerators show up at beneficiary homes might align to sampling best practices, but people sometimes feel more comfortable speaking about sensitive topics in anonymous public settings, where other family members aren't listening in and they cannot be easily identified.

In addition, consider asking questions in a way that takes the pressure of the respondent. For example, rather than asking if a respondent has had to send his own school-age child to work, ask instead if people in the community engage in this coping strategy.

Challenge: "Closing the feedback loop" sounds good in theory, but sharing monitoring results can be time and labor intensive for both beneficiaries and program staff

Strategy: Integrate the sharing monitoring results into program processes that are already in place, and take advantage of pre-existing networks to spread information

Results from the previous round of monitoring can be shared during a subsequent round of post-distribution monitoring (PDM). Local networks—like radio shows, community and religious meetings, or newspapers and bulletin boards—can be used to disseminate monitoring data. Call-in lines for radio shows, SMS response options or a "feedback booth" set up at a regular time and place can give beneficiaries the chance to respond to and question monitoring results, if they wish to do so. To respect beneficiary time and limit information overload, consider collaborating with other agencies to spread shared messages.

"Town hall meetings"—where staff share monitoring data in a group setting and elicit feedback— are a common approach to closing the feedback loop. However, they can require a substantial amount of time and logistical planning, and beneficiaries may feel obligated to attend to please program staff. Still, this more formal, facilitated approach can be valuable if there are large discrepancies in monitoring data that need to be understood more fully, or if staff are considering a critical change to the program that might impact beneficiaries.

When sharing back monitoring results, remember that it is critical to consider both beneficiary privacy and the impact information could have on community and conflict dynamics.

Participatory Monitoring Approaches in the ERC Pilot

While participation was limited in the pilots, there were two main participatory elements that worked well for monitoring multipurpose cash grants: proportional piling exercises and sharing information from the household survey in the community group discussion.

Proportional piling:
To begin the community group discussions, the DRC-Tufts team conducted a proportional piling exercise with the participants. The exercise was utilized as an ice breaker to help participants feel comfortable sharing in the community group discussion, and also as a participatory method of data collection. Participants were asked to put toothpicks on icons of various categories of spending (health, food, water, etc.) proportional to how much community members spent on each category. For example, if the participants felt that the community collectively spent the most money on food, they would put the most toothpicks on food. Community group discussion facilitators from the pilot mentioned that they felt the proportional piling exercise was a good way to get everyone thinking about the topic and help ensure everyone felt comfortable speaking in the group.

Sharing monitoring information back to participants during community group discussions:
The household surveys can be conducted first, and then there should be two days budgeted for a rapid data analysis. The community group discussions leaders should then share the findings of the survey with the community (ensuring that all data is anonymous and no results that could implicate a certain individual or family are shared). This provides an opportunity to share the findings with the community and get their feedback on what was found. For example, after asking the participants on their experience with receiving their cash, the facilitator could ask, "As you know, we did a survey of the community last week. In that survey, we found that most people were having to wait over an hour to get their cash. What are your thoughts on this?" This can provide interesting feedback on the survey without asking leading questions to the participants of the community group discussions, as they have already shared their thoughts in the previous question. In the pilot in Ethiopia, the facilitators of the community group discussions found that they got better inputs when they shared the survey results, and it also serves as a way to close the feedback loop and provide information back to the community.

Conclusions

Over the course of the two pilots, the intention was to operationalize existing M&E resources in difficult contexts, and to streamline MPG monitoring in order to reduce the burden on cash recipients and field teams while maximizing the utility of monitoring data for decision making. In addition to the learning shared in this report, the DRC-Tufts team would to emphasize the following themes:

- Monitoring is less about the actual tools, as there are many good operational examples (which were consolidated via this Consortium) – it is more about connecting the monitoring process to the intended results of a multipurpose cash programme.

- Collaborative monitoring requires significant effort over a sustained period, particularly in contexts with little or no inter-agency multipurpose cash programming at scale. In order to pilot the monitoring tools within limited time and scope, the team engaged bilaterally with operational agencies. Now that the tools are available, it will be important for agencies to agree on minimum monitoring requirements across cash actors and projects in order to take quality MPG monitoring to scale.
- Participatory monitoring processes are challenging in humanitarian contexts in general, and for MPGs in particular. They require time, skills and resources that are often beyond normal agency capacity. However, there are ways to integrate participatory approaches into MPG monitoring that will directly improve quality, better capture beneficiary preferences, and inform decision making as outlined above. This is particularly true as humanitarian agencies attempt to harmonize how we think about and analyse coping strategies beyond food security.

Ultimately, quality MPG monitoring is closely linked to good humanitarian programming and should be implemented in conjunction with strong programme design. As MPGs continue to be perceived as giving people choice, dignity, and flexibility, monitoring can also identify what needs cannot be met through MPGs to inform complementary and integrated assistance. Monitoring MPGs is a way to continue the conversation with recipients of cash assistance to ensure not only that responses meet humanitarian standards, but also contribute positively to meeting people's prioritized needs and improving their ability to cope with difficult situations.

Annexes

Annex 1_Toolkit_HH Survey

Annex 2_Toolkit_Community Discussion Guide

Annex 3_Toolkit_Key Informant Interview Guide

Annex 4_Enumerator Training Outline

Annex 5_Enumerator Feedback Surveys

Annex 6_Icon List for Proportional Piling

Annex 7_Pilot I Data, Ethiopia

Annex 8_Pilot II Data, Ethiopia

Annex 9_ Translation Challenges Report, Ethiopia