

## **Global Cash Policy Network Call: the UN Common Cash System 14 December 2018**

On 5 December, Principals of UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and OCHA [announced the launch of a joint system](#) for the design, delivery and monitoring of cash assistance. This is a welcome step towards improved collaboration between United Nations agencies, with the potential to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of UN cash operations and better support those affected by humanitarian crises. It is also likely to have significant implications for the humanitarian community as a whole.

Open and constructive dialogue, as acknowledged in the statement, will be key to the success of this important initiative. As a first step in engaging the broader humanitarian community in the design of this system CaLP held a call of its Global Cash Policy Network, plus additional donor invitees and representatives of CaLP's Technical Advisory Group. The aim of the discussion was to share what is known so far about the common cash system to ensure a shared understanding of what the proposal entails, and to identify initial questions, aspirations and advocacy messages as the start of a broader engagement process.

WFP, on behalf of UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF, briefed on the genesis and scope of the initiative. Discussions on the design of the common cash system are ongoing. This will be a coordinated programmatic approach around the programme cycle from needs assessment to monitoring. It will be context-specific, and will include a common data management system based on a global data sharing agreement between the three agencies. There will be opportunities for engagement and dialogue throughout the process, and the agencies recognise the need to work with others and build on all available evidence to fully realise the potential for increased efficiency and effectiveness.

Participants on the call discussed their key aspirations for and questions about the proposed system: What would success look like? What should we seek to avoid in the design process? What are the key questions we would like to know the answers to? How should others be engaged? Key points from the breakout groups included:

### **Effectiveness, efficiency and accountability**

- How can we ensure accountability, both to the people we serve and to donors?
- We've seen that joint delivery doesn't necessarily equate to increased efficiency – how can we build on what we've learned and ensure transparency around efficiency and effectiveness metrics?
- How can we keep a focus on quality programming – doing cash better not just doing more cash?
- How can we ensure that we keep (a) quality programming and (b) effective coordination at the centre of our collective efforts, and are not distracted by building this tool?
- What is the problem – ultimately – that this system is trying to solve? How radical is it, is it needed, what is it and what is it not – more clarity on this would be welcome.
- Can we develop and work to a common set of standards to which the common system (and others) would then be held to account?

### **User-centred design:**

- This has started as a top-down initiative – how can we ensure to the extent possible that its design is being shaped by user preferences, feedback and experiences?
- What does a joint system mean for end-user choice?
- What happens to those (eg unregistered refugees) who cannot be part of the system?
- The presentation did not mention engagement with affected people – we need to recognise that in some cases this is not a strength of the UN agencies and that partnerships with other actors will be needed to ensure this is kept as a focus.

#### **Data management and protection:**

- How will data protection be taken into account in the design process?
- The system will eventually be open for others to use - how can NGOs engage while retaining agency and ownership of their data?

#### **Relationship with other actors:**

- How will the system interact with other operational models and actors?
- Is collective ownership possible, and what does it mean?
- How can we ensure transparency at every stage of the process, in particular around planned coverage, reach and timeline, to maximise opportunities for collaboration?
- How can we ensure that we build on existing experiences of collaborative delivery, including the CCD?
- On current plans who will ensure programme quality, effective feedback and effective action, in particular in the last mile?
- There's a tension with localization commitments here – how will local actors be involved in shaping, driving and supporting the common system?
- The intention is to open the system up to other actors – how will small and national NGOs be able to engage?
- Different actors have different strengths (for example, NGOs and national actors specialise in last mile delivery and engagement with affected people) – we don't want to see a monopolistic system, and there is intrinsic value in a diversity of response options.
- How will financial service providers be engaged?

#### **Coordination:**

- This is a welcome step towards improved collaboration between UN agencies but doesn't solve the broader coordination questions - how can we keep a focus on these?
- The system must engage with the global coordination system, including – for example – on defining common multipurpose cash monitoring and reporting systems rather than building parallel systems.

#### **Future fitness:**

- How will the model take emerging trends, needs and partnerships into account?

#### **Context:**

- How will this system work in remote, low-infrastructure areas?
- Will it be able to reach beyond urban/ population centres?

- How will context affect the type of model which is rolled out in a given setting?

**Other assistance:**

- Will the system be extended to allow joint assessment, planning and delivery of other types of assistance?
- How will other types of assistance, including complementary assistance, interface with this system?

**Engagement and dialogue:**

- How will this build on what we have learned to date, including through CaLP's Operational Models framework?
- Let's ensure that we engage with and learn from existing platforms, including the CCD (which represents 15 NGOs).
- How can we ensure the meaningful engagement of local actors, governments and regional actors?
- There needs to be a clear distinction between engagement on: a) usability/functionality for actors who may be engaging with the system as sub-contractors; b) broader coordination with the system for actors working alongside it. For both, the interaction with coordination structures needs to be clearly defined

These reflections mark the start of an active engagement process which CaLP aims to support. The Collaborative Cash Delivery Network (CCD) have shared some further reflections [here](#). The IFRC have indicated that they intend to convene a technical level discussion around this early in 2019. We will highlight opportunities for further engagement as soon as these are clarified.