

Temporary suspension of the implementation of humanitarian Cash Based Interventions (CBA) in Gedeo and West Guji zones and Mitigation Measures

Core Issue:

Temporary suspension of the implementation of humanitarian CBIs to IDPs in West Guji settlement sites by NDRMC-led Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Bule Hora and shared through the Bule Hora coordination forums during the week of August 27, 2018. The suspension was subsequently extended to Gedeo zone, though no CBIs had yet taken place in the zone.

Underlying causes of the temporary suspension of CBIs in Gedeo and West Guji zones:

The concerns raised by NDRMC leadership at the Bule Hora EOC include; targeting of the displaced persons for humanitarian cash response and beneficiary protection during these activities.

Targeting of Beneficiaries:

According to the report by Bule Hora NDRMC, beneficiary targeting for CBIs was not fairly and appropriately conducted in West Guji, resulting to inclusion and exclusion errors. Many beneficiaries, who didn't not fulfill the vulnerability criteria were included, while at the same time many vulnerable people/HHs, that fit the identified criteria were excluded. However, it is important to note actual targeting of beneficiaries was done by the local authorities at the woreda level based on the agreed eligibility criteria with little or no involvement of the humanitarian actors implementing the CBA.

Protection Concerns identified during distribution:

- Information sharing weakness; the host communities and the targeted IDP population were not aware about the CBIs.
- Cash payments to beneficiaries were carried out in an open area/center of the displacement sites exposing the beneficiaries to risk of theft or taxation and likely to attract attention of the non-beneficiary category.
- CBIs are deemed as the preferred modality of assistance by IDPs in West Guji due to its empowerment, choice and flexibility especially with a variety of unmet immediate and recovery needs.
- Tension between the two groups of beneficiaries i.e. those that received cash assistance and those who were provided with in-kind assistance.
- Appropriate targeting mechanism for humanitarian CBI due to the sensitivity of cash transfers and the fact that CBIs are, in most cases, the preferred modality.

Mitigation Measures

Targeting Issues:

- Beneficiary involvement, sensitization and information sharing: Share information and sensitize the beneficiaries on who is targeted, why they are targeted, why -the transfer values may be different from site to site. Organizations are strongly encouraged to coordinate and harmonize transfer values where possible.
- Follow community based participatory beneficiary targeting methodology, which actively involve the communities concerned in setting the targeting criteria as well as the targeting and registration procedures.
- Ensuring targeting of the most vulnerable to minimize the likelihood of conflict with the non-beneficiary households and/or host community. Authorities to consult with host community groups eg. youth groups and address perceived grievances.

- Ensure that targeting of IDPs/host communities is based on a clear vulnerability criteria with consideration of different groups and mindful of different perception issues.
- Where possible, use different methods to verify beneficiary lists with IDP or host community committees while ensuring beneficiary confidentiality and data protection.
- Consider electronic registration and cash transfer to beneficiaries in order to mitigate possible irregularities such as double registrations and increase accountability.
- EOC to provide clear advice, guidance and support to humanitarian actors related to targeting and implementation of CBA.
- Site targeting must be coordinated with and authorized by the two EOCs in Dilla and Bule Hora. Targeting and cash intervention to be closely coordinated through the various coordination forums in the two locations and upwards to the ECWG at the federal level.
- Collaborate and coordinate the response across the different clusters and with the involved humanitarian actors ensuring proper targeting of cash recipients.
- Work closely with zonal and woreda authorities on identifying targeting criteria and proper implementation of the targeting and distribution at kebele level.
- Active engagement of zonal and woreda authorities to be ensured throughout the CBA.

Measures to mitigate against the protection risks

- Include affected communities as participants in all phases of the program cycle. Ensure that crisis-affected populations identify their own protection risks and benefit from self-protection mechanisms. Explain program goals to all community members, including non-beneficiaries.
- Conduct a risk analysis and consider whether CBIs will create or exacerbate protection risks and benefits for individuals, households and communities, and to what extent new risks could be mitigated by affected communities, humanitarian agencies and duty-bearers (governments) and/or by complementary program activities. Compare risks and benefits of different response modalities eg. cash, vouchers, and in-kind.
- Apply an age, gender and diversity (AGD) lens to assessments, targeting, design, implementation, monitoring and accountability, to ensure that people with specific needs and protection risks are identified. Engage a sample of community members, with an AGD lens, in ensuring that mitigation strategies are incorporated into the design based on risks and benefits identified in assessments.
- Ensure protection measures in and during the design and implementation of cash response. Include minimum protection questions throughout the program cycle.
- Design CBI along with complementary activities and services – particularly if specific protection objectives are part of program design.
- Embed monitoring of identified protection risks and benefits into program monitoring processes and post-distribution monitoring or similar tools.
- Establish an accountability framework, not limited to the cash-based component of programs, including a multi-channel feedback mechanism. Ensure that staff know how to deal with different types of feedback, including referrals for psychological and protection services and support.
- Capacity building of partner staff to improve response design, implementation and monitoring of CBIs.
- Train staff and partners on the prevention of sexual abuse, exploitation and child safeguarding, including on referral pathways to protection and psychological services.

General Mitigation Measures

- Thorough and routine sensitization of the local stakeholders in particular the local communities about the CBA; roles and responsibilities, risk and mitigation efforts, challenges, amount and frequency of transfer value, geographic and beneficiary targeting criteria, and feedback mechanisms.

- Establish field-level Cash Working Groups both at West Guji and Gedeo to coordinate with the EOC and the federal-level ECWG towards harmonized CBA.
- The value of the transfer is based on what the household needs to meet the identified needs which is the gap between people's needs, what has been provided via in-kind distributions (if any) as well as IDPs capacity to cover any needs without resorting to negative coping strategies.
- Consider multi-purpose cash response to meet the various needs of the IDP communities when feasible and most appropriate.