

MEETING MINUTES OF THE LEADS OF THE CASH WORKING GROUPS (CWGS) FROM WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Location: virtual
Date: June 15th – June 16th (12H-15H GMT)
Participants: 24 of which 10 women (1st day)
18 of which 07 femmes (2nd day)

Justification

From 15 to 16 June 2022, the meeting of the leads of the CWGs of West and Central Africa was held in virtual mode. The meeting is part of the support provided by the regional CWG to national CWGs in the region with the financial support of the Office of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA/USAID). The meeting was organized in collaboration with the United Nations Regional Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Food Program (WFP). In order to better respond to the needs of people affected by crises and to address the food security exacerbated by the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, in combination with the help of strategic partners, the meeting specifically set the following objectives:

1. Strengthen ties and share expertise among CWG leads.
2. Identify solutions to strengthen national coordination of cash transfers.
3. Define common orientations and collaborative working methods within the national CWGs and with the regional CWG (Dakar-Senegal).

Introduction

In his opening remarks, Mirko TOMMASSI, Regional Representative - West and Central Africa, began by thanking the participants and especially the representatives of OCHA and WFP for their participation in the presentations they would be making throughout the meeting. He also mentioned the relevance of the change of name and logo of CALP from CaLP Learning Partnership to CALP Network. Indeed, under the banner of this new name, CALP identifies itself much more as a network and relies on collective action by depending on strategic international and national organizations in order to create a global change in humanitarian aid. However, CALP's commitment remains the same: to maximize the potential of humanitarian cash transfers for people living in crisis contexts while prioritizing the choice and dignity of those people.

Mr. TOMMASSI also stressed the importance of putting in place sustainable solutions especially this year with the impacts of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict that come in addition to climate change, insecurity and economic impacts related to Covid-19, further aggravating food insecurity in several countries of the West African and Central region.

This was followed by a speech from Ms. Benedetta, Head of the Coordination Unit of the OCHA Regional Office covering 24 countries in the West and Central African region. She recalled the progress that had been made in the cash transfer sector over the last ten years compared to the humble beginnings. OCHA is committed to working with the various UN agencies and NGOs so that

the crisis in Ukraine would not conceal the problems facing the countries in the region. According to the OCHA Office, good assistance for cash transfers requires a good multisectoral coordination and for this, it is necessary that all actors in cash transfers are supported in terms of accountability, expertise and training tools. The sharing of good practices and information is strongly recommended at the end of this meeting.

Reminder of the main points of the September 2021 meeting

1. Senegal and Gambia

The implementation of CWGs is underway and since then there has been no significant progress.

2. Central Africa

- **Cameroon:** The reluctance of the Cameroonian authorities for the MTs because of a potential risk that it may fall into the hands of the armed groups; a MEB has already been validated, but the difficulty of its use remains.
- **RDC:** validated MEB and the CWG is in the process of ensuring its use while encouraging actors, particularly at regional level, to have a common approach to TMs.

3. Sahel:

- **Burkina Faso:** Ongoing MEB definition process. Validated methodology, Secondary and primary data collection completed. Validation process of the basket calculations in progress with all the actors.
- **Mauritania:** difficulty in organizing meetings; harmonized tools produced; the challenge of alignment with social safety net amounts; sub-groups set up at the regional level.
- **Mali:** difficulty in organizing meetings due to COVID and lack of staff.
- **Niger:** MEB still ongoing; work for a better understanding of cash transfers by clusters; challenges of government involvement.
- **Chad:** interest in the use of TMs; challenges of government involvement; MEB validated but remains the question of its use.
- **Nigeria:** high rate of co-lead departure; MEB validated since 2018 with the support of CALP but difficulty in the revision; harmonization of the CFW's rate of pay; the government asks to develop a national TM policy; WFP is interested in supporting the process.

Presentation of the new IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee) coordination model

Day 1 Presentations and discussions

In the new basic model of cash coordination, **Juliet LANG, Global Cash Coordination Officer - OCHA**, goes into detail on this model and its application for the WCAF regional office. Indeed, in this prototype, at the operational level, the CWGs will be sub-groups of the inter-cluster coordination group and as far as leadership is concerned, it has been recommended that there be a permanent co-chair at the country level, both programmatic and non-programmatic. This co-chair will work jointly with a local government representative.

At the global level, the CAG, an advisory group composed of 12 senior technical advisors (including 02 chairs, 03 UN representatives, 02 INGOs, 02 local actors, 02 Red Cross/Red Crescent representatives and 1 CALP network) on cash is established for technical assistance to the CWGs. The role of this group is to develop a transition plan by September 2022 that will be submitted in return to the IASC for approval. The CAG is required to submit a mapping of the CWGs including regional and global groups. The CAG will also review the transitions of the CWGs and see how they align with the IASC model data during the 18-month transition. A complete list of CWG functions was provided as well.

Group work on CWG features (Day 1)

The first discussion session on Day 1 of the e-meeting of leads and co-leads focused on the following themes: **achievements, challenges and recommendations of the different CWGs**. At the end of the discussions of the CWGs separated into three working groups, these following points were retained:

- **Achievements:** the craze for cash; the existence of the MEB in Burkina Faso and Niger; sharing experiences and lessons learned during CWG meetings; innovation on the theme of terms and conditions for both cash and coupons.
- **Challenges:** capacity building on the MEB from its definition to its validation for a better appropriation of the actors; 5W filling; the challenge of sharing results and the PDMs of the actors; collaboration with social safety nets; strengthening in the technical capacities of actors.
- **Recommendations:** Return of face-to-face training to facilitate the filling of matrices; demand of Clusters' commitments.

The second session of discussions (Day 1) **focused on the alignment of CWGs with the IASC model**

- **Linkage to inter-cluster:** all countries are linked to the inter-cluster; many activities are underway, engagement of local NGOs; sharing of experiences.
- **Leadership arrangement:** national and international NGOs are available
- **Functionality of the CWG:** Previously discussed
- **CWG needs** resource mobilization; guidelines in pooling with social protection; government commitment for support (except Nigeria); capacity building on tools; an information management officer for mapping and publishing needs.

Presentations et discussions on Day 2

New vision of the CALP network and prospects in the WCAF region

Following the perception survey carried out in 2021 among CALP members, the network received an appreciative note on its management and the following recommendations were made:

- **The CALP should strengthen its communication with its users.**
- **Engagement with local NGOs and local governments.**
- **The CALP should increase its training sessions.**

In addition to the regional initiatives led by WCAF officials, Lynn YOSHAKAWA, CALP Network Development Manager, stated that CALP has considered all the above recommendations while prioritizing the themes of social protection, climate change and digital payments. This year, CALP is more inclusive with the presence of interpreters during meetings to facilitate exchanges. A new global framework for cash transfers will be initiated this year and discussions in the region are also in the pipeline. System capacity building, investments in digital payments and data protection, and the re-establishment of CALP in the Asia Pacific region are key areas (global and regional) of the network's annual plan.

It is important to note that the use of cash transfers is growing, therefore CALP as a network needs to develop the knowledge of individuals and organizations to better meet the expectations of cash transfer programs with quality and accessibility. As part of CALP's new vision as a network, CALP will position itself as a facilitator in capacity building to promote collective action, collaboration and leadership of its members. In this regard, Alain KERGOAT, Coordinator of Training Development within CALP, will oversee technical assistance to the trainings and will coordinate the efforts and contributions of the different organizations to adapt them to the realities of the field.

Sharing experiences

- **Presentation of the SEM implementation process in Burkina Faso (April 2022)**

Lionel OUEDRAGO, MT Specialist and Lead CWG BF, recalled the humanitarian context in Burkina Faso that led to the updating of the MEB basket by the end of 2021. In this process, the hybrid

approach was used based on (expenditures + fundamental rights). Considering the "Rights" aspect, a cohort of the population was designated based on the level of satisfaction of their basic needs and the quality of their food. At the same time, the cluster had defined the minimum amount spent and following the household survey, several MEBs were formulated: an emergency MEB, a resilience MEB and a national and regional representative MEB.

It should be noted that the MEB process is long and costly (World Bank and CERF funding), nonetheless it was conducted in a participatory and inclusive manner with national leadership and cluster participation. At the end of the process, the recommendations to be retained are to proceed with a complete update of the prices for all the other sectoral sub-baskets; to automate the updating of the MEB prices and the GAPs; and to continue the diffusion of the MEB to all actors, especially sub-national ones.

- **Presentation of the MEB implementation process in Niger**

Fadima SOUMANA, Lead Niger CWG, recalled that the last value of food security has remained unchanged since 2012 therefore in consultation with other sectors, the CEC, TFPs, humanitarian organizations and the government, a technical working group was set up in 2018 to define the MEB. A hybrid approach was used based on data from national surveys.

At the end of the process, the total monthly MEB was defined (effective in the 2023 support plan), its outreach mechanisms and usage. A joint price monitoring mechanism is underway. It should be noted that the validation process took several years and that the following challenges were encountered: a provisional MEB due to the absence of several clusters; very few sectors with experience with MEBs; confusion in the technical terms between MEB and TM; some sectors could not be defined.

Insecure Area Access Strategy and Approaches / WFP

Given the context of growing insecurity in many areas of the WCAF region, **Tidiane FALL, Regional Humanitarian Military Interaction and Access Officer/WFP**, presented the four principles for working in difficult areas. These principles are based on community acceptance, information gathering and analysis capacity, local humanitarian negotiation capacity, and civil-military coordination CVI and HMI (Humanitarian Military Interaction). The elements to consider in insecure areas are based on communication and negotiation. When the topic of cash is raised in insecure areas, one must also consider the risks associated with beneficiaries/humanitarians and in this case additional risks arise with the use of armed escorts (private and government). In this presentation, Tidiane FALL discussed the use of armed forces in humanitarian convoys and how it can be used to preserve the security of all parties. Depending on the context of insecurities, a list of possible alternatives based on strategies of communication, negotiation, management of all stakeholders, and the establishment of humanitarian corridors, can be used. However, as a last resort, humanitarian operations may be suspended or halted, depending on the implications.

Group Work and Discussion on Day 2

The first session of group work on the second day focused **on actions to be taken to meet the expectations of the new CALP network strategy.**

From a coordination and collaboration point of view, most of the CWGs requested the return of face-to-face meetings and more meetings to facilitate the sharing of experiences. In addition, the presence of the local organizations of the coordination bodies in the CWGs was strongly desired. To this end, it was recommended that they be included in cluster and inter-cluster meetings and that new practices and important information on cash transfers be shared. A request for government involvement and support for funding coordination was made.

From the point of view of training and technical support, several points, namely field missions of CALP in the national CWGs, diversification of CALP training according to the context and the needs of the members, reinforcement of the Francophone trainer capital for the WCAF region, advocacy with donors and technical assistance to the actors, were highlighted. For the implementation of these

recommendations, the discussion groups recommended to ensure in collaboration with the local CWGs the mapping of local/international organizations and their relative capacity building. In conclusion, for a synergy with local organizations, days of exchanges and assessment of CWG activities should be set up.

Following the presentation by T. FALL / WFP, the second session of the working groups on Day 2 focused on **the access constraints present in the CWGs' intervention zones, mitigation measures and obstacles related to greater use of cash transfers**. At the end of the group work, the following points were made

- **Constraints** related to access to CWG intervention sites: insecurity, limitations of digital access, difficult geographic access and imposition of armed escorts
- **Mitigation measures**: combination of several mechanisms (digital and direct), use of local relays, digitalization of assistance
- **Obstacles** to the use of CVA programs in insecure contexts: insecurity, delays in implementation due to logistical problems, increase in provider prices, fear of cash due to risks.

Questionnaire

After two days of meetings rich in knowledge and discussions, the regional office, to evaluate the meeting, administered a satisfaction questionnaire to the participants in order to analyze the points to improve.

The answers and solutions will be discussed internally.

Agenda

Schedule	Session	Script
12H00-12H50	Welcome Address	CALP OCHA
	Agenda and objectives of the meeting	
	Reminder of the Zoom features essential to the meeting and other practical issues	Simultaneous interpretation, recorded meeting...
	Introduction of the participants	Presentation in pairs Presentation in plenary
12H50-13H40	How CWGs work: understanding current issues and challenges, sharing ideas and exploring common issues (Moderator: Lionel)	Reminder of the main points of September 2021 meeting
		Group work
		Restitution of group work and discussion in plenary: Points of convergence, common challenges
13H40-14H00		
14H00-15H00	Perspectives on the role of CWGs in the new coordination model	Presentation on the transition process after IASC adoption of the new coordination model
		Work group
		Restitution of work group in plenary
12H00-13H00	CALP's multi-annual action plan and perspectives at the regional level (launching communities of practice, ...)	Presentation on CALP's annual action plan
		CALP's new vision in terms of capacity building: workshops, certification, technical assistance
		Work group
		Restitution of work group in plenary
13H00-13H40	Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB)	Country Overview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burkina Faso: adaptation of the MEB to the inflation context Niger: Expected challenges, timing and complex negotiations.
		Questions & Answers/ Recommendations Summary
13H40-14H00		
14H00-14H30	Discussion on adapting humanitarian operations in difficult/complex contexts	WFP presentation
		Group discussion on challenges and experiences on CVA programs in complicated contexts
		Open feedback
14H30-15H00	Closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of key discussions and action points 	



Schedule	Session	Script
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conclusion and end of the meeting	

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