**REPORT of the WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA CASH WORKING GROUPS (CWGs)’s LEADS MEETING**

**Location**: virtual

**Date**: September 13 and 14 (1 p.m.-4 p.m. GMT)

**Participants**: 32 including 11 women

**Rationale**

The virtual meeting of the leads of the CWGs of West and Central Africa was held from September 13th to 14th, 2021. The meeting is part of the support provided by the regional CWG to national CWGs in the region with financial support from the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA / USAID). This meeting was jointly organized with the regional office of the World Food Program (WFP) in Dakar, Senegal with the objectives to:

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

**Opening remarks**

In her opening remarks, Lynn Yoshikawa, the CaLP Head of network development who first outlined the new CaLP 2020-2025 strategy which will build on the collective strength of the network to ensure the skills, funding, and systems to respond to the various challenges of the moment. CaLP will thus continue to support its partners in building skills by working with the humanitarian system and governments (or challenging the system if necessary) to maximize impact by putting the needs of affected people at the centre of our decision-making.

There was also the intervention of Thomas Conan, Senior Program Advisor of the WFP regional office, who was initially delighted with the work accomplished by the CWGs in the region. CVA can change people's lives to enable “Zero Hunger” by giving more choice, flexibility, dignity, to meet their immediate needs. WFP plans to transfer three billion dollars in 2021 globally. WFP will work to foster financial inclusion of recipients for transformative impact. We must continue to work together on the issue of CVA to advance the agenda of financial inclusion and the empowerment of women. The WFP will continue to support coordination efforts at the global and regional levels.

**Main updates from the CWGs**

This session aims to understand current issues and challenges, share ideas, and explore common issues between the different national CWGs:

**1. Senegal and Gambia:**

* CWGs being set up for a much more harmonized approach, on the amount of the transfer, the coordination of interventions, and experiences sharing.
* Terms of reference are being developed in both countries.
* The mapping of actors is in progress.

**2. Central Africa:**

* Unwillingness of the Cameroonian authorities for CVA who think there is a high risk that it will fall into the hands of armed groups; the COVID situation and its restrictions for planning and implementing responses; a guidance note produced allowed activities to continue.
* A MEB is already validated, but still the difficulty of using it.
* In DRC, the MEB is validated and the CWG is in the process of ensuring its use while encouraging actors, particularly at the regional level, to have a common approach regarding CVA; the COVID situation and the adjustments it requires; the issues encountered in terms of security.

**3. Sahel:**

* Mauritania: issue in organizing meetings; however harmonized tools was produced; the challenge of alignment with the amounts of social safety nets; sub CWGs set up at regional level.
* Mali: issue in organizing meetings due to COVID and the gap of staff; training needs assessment ongoing, possible solicitation of CaLP or WFP regional office as needed.
* Niger: the MEB is still in progress; integrating humanitarian CVA into humanitarian planning; integration of multiple-use cash under the RRM; production of a COVID briefing note; work for a better understanding of CVA by clusters; the challenges of government involvement.
* Chad: interest in using CVA as modality; the challenges of government involvement; the MEB is validated but remains the question of its use.
* Nigeria : high level of turnover of technical co-lead staff; the strategic lead is new; MEB validated since 2018 with support from CaLP, however struggling with the revision; to update the MEB still trying with support from REACH to conduct a Joint Market Monitoring impacted by the suspension of the activities of ACTED in Nigeria; REACH is continuing to support remotely; the issue to harmonize the Cash For Work rates; the government ask to develop a national CVA policy by the humanitarian community and WFP is interested in supporting.

**Perspectives on the role of CWGs within the coordination structure**

This is the only session facilitated in English. Discussions focused on exploring perspectives on CVA coordination; understanding of global initiatives and links to work at regional and national level. It was moderated by Cédric Bernard, regional food security and livelihood advisor for the West and Central Africa regional office of Action Contre la Faim. There were three panellists:

* Dina Morad, Senior Advisor Cash Coordination- WFP: The letter signed by 95 organisations was handed into the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) urging the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to take a decision on the leadership and scope of cash coordination in the coming year; the Grand Bargain 2.0 after 5 years of existence which will potentially focus on funding quality and localization.
* Angel Pascual - Global Shelter Cluster: three guidance: 1) From 2016 – Cash Based Programmes for Shelter&NFI Implications upon Shelter Cluster Information Management Services. Can be found here: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/cash_based_programmes_for_shelter_and_nfi.pdf>; 2) Global Shelter Cluster Coordination Toolkit: (Section 4C). Can be found here: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/coordination-toolkit-2018-version/library/cash>; 3) Cash for Rent Guidance: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/resources/library/rental-market-interventions?mode=descendants>; In addition, as part of the Grand Bargain, the Global Shelter Cluster recently recommended outcome indicators for MPCA. The document is not public yet; In the HRP Process, the Global Shelter Cluster position is that all shelter and NFI activities need to be addressed through the relevant “SHELTER CHAPTER” and that the shelter chapter should refer to the cash response within the sector.
* Paul de Carvalho-Pointillart - DRC CWG lead: the CWGs supposed to play a role at the planning and at the inter-cluster level (planning and analysis of assistance modalities); donors are supportive of coordination (rates harmonization for example); CWG can support capacity building initiatives for organizations when they are transition to cash. CWGs are also expected to liaise with social protection programming. In terms of support from global level, keep regularly up to date the national CWGs on what is happening: tools and guidance, support for ongoing in country initiatives. CWG need also to have support of the Humanitarian Country Team (HTC) adopt a common referential for all CWGs involving all stakeholders and all levels (clusters, HCT, etc.) for common agreements and expectations since the beginning.

**Trainings needs**

For this session, it was mainly about gathering points of view on priority training needs and possibilities for joint activities. The learning path proposed by CaLP begins with identifying your function within your organization; then complete the prerequisites before participating in one of the standard modules related to your function. There are also specialized courses, training of trainers, e-learning and online training. But this learning path is likely to be revised based on CaLP's new 2020-2025 strategy.

Training offers are now more diversified and more accessible with the ongoing conversion of face-to-face modules into online training.

Some recommendations:

* Strong need to have CaLP certified trainers in the countries; however, it is necessary to target trainers who will be more available; one can for example explore with local organizations.
* Technical support / training on market assessment, MEB, risk analysis, ...; prior to project / program design; some specialized courses exist on response analysis for example but not on the MEB or risk analysis even if these aspects are integrated into the standard training.

**Funding and staffing for CWGs**

A presentation of the experience of the CWG in Mali, which experienced a funding and staff gap. The strategy of handing over the CWG to the government in the event of a funding gap has not worked. There have been no meetings for almost nine months. The situation has been exacerbated somewhat by the COVID-19 pandemic which now requires another format of online meeting that the government has not mastered. This presentation served as a basis to launch the discussions. Almost all CWGs in the region have experienced periods of funding and staff gap, but not necessarily in the same way:

* Always maintain the multisectoral character of the CWGs even if, depending on the situation, they can rely on existing sectoral coordination structures to support and develop institutional capacity; it also allows to have more flexibility.
* Strengthen the mandate of the lead / co-lead of the CWG beyond organizing meetings; they can for example be a pool of trainers to facilitate access to CaLP trainings.
* The new dynamic around social safety nets which somewhat dilutes the dynamic of the CWGs; reflect on how to strengthen the role of the CWGs, through advocacy for a more effective role in humanitarian coordination in general and in the current dynamic around social protection.
* Build the dynamics of CWGs step by step avoiding very ambitious objectives at the beginning.
* Consider cost sharing between actors and rotation of leadership, but by creating the conditions for the systematization.
* Advocate to provide funding for the coordination of CVA within the UN CERF fund in the beneficiary countries.
* Develop joint initiatives to create and / or strengthen group dynamics and thus create interest in funding and making staff available for CWGs.

**MEB session**

The objective of the session is to understand the progress made, current challenges, prospects and identify what would be useful in terms of potential next steps. There had been three presentations:

* Ollo Sib Senior Regional RAM Advisor of the WFP regional office on monitoring market prices at the regional level, what outlook for MEBs over the next 6 months: after sharing the latest trends on prices in the markets, he went on the understanding of the minimum expenditure basket (MEB): what is and what is not an MEB before tackling the question of the design of the MEB itself. But whatever approach used to calculate an MEB, it must be realistic, verified, and embedded in behaviour. It can be used in programming, in understanding the functioning of the market, monitoring programmes, and supporting coordination initiatives.
* A presentation of the experience of Burkina Faso by Boureima Lionel Ouedraogo, co-lead of the CWG: the MEB was built based on a cohort made up of calorific needs, the food consumption score, and the level of vulnerability according to a hybrid method. The main difficulties encountered are the heaver of the process, slackening over time and the difficult resources mobilization. The major challenges remain a) ensuring the participatory and inclusive nature of the process, b) maintaining the mobilization of sectors for validation and technical discussions as well as c) acceptance and use of the final product by all.
* A presentation of the DRC MEB by Jennifer Price, CWG co-lead: it is a national MEB which has already been finalized and validated. It was developed based on a hybrid approach while seeking harmonization of all existing MEBs at the country level and the contribution of actors with experience of response based on multipurpose cash as well as national and regional clusters. A MEB tool and a MEB guide have been developed and being disseminated as well as updates for improvement within 6 months.

It was suggested to organize capitalization meetings between the CWGs. There is also the need to share experiences on the use of MEB, especially in countries where it has already been finalized to inspire other countries whose process is still ongoing.

**New resources**

Participants were informed of the main resources available:

* Cash coordination tip sheet: [Cash Coordination Tip Sheet | Cash Learning Partnership (calpnetwork.org)](https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/cash-coordination-tip-sheet/)
* Minimum expenditure basket, decision-making tool: [Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) Decision Making Tools | Cash Learning Partnership (calpnetwork.org)](https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/minimum-expenditure-basket-meb-decision-making-tools-2/)
* Definition of minimum expenditure baskets in West Africa: [Definition of Minimum Expenditure Baskets (MEB) in West Africa | Cash Learning Partnership (calpnetwork.org)](https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/definition-of-minimum-expenditure-baskets-meb-in-west-africa/)
* [Linking Social Protection and Humanitarian Cash | Cash Learning Partnership (calpnetwork.org)](https://www.calpnetwork.org/blog/linking-social-protection-and-humanitarian-cash/)
* Call to action: Increase the use of cash transfers to ensure rapid response in case of shocks: [A call for action Increase the uptake of cash transfers to ensure rapid response in case of shocks | Cash Learning Partnership (calpnetwork.org)](https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/a-call-for-action-increase-the-uptake-of-cash-transfers-to-ensure-rapid-response-in-case-of-shocks/)
* Collected papers on gender and cash transfer programmes in humanitarian contexts: [Collected Papers on Gender and Cash Transfer Programmes in Humanitarian Contexts | Cash Learning Partnership (calpnetwork.org)](https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/collected-papers-on-gender-and-cash-transfer-programmes-in-humanitarian-contexts/)
* Gender Sensitive Cash and voucher assistance: Guidance to ensure the approach in the field: [Gender-Sensitive Cash and Voucher Assistance: Guidance to ensure the approach in the field | Cash Learning Partnership (calpnetwork.org)](https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/gender-sensitive-cash-and-voucher-assistance-guidance-to-ensure-the-approach-in-the-field/)
* Cash & Voucher Assistance and Gender Based Violence Compendium: Practical Guidance for Humanitarian Practitioners: [CVA\_GBV-guidelines\_compendium.FINAL\_.pdf (gbvguidelines.org)](https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CVA_GBV-guidelines_compendium.FINAL_.pdf).

Organized with the generous support of

