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IN PROGRESS: A REVIEW OF FORMS OF COORDINATION BETWEEN CASH WORKING GROUPS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN THE AMERICAS

AUGUST 2022



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



GRUPO DE TRABAJO
TRANSFERENCIAS
MONETARIAS



Plataforma de Coordinación
Interagencial para Refugiados
y Migrantes de Venezuela



**CALP
NETWORK**

CHOICE & DIGNITY FOR PEOPLE IN CRISIS



para cada infancia



Save the Children

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Cover photo: María Jerónimo Jiménez, a young mother from the indigenous community of Chicoy, Todos Santos, Huehuetenango, Guatemala, poses with her daughter Hilary Cruz Jerónimo (3 years old) and her son Isan Cruz Jerónimo (6 months old).
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SUMMARY

The Regional Platform for Inter-Agency Coordination for Refugees and Migrants in Venezuela (R4V) led by the United Nations System (UN) is a key example of coordinated humanitarian efforts in response to disasters. This initiative effectively combines efforts at the national and international levels, eliminates duplications, and brings together various institutions and programs to address the needs of millions of displaced people. The Regional Cash Working Group (RCWG,) was co-chaired by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) (2019–2021). It is currently led by UNICEF and Save the Children (since 2021).

Recently, UN agencies and governments have collaborated to link humanitarian cash and voucher assistance (CVA) into safety net systems, improving coordination primarily through the Cash Working Groups (CWG). These initiatives, driven by Latin American CWGs, humanitarian actors, and governments, are linked to both local and global processes.

Regional spaces have been established to evaluate and establish relevant coordination mechanisms, based on each experience, to enhance the collaboration between safety net systems and humanitarian CVA. Numerous regional studies have been conducted to analyze coordination in this field and provide systematized local experiences with lessons learned, opportunities, and challenges to address.

This systematization aims to contribute to the RCWG's coordination objectives between CWGs and national and subnational governmental entities by compiling historical and current evidence in Latin America and the Caribbean and presenting concrete recommendations. It provides a foundation for coordinating strategies between social protection systems and CVA by mapping and overviewing the initiatives and coordination efforts in each country in the region, as well as conducting in-depth case studies in Colombia, Ecuador, and Guatemala.

The systematization includes a description of the countries that have CWGs or other coordination spaces, such as working groups or thematic forums, aimed at linking humanitarian CVA with social protection and part of the CALP Network and/or RCWG-R4V.¹ It also highlights the social protection approach to the use of CVA and the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in which several governments promoted the use of CVA with the help of UN agencies and international organizations.

¹ CALP. (n.d.). [Grupos de trabajo de transferencias monetarias de las Américas. Web page](#)

KEY FINDINGS

In general, several trends can be observed in terms of coordination between government actors responsible for safety net system programs and the humanitarian sector.

In this study, all the governments covered have incorporated at least one type of CVA as part of their safety net systems, mostly in the form of conditional cash transfers. It is not uncommon for a government to adopt more than one CVA program as part of their basic social development initiatives. CVA is widely recognized as a valuable public policy tool, both in terms of their effective implementation and their positive impact on human capital development. As a result, CVA is integrated into the non-contributory component of social protection systems in the analyzed countries.

The use of CVA in crisis and emergency responses is evident, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, the safety net systems of the countries covered, integrated CVA into the response to the pandemic on an unprecedented scale. In some contexts, these efforts by government actors were coordinated, supported and/or complemented by the humanitarian sector and international cooperation. The relationships between the covered countries' CVA programming and their governments and social protection systems is evolving; but the results are generally promising and there have been significant achievements in some cases.

The main challenges in linking the humanitarian and social protection sectors have been adequately identified, and the CWGs have formulated preliminary approaches, even though solutions may not be comprehensive.

Initial courses of action have been developed at the level of the CWGs and previous studies² have identified three main challenges: (i) the lack of coordination between the actors involved, (ii) the inadequacy of social protection systems to respond to crises, and (iii) the lack of experience in social protection among humanitarian actors.

Specific measures have been taken to address the first challenge of lack of coordination, including sharing data, setting up registration and data management systems, and working together to establish CWGs. To tackle the other two challenges, the main responses by the CWGs include providing technical and advocacy support to national social protection organizations, providing training and capacity-building opportunities, and fostering links between the humanitarian and social protection sectors.

The primary trends observed from the viewpoint of humanitarian actors indicate that individual agencies and NGOs have a strong interest and numerous initiatives in coordinating with governments and social protection agencies. These efforts primarily focus on enhancing social protection capacities through training, implementing administrative processes, and establishing registration and data management systems. At the same time, coordination efforts are also directed towards designing and implementing CVA by governments.

Regarding the design and implementation of humanitarian CVA by specific humanitarian actors, there have been few successful experiences in integrating them into social protection systems. Working with government entities in the implementation of humanitarian CVA usually involves specific spaces, situations, and actions.

² CALP. (2020-a). *State of the World Cash 2020 - Chapter 8: Linking CVA and Social Protection*.

CONCLUSIONS

This systematization concludes that, while the regional trends are in line with the “first steps” towards establishing linkages and coordination relationships between the CWGs and the national social protection systems, the actions undertaken have proven to be sufficiently focused and relevant in their national contexts.

A few of the CWGs in the countries surveyed have subgroups, committees or other spaces specifically dedicated to coordination with social protection; they have developed a number of tools, processes and actions that can serve as a reference for other countries. The cases mentioned are Colombia, which has a subgroup on social protection within the CWG; Guatemala, which has a committee for reactive social protection; Honduras, where a technical working table for CVA has been established with the government and the CWG; the Dominican Republic, which, despite not having a CWG, has an adaptive social protection working table with the participation of humanitarian mandate actors; and Brazil, which also does not have a CWG but has a focal point for social protection.

In addition, several CWGs have been recognized by their respective governments and social protection agencies as valuable partners in the context of strengthening social protection systems and developing CVA in response to crises.

In general, there is a growing participation of governmental social protection agencies in CWGs, which are also interested in participating in common spaces for training and complementary work.

However, there are still limitations to the coordination between the CWGs and the social protection systems, mainly in establishing permanent and structured links. To address this, the strategy has been to open spaces for dialogue through training, technical assistance, and advocacy processes, and to support the strengthening of social protection capacities, including links with the CWGs and the humanitarian sector.

There are also several challenges from the humanitarian coordination side, including:

- The current structure of humanitarian funding, which works to the detriment of the medium- and long-term building processes needed to work with governments.
- Very few contexts have coordinators who are fully dedicated to the CWGs, which limits the ability to foster links with the government. Colombia and Guatemala, however, are exceptions as they have coordinators who are fully or substantially dedicated to the CWGs.
- The timing and objectives of some humanitarian funding may not be conducive to the kind of emergency preparedness and capacity building that would enrich the role of humanitarian actors vis-à-vis governments.
- At the individual level, different agencies and organizations vary in their internal capacity to engage with governments. These differences are often due to the particular mandates of these organizations. Some organizations have a greater amount of in-house expertise and capacity than others within the same CWG.
- At the regional level, the landscape is uneven in terms of progress in coordination between the CWGs and social protection systems. Nevertheless, the outlook appears encouraging.

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[Read the full study here](#). If you need more information about the development of this study, contact Holly Welcome Radice, CALP Network Regional Representative in the Americas, at holly.radice@calpnetwork.org; Florencia Alejandre, UNICEF LAC Social Protection Specialist and RCWG-R4V Coordinator, at malejandre@unicef.org; Emilie Arnaud, CVA LAC Regional Advisor and RCWG-R4V Coordinator, at emilie.arnaud@savethechildren.org.

CALP NETWORK

The [CALP Network](#) is the global consortium of humanitarian actors involved in policy, practice and research for cash and voucher assistance (CVA).

INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION PLATFORM FOR VENEZUELAN REFUGEE AND MIGRATION (R4V)

In April 2018, the UN Secretary General directed IOM and UNHCR to coordinate the regional response to the Venezuelan refugee and migrant situation. As a result, the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugee and Migration (R4V) was established as a forum to coordinate response efforts across 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. [The Regional Cash Working Group](#) (RCWG) is a coordination mechanism with the objective of supporting national responses through national/sub-regional CVA platforms to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate all CVA-related responses.



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