

## Case Study: Summary

# Cash Working Group de-activation in Iraq

The Cash Working Group (CWG) in Iraq was deactivated in December 2022 after a year-long process that required strategic thinking to adapt to new ways of working. Iraq is not unique in the region in that it faces a number of protracted and interlinked crises, but it is the first country where the humanitarian coordination system has been deactivated. There are very few examples of this happening globally.

This case study describes the deactivation of the CWG. It is intended to document its complexity and serve as a reference point for humanitarian practitioners who might be involved in similar exercises.

**Authorship:**

Mireia Termes, CashCap expert deployed as Cash Working Group co-lead, hosted by the World Food Programme, from April 2021 to January 2023

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## Context analysis

Iraq has been immersed in a large-scale humanitarian crisis since the start of the conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014. The crisis the conflict triggered has evolved positively in the recent years, but the remaining humanitarian needs have been aggravated by subsequent shocks, which required a redefinition of how the needs and their indicators were determined. At the same time, as the number of people in need dropped, funding reduced and the country's revenues increased, the humanitarian community began to assess the feasibility of phasing out its activities and handing them over with a focus on government institutions.

The CWG in Iraq was established in 2014 as a technical working group within the Inter Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) to support cash and voucher assistance (CVA) programming.<sup>1</sup> CVA has played a significant role in the humanitarian response, and the CWG provided operational coordination and guidance for multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA), which was a major HRP activity, and it also provided technical and strategic guidance to all implementing partners and clusters.

## The deactivation process

The deactivation process was led by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), with support from the ICCG, clusters, working groups and other stakeholders. The initial conversation began in January 2022 and the decision was officially made in July, setting a deadline of 31 December for the deactivation of all clusters and the CWG.

The decision was agreed based on low levels of available funding and reduced humanitarian needs, and that action should focus more on development and stabilisation. Priorities were determined by a humanitarian transition strategy for 2023 that focused on nexus coordination.

The CWG developed a transition roadmap with specific indicators to inform whether it should continue in 2023, transition into a new entity or be fully deactivated. Each scenario considered the CWG'S two main pillars of work, the coordination of MPCA and the technical support for sector-specific CVA. A risk analysis was also conducted to assess the impacts on beneficiaries and the cash community should the CWG be deactivated without anyone taking over.

### Key advocacy messages to the government

Enhance cash-based social protection programmes, including through the development of shock-responsive mechanisms and by advancing the work currently under way to build a unified social registry.

Collaborate with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), to ensure that all vulnerable households and population groups can access quality and regular cash assistance to have their basic needs covered. A transitioned CWG needs to be in place to share the expertise gained during the humanitarian response and aims to engage with social protection discussions within relevant forums to ensure strategic alignments and to support the quality delivery of cash-based intervention schemes.

A mapping was undertaken through interviews with key stakeholders, a workshop with CWG members conducted and an online session held with donors to identify how CVA would be integrated in different areas beyond 2022. The exercise informed the [CWG transition strategy](#), which outlined the role of key stakeholders and priority areas for CVA in 2023. The recommendation was for the CWG to continue operating in an adapted form to support stakeholders with greater focus on durable solutions, development and government social protection, and able to inform any type of CVA activity anywhere in the country.

The CWG continued to support partners with strategic, technical and capacity-building activities until the end of the year. Engagement with new stakeholders began, particularly in the areas of social protection and durable solutions. A [position paper](#) was also published to advocate for the continuation of CVA coordination and the use of CVA programming in new areas, and to emphasise the importance of engaging with the new coordination group.

The last CWG monthly meeting was organised in the first week of December, and the following week a [workshop took place to launch the new CVA group](#) and discuss its [terms of reference](#) and [workplan](#) for 2023. It was also decided that the new group would be called the Iraq Cash Forum (ICF).

<sup>1</sup> For all CWG resources and publications, please see the [CWG website](#)

		CWG	
Scenarios	MPCA		Technical Support
<b>Continuation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing HRP 2023</li> <li>High humanitarian needs</li> <li>New humanitarian shock</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MCNA: At least, 40% of conflict-affected population cannot afford basic needs + 15% relying on NCS + 40% with monthly income &lt;440,000 IQD</li> <li>MCPA can be linked with longer-term assistance</li> </ul>	CWG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant clusters continue with CVA activities and technical support is needed</li> <li>Engagement with Shock-Responsive Social Protection</li> </ul>
<b>Transition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No HRP 2023</li> <li>Context of Nexus - Durable Solutions</li> <li>Active development actors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MPCA integrated in Nexus</li> <li>MPCA linked with Social Protection (SP)</li> </ul>	CVA Technical Advisory group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant clusters transition to working groups with CVA activities and technical needs</li> <li>Technical support needed for CVA Durable Solutions / development outcomes</li> <li>Engagement with Cash-Based SP</li> </ul>
<b>Deactivation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No HRP 2023</li> <li>Very low humanitarian needs</li> <li>No CVA in Nexus and/or development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No needs that MPCA can address</li> <li>No possibility of integration with Nexus</li> <li>No possibility of engagement with SP</li> </ul>	Handover relevant resources to CVA actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Clusters or working groups with CVA technical support needs</li> <li>No Development actors with CVA technical support needs</li> <li>No possibility of engagement with SP</li> </ul>

## Challenges and lessons learned

Challenges	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New process for the majority of CVA stakeholders and individuals – learning by doing.</li> <li>CWG defined its transition strategy at the same time as its partners and donors were redesigning their own operations.</li> <li>Transition required resources while crises emerged in other countries, leading to critical staffing gaps and a significant decrease in funding in Iraq.</li> <li>Lack of a government for a year meant difficulties in identifying interlocutors.</li> <li>Systems are still needed to ensure government revenues are reinvested in the population.</li> <li>Coordinating with development stakeholders was essential, but a forum for doing so was lacking. Nor had there been much interaction before the transition.</li> <li>It was not always possible to keep all CVA stakeholders updated and abreast of events as the transition progressed.</li> <li>There were considerable discussions about whether the time was right to phase out the humanitarian coordination system, including deactivation of the CWG.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The humanitarian community should anticipate the debate on exit and handover strategies.</li> <li>The CWG mandate was solely for humanitarian CVA, but in protracted crises it is important to explore other types of CVA programming in other areas.</li> <li>Transition and deactivation were complex and dynamic processes that required strategic thinking and coordination beyond humanitarian approaches. They also demanded time, resources, learning from the development sector and engagement with non-humanitarian stakeholders.</li> <li>Engagement with local stakeholders and understanding their different ways of participating in coordination systems was essential.</li> <li>Guidance and tools provided by the HCT and ICCG helped in developing a strategy for deactivation and putting it into practice.</li> <li>Thorough planning with objectives, activities and timelines was vital.</li> <li>The CWG and the environment it worked in were unique, but sharing information and experiences from other countries will benefit global learning.</li> </ul>