

Minutes meeting of the Regional Cash Working Group Western and Central Africa

Place: Virtual and face to face
Date: May 9, 2023 (9-11H GMT)
Participants: 58 including 16 femmes
Organizations: Department of Social Protection and Solidarity Economy (DNPSES) / Mali, Upddhe Africa ONG, Care Cameroon, MercyCorps, France Red-Cross, IFRC, IOM, NRC, Oxfam, PAM, Première-Urgence, Amsterdam MSF, DCA, UNHCR, USAID, Bulgaria NGS, Unicef, Spain Action against Hunger, ICRC

Context

On May 9, 2023, the meeting of the regional working group of West and Central Africa on Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) was held in virtual and face-to-face mode at the OCHA regional office. The meeting is part of the support provided by the regional CWG to the national CWGs of the region with the financial support of the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA/USAID). This meeting was co-organized with the OCHA regional office.

The agenda is centered around a roundtable discussion on recent activities of the various CWGs and presentations followed by question-and-answer segments, all with simultaneous interpretation in English and French.

1- Roundtable of the different national Cash Working Groups

Available on recording (from 1 - 51mn)

- **Burkina Faso CWG**
 - Process of revision/harmonization of the minimum expenditure basket (MEB), definition of the survival MEB (SMEB) and the Gap transfer. Process of developing and validating a protocol on cash transfer in collaboration with the government following the ban on cash in some regions is expected by the end of this month.
 - Analysis of MEB and SMEB to update the transfer amount (all cluster's leads have been consulted).
A consensus amount based on the SMEB Gap of the 6 most affected regions has permitted to define 41,000 XOF as the multisectoral cash amount and 200,000 XOF/household/year as the resilience amount (paid in two installments). The amount of "Cash for Work" was also established and amounts to 36,000 XOF per month or 1,800 XOF per day, for a period of 20 days.
- **Cameroon CWG**
 - Exchange Workshop between humanitarian actors and their respective government counterparts on the topic of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) in Cameroon. The objective of this meeting was to reflect on the main recommendations concerning the CWG action plan made during the workshop held in December 2022. At the end of this meeting, it was decided to further integrate social protection actors in the updating of the calculation of the MEB and the transfer value – to strengthen the sharing of cash assistance experiences – Availability of reference documents.
 - Implementation of tools for Joint Market Monitoring (food and non-food commodities) with the support of sectors and REACH.
- **Central African Republic CWG**
 - Workshop on the action plan of the Cash Taskforce for 2023 to be organized with the members of the CWG based on the strategic objectives of the HRP for the Cash modality.

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- Workshop on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2022 Cash Barometer survey report - Household perception survey on CVA programs to define concrete follow-up actions for Cash Taskforce partners.
- **Mauritania CWG**
 - Development of an MEB at the Mbera refugee camp level in the east of the country (Funded by UNHCR) in a participatory and inclusive process. The stakeholders' report is expected later this month.
- **Mali CWG**
 - Establishment of a taskforce for the MEB development led by WFP with the support of the other CWGs.
 - Revitalization of CWGs through a mailing list available under this following link : <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/cash-working-group-cwg-republique-du-mali-guide-pour-la-coordinations-des-5ws-au-mali>.
 - Development of the 5W Coordination Guide and presentation to ICCG.
 - ToR Update of the national CWG.
- **DRC CWG**
 - First discussion on updating the prices to adjust the programming of the humanitarian has been initiated as there has been no change in the MEB for the last two years.
 - Training on Core CVA Skills: The DRC National CWG, with the support of CALP and its members, is organizing two training sessions on core CVA skills for program staff in Goma and Bukavu in late May and early June 2023. Another session is being planned in the Kalemie site.
- **Niger CWG**
 - Establishment of a CVA coordination framework within the existing coordination structures in the 04 main regions in crisis: Diffa, Tahoua, Maradi et Tillabéri.
 - Support to MSCWG members for the preparation of the 2023 lean season's response via the CVA modality.
 - Discussions with the government side on the MEB approval process at the national level developed by the national CWG. The calculated amount of 40,000 XOF has not yet been officialized by the government.
 - Training on core CVA skills is under consideration.
- **Nigeria CWG**
 - The revision of the MEB is in process (the first draft of the MEB revision document will be shared with ISCG during this month for input and approval. As a final step, the document will also be shared with HCT for a final agreement).
 - Completing the mapping of financial service providers (FSPs) to understand the difficulties faced by CVA partners with PSFs and the impact of money shortages and central bank regulation on cash programs.
 - Requesting information from partners to have an estimate of the amount of cash that will be allocated during the lean period in an effort to take the appropriate measures to deal with the limitation of cash withdrawals mandated by the central bank.
- **Tchad CWG**
 - Developing SOPs for cash transfers.
 - Advocacy on the issue of the identification of beneficiaries assisted through cash transfers.
 - Updating the food and livelihoods component in the Chad MEB; the consensus is 7,000 XOF/person/month.

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- Identification of CALP specialized training modules for the country. 03 modules were selected: market assessment tools, coordination of CVAs and the link of CVAs to social protection.
- Update on Sudanese crisis: 30,000 people registered at borders (including refugees, migrants, and returnees. As of May 7th, 27,000 beneficiaries were registered. For the time being, the recommended response is in-kind assistance, coordinated by UNHCR.
- **Togo and coastal countries 's CWGs**
 - **Togo**
 - Discussions are underway to determine a MEB and a transfer value. In-kind assistance registered an initial cohort of 52,000 beneficiaries in March, these same individuals received cash assistance in April. The regions involved in this aid are Sabam and Kara. The provisional transfer value is 20,000 XOF, of which 15,000 are provided by the government and the remaining 5,000 by WFP.
 - The ToRs for the CWGs are being developed.
 - The last cash assistance for the previously cited cohort is expected within this month. The next assistance will benefit a cohort of 100,000 people for a period of 7 months (3 months of unconditional cash, 3 months of conditional cash and 1 month of food assistance).
 - **Benin, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Togo:**
 - Ongoing joint evaluations between WFP and other agencies in the establishment of the four country offices and the expansion of staff.
 - Process of revitalizing CWGs in coastal countries.

2- **Inclusive CVA – Mainstreaming disability inclusion into humanitarian CVA. An Example from Burkina Faso. CBM (Christian Blind Mission)**

Available on recording (from 52 – 1H37mn)

The first presentation of this meeting is an opportunity for CBM Global Disability Inclusion to address primarily the humanitarian community in order to urge them to take better account of people with disabilities in CVA policies. In this respect, **CBM Global is examining the impacts of emergencies on people with disabilities and the barriers to accessing cash assistance.** The spectrum of disability is extensive, and it is estimated that 15% of the global population is living with a disability. This segment of the population is often marginalized and the most impacted during crises and conflicts. Paradoxically, these people living with a disability are the least reached by humanitarian services. Beyond the "disability" factor of these people, there are other barriers at the environmental and institutional levels and further in our behavior and communication patterns that constitute obstacles to the accessibility of cash transfers. For more inclusive CVA programs, it is necessary to think in advance about the most accessible modality for people with disabilities, to include budget guidelines (3-5% more of the budget) and to adjust the MEB to cover the additional costs (further considerations available on the presentation slides). **Wherever possible, cash distribution mechanisms should allow people with disabilities to access cash themselves, independently, while removing barriers.** The main obstacles noted to accessing cash and marketplace are related to inaccessible/inadequate means of communication, attitudes/prejudices of the population and the environment (theft and aggression). This presentation allowed for discussions for the implementation of inclusive CVA through the understanding of the barriers and the allocation of additional resources for people with disabilities.

More information on methodologies, tools and good practices from the CBM studies is available at the following links :

http://cbm-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CBM-Global_DisabilityInclusiveCashAssistance.pdf

<https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2023/02/PDF-Summary-of-monitoring-report-Rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-during-the-war-in-Ukraine.pdf>

Additional resources on building organizational capacity for inclusiveness: Handicap International/ Humanity and Inclusion.

3- Cash and Voucher Assistance for Nutrition: French Red-Cross's Pilot project in Niger

Available on recording (from 1H38mn-2H08mn)

The second case study of this meeting is a pilot project conducted by the Red Cross in Niger in the Zinder region to assess the effects of CVA in reducing the impact of economic factors on the most vulnerable. **The objective is to fight and prevent child malnutrition as a complement to the usual actions.** This cohort study, deployed during the lean season (July-Oct. 2022), measured the effects of a cash transfer intervention on the prevention of severe acute malnutrition by selecting as many exposed subjects as possible/intervention group and non-exposed subjects/control group. The results of this study are centered around three outlined hypotheses (mentioned in presentation) and are as follows:

- Observation of a greater improvement in dietary intake and diversity scores during the intervention.
- Reduction in the use of coping strategies for food but without the influence of cash transfer compared to the classic intervention.
- Reduction in the proportion of recurrences of acute malnutrition by the cash transfer intervention.

Following this presentation, the Red Cross mentioned that additional studies with a larger sample would be needed to further confirm some of the findings. **The high rate [36.8% in the intervention group versus 53.2% in the control group at the end of the period] of relapses of acute malnutrition despite the intervention raised questions about the effectiveness of CVAs alone in significantly reducing the risk of relapse.** It would be advisable in future studies to use cash approaches combined with more systematic medical follow-up.

(Selection criteria, methodology and study limitations available in the presentation).

4- Any other business

Available on recording (from 2H08mn to the end)

Feedback meeting on the study on the adaptation of cash transfers under conditions of inflation and currency depreciation; case study of Burkina Faso scheduled on May 24th.