

## **MINUTES OF THE FIRST WEBINAR OF THE SERIES ON EXPLORING THE LINKS BETWEEN CASH AND VOUCHERS ASSISTANCE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA**

**Place:** Via ZOOM  
**Date:** February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (12H-13H30 GMT)  
**Participants:** 186  
**Panelists:** **Dr Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe** / ECOWAS  
**Corinna Kreidler** / Independent humanitarian consultant  
**Christian Bodewig** / World Bank  
**Sigrid Kühlke** / European Commission (DG ECHO)  
**Paul Quarles Van Ufford** / UNICEF  
**Sabah Fara** / International relief & CCD  
**Céline Sinitzky** and **Amadou DIOP** / CALP Network

### **Justification**

According to CALP's most recent report on the State of the World Cash, published in 2023, progress has been made in approaches to Linking cash and vouchers assistance (CVA) and social protection (SP), particularly in view of the acceleration of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). This link should include distinctive settings, from stable and well-organized states - settings preferred by development and social protection actors - to conflict zones and fragile states, well familiar to humanitarians. Where do we stand today in West and Central Africa?

How do both humanitarian and development stakeholders concretely work together to answer both the needs and rights of the population? Are Cash and Voucher Assistance and social safety nets still valid entry points to shape and strengthen the Social Protection Policy? What are the leverages in different contexts and how can linkages be facilitated across the programme cycle?

The webinar series will unpack those questions with all key stakeholders, based on the learnings from West and Central Africa.

The first webinar provides a comprehensive regional overview, exploring opportunities and threats in the regional context.

The next webinars of the series will then focus on case studies from several countries, with particular emphasis on the Sahel region.

### **1. Opening remarks from ECOWAS**

Available on recording from 10mn-21mn.

**Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe**, Director of Humanitarian and Social Affairs at the ECOWAS Commission, opened the webinar by thanking the presenters and the members of the panel discussion.

The opening remarks focused on the importance of social protection and humanitarian aid; two themes closely linked to the region's development.

In addition, Dr. Ugbe recalled not only the fundamental right represented by SP, but also its social and economic necessity, despite the social protection constraints facing the region, both in terms of coverage and expenditure relative to gross domestic product.

The second theme of her intervention was the importance of humanitarian aid in a region facing multifaceted crises.

Other points raised in Dr. Ugbe's speech included the following:

- Government leadership is essential to set objectives and establish coordination between different ministerial departments.
- The need to create synergies between the humanitarian, development, and social protection sectors.
- The validation of the Social Protection Framework and Operational Plan by the ECOWAS Commission in November 2023, which aims to establish a broad set of guidelines and principles in the design of social protection interventions in member countries (**See section 4.4 of the Framework and Operational Plan**).
- The goal of achieving social protection coverage of forty percent (40%) of the member states' population by 2050.
- The need to promote better coordination of SP between stakeholders, whether in response to development, humanitarian emergencies, or other forms of crisis.
- The need to adapt and bolster existing social protection systems to respond rapidly to humanitarian needs and crises.

Dr. Ugbe recommended the panelists and participants to:

- Draw on their experiences to identify best practices for improving coordination and synergy, and to strengthen the link between humanitarian CVA and SP.
- Replicate this dialogue framework on a national scale and include all stakeholders.
- Strengthen the links between SP and responses in terms of humanitarian CVA and development.

## **2. Linking humanitarian CVA and social protection – CALP**

Available on recording from 23mn-33mn. The presentation is available under this link : [https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CALP\\_Linking-humanitarian-CVA-and-Social-Protection\\_EN.pdf](https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CALP_Linking-humanitarian-CVA-and-Social-Protection_EN.pdf) .

In the same line as the ECOWAS opening remarks, the strengthening of the links between CVA and SP is further explored in this presentation from CALP.

Why is it important to create links between SP and CVA? Primarily, to respond effectively to the needs of populations in different contexts. The humanitarian sector and social protection jointly pursue common goals and similar objectives through comprehensive and relevant coverage and a sustainable, timely, efficient, predictable, and accountable approach to beneficiaries.

In addition to the similarities between these two sectors, the presentation also highlighted the following points:

- The points of divergence between the SP and humanitarian CVA revolve around the principles of independence and government ownership.
- The functions and pillars of SP.
- Reasons for the relevance of links between SP and CVA.
- The different types of alignments between humanitarian response and social protection.

However, in certain situations, notably in conflict settings, the humanitarian sector may decide not to establish links with the SP in order not to violate the "Do no harm" principle.

In conclusion, depending on the maturity level of the social protection system in response to chocs, humanitarians have several roles to play and several options to choose from, either to guide or to support. For additional guidance on the various concepts of SP, an online CALP self-study course is available in four languages on the KAYA platform (<https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=4464>) alongside the toolbox on the CALP page (<https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/social-protection-toolbox/>).

## **3. Presentation of the regional World Bank report “Linking Humanitarian Cash Assistance and National Social Protection Systems” to provide a general regional overview. (Corinna Kreidler, independent consultant)**

Available on recording from 35mn-53mn. Presentation is available under this following link : <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Linking-humanitarian-cash-assistance-and-national-protection-systems.pdf> .

The second presentation of this webinar focuses on sharing the results from the study published in 2023 and conducted by independent humanitarian consultant Corinna Kreidler, on the alignment and current

links (2020-2022) between social protection programs on the one hand and humanitarian aid provided by donors and agencies on the other. The study focused on six countries in the Sahel region: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal.

**The objectives** of this study are **(1)** to identify the most effective connection points for convergence **(2)** to identify the main catalysts and obstacles to convergence, **(3)** to provide strategic, political, and operational reflections on the potential and added value of converge.

**The methodology** of this study consists in analyzing sixteen different elements of each program/country grouped into four levels: national policy; program objectives; program design and program implementation. For the purposes of this webinar, two chapters of the report are discussed: the working methods that enable or hinder convergence, and an analysis of the 16 different elements. **Obstacles** to convergence are related to political economy and institutional interest, as well as the use of national social registers.

To achieve better convergence results, we recommend the following conclusions:

- Find a compromise between coverage and adequacy of assistance, between the delivery speed of response and investment in systems.
- Develop common ground, step by step, with stakeholders, adopt best practices, share knowledge, prioritize collective work, and prepare for a long-term project.

The mentioned studies of the presentation are available here:

- The full report of this study: [Linking humanitarian cash assistance and national social protection systems](#).
- Regarding the use of social registries: <https://socialprotection.org/discover/publications/challenge-coordination-and-inclusion-use-social-registries-and-broader-social>  
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099624411142338969/pdf/>
- The English webpage of the Sahel adaptive social protection program: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/sahel-adaptive-social-protection-program-trust-fund>.

#### **4. Panel discussion with 4 panelists from: the CCD Network, DG ECHO, UN (WFP/UNICEF) and the World Bank.**

##### **Questions and answers**

Available on recording from 54mn - 1h38mn

- **Question to Christian, World Bank – In terms of financing, what role can donors play (alone or in partnership) in establishing links between CVA/cash and SP systems? Answer:**
  - Support in terms of alignment.
  - A structured and diversified response characterized by prominent leadership of the government.
  - Strengthen a systemic approach by the State, with capacity building in implementation and mobilization for rapid response.
  - Inclusive communication involving the community for a true partnership.
- **Question to Sabah/CCD – What adaptations or changes would be required to facilitate an integrated and sustainable approach between Cash programs and SP? Answer:**
  - Establish common intervention and governance frameworks and tools. For example, it is important to strengthen institutional coordination mechanisms at the national and regional levels, set up working groups, and work on program coherence and data compliance.
  - Work on program connectivity and integration to ensure continuity and complementarity of approaches. For instance, the region needs rapid response mechanisms, seasonal CVAs and predictable social safety nets.
  - Explore programs with flexible modalities that extend well beyond cash (risk and disaster management, SP programs for education, health, etc.).
  - Put affected people at the center of responses, right from the conception stage.

- Work on dialogue and mutual awareness of stakeholders' programmes.
  - Work on joint advocacy to influence policies and mixed/and or joint financing.
- **Question to panelists - What opportunities for dialogue and collaboration exist between the humanitarian community and technical and financial partners (TFPs) to strengthen adaptive social protection systems (ASPS) and social protection linked to humanitarian aid?**

**From Paul, UNICEF & PAM Joint Programme:**

- Prioritize existing real platforms for dialogue opportunities, noting three levels of platforms: **(1)** government and its coordination mechanisms, **(2)** government & humanitarian partners, **(3)** humanitarian & SP sectors. These different levels of coordination are centralized and decentralized.
- Agenda to support countries in establishing a coordination mechanism for the SP sector to strengthen government leadership.
- Within governments, strengthen the actors in charge of SP and those in charge of implementing emergency responses.
- Reinforce information sharing on both sides (joint analysis of bottlenecks, creation of formal platforms and informal spaces to understand each other's priorities, perspectives, and visions).

**From Sigrid, DG ECHO:**

- 40 years of experience in the sub-region, with the establishment of national and regional crisis prevention and management mechanisms (e.g. the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel - CILSS).
- The new challenge is to work in a coordinated way to respond to new types of shocks (e.g.: monitoring and planning responses to address conflicts, population protection, human rights violations, population displacement, etc.).
- Adopt a shock-reactive social protection model where humanitarians can cover all the survival needs of affected populations for a period of three months.
- Work in coordination with national Early Warning Systems, calculation models and duration.

- **Question to Sabah, CCD – In terms of civil society organizations and NGOs, what are the obstacles to involving CVAs in SP? Answer:**

- Lack of coordination due to the multitude of organizations.
- Strengthening resilience.
- Database management and establishment of common standards.
- Strengthening local actors.
- Pooling funds to work with a mixed financing approach.

- **Question to panelists - What role should humanitarian and development organizations play in financing despite the reluctance to channel funds to certain governments?**

**From Christian, World Bank :**

- The example of **The Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program (SASPP)** - a multifaceted partnership to support the design and implementation of adaptive social protection programs and systems in the Sahel.
- Coordination in the information system, approaches, innovations, and payment financing, with the objective of having a more coordinated system.
- Coordinated approach of different humanitarian and development actors within a governmental coordination framework.
- Example of the "Twin Track" project for a distinct yet coordinated approach.

**From Paul, UNICEF & PAM Joint Programme:**

- An example is the **"Twin track" Project**, a two-track approach aimed at increasing the coverage of SP interventions when national systems do not have the capacity to provide a rapid response in a structured way to strengthen coverage.
- A resilience approach to ensure continuity in the implementation of existing programs, even in crisis situations.
- CVA programs through national partners.
- Government-coordinated interventions via coordination platforms.
- Capacity-building of national systems in the areas of payment targeting monitoring of experiences/feedback and complaints.

**From Sigrid, DG ECHO:**

- The DG ECHO is positioned in emergency areas, often with difficult access, where it can bring an added value.
- The main commitment is to save lives, while working in complementarity and coordination with other humanitarian actors.

- **Question to all panelists: What areas of collaboration should be prioritized in the coming months to strengthen coordination, dialogue, and cooperation between humanitarian actors and those who support social protection programs (including governments), with a view to guaranteeing effective support for vulnerable individuals in various contexts?**

**From Sabah, CCD:**

- Affected population-centered responses.
- Engage with all types of humanitarian actors in the various dialogue platforms.
- Establish convergences among different programmes while respecting each other's mandates.

**From Christian, World Bank:**

- Alignment of actors in advocacy with the authorities for the use of cash as a modality of assistance. The evidence and impact of cash on beneficiaries could provide greater clarity in this context of cash bans in certain areas of the Sahel.

**From Sigrid, DG ECHO**

- The importance of maintaining CVAs for emergency and resilience programmes.
- Responses planning and task sharing.
- Involving all concerned stakeholders in response to conflicts.
- Data protection.

**From Paul, UNICEF & PAM Joint Programme**

- Bring these rich discussions at the national and local levels.
- In line with the ECOWAS priority of strengthening SP coordination at country level.

**Conclusion and next steps**

Available on recording from 1H38m - the end.

- Closing remarks from the Regional Representative / CALP at WCAF region on the importance of linkages.
- Summary of the main points developed during the webinar.
- Open question addressed to participants in the form of a survey on future avenues of collaboration to strengthen coordination and dialogue between stakeholders.
- The next series of this webinar will focus on case studies from several countries in the region.