



REPORT ON THE SECOND WEBINAR IN THE SERIES OF LINKING CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE & SOCIAL PROTECTION

NIGERIA CASE STUDY ON THE FEEDBACK MECHANISM

Place: via ZOOM
Date: July 17, 2024 (11-13H GMT)
Participants: 117
Panellists: **Valentine Ezulu** / Federal Ministry for Humanitarian Affairs – Nigeria Government
Muhammad Bashir / Ministry of Budget and Planning – Nigeria Government
Steven Loyst / Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
Emmanuel Atam / Fact Foundation
Fred Merttens et Louis Hodey / Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC)
Hannah Miles / Ground Truth Solutions (GTS)
Abiodun ABANIWO / Action against Hunger (AAH)
Akeem AJIBOLA / World Food Program (WFP)
Rami Beikhdar / Nigeria Cash Working Group
Mirko Tommasi, Abdoulaye Hamidou et Céline Sinitzky / CALP Network

Justification

This webinar is the second in a series of regional webinars designed to explore the links between humanitarian assistance in the form of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) and social protection (SP) in West and Central Africa. As a follow-up to the first regional webinar, “Exploring the links between cash and voucher assistance and social protection in West and Central Africa”, the importance of linking humanitarian assistance to social protection has become even more apparent. However, implementing this approach remains a challenge. This webinar will focus on Nigeria and examine how linkages can be made in complex contexts, with lessons from Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states.

The webinar aims to explore the potential of feedback mechanisms as a means of linking Humanitarian CVA to social protection, improving response efforts and ensuring accountability to affected populations.

In collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Nigerian government, Fact Foundation, AAH, WFP, FCDO, BASIC and GTS, this webinar included a few presentations followed by a panel discussion that examined how feedback mechanisms and community voices can improve distribution methods, cash and voucher assistance programs and social protection policies. There have also been discussions on how to strengthen the links between humanitarian CVA and social protection.

1. Opening remarks by the Nigerian Government representative

Available on recording (5mn-16mn)

Mr. Muhammad Bashir Ibrahim, Director of Budget, Ministry of Budget and Planning, delivered the opening speech, presenting the achievements of the national development plan under the name Yobe Socio-Economic Reform (**YOSERA**) for the BAY region. This region is facing a protracted humanitarian crisis caused mainly by actions of the Boko Haram group, the agricultural crisis and natural disasters, as well as a community crisis caused by poverty, inflation, income inequality and unemployment. In addition, there are social needs, such as high rates of low education levels and malnutrition. In response to these challenges, the YOSERA plan has brought together all efforts to strengthen coordination between the

government, development partners and international organizations to improve social protection in Yobe State.

The YOSERA development plan was rolled out in four distinct phases between 2004 and 2020. However, the fifth version of the plan is now considered a long-term plan, spanning 25 years from 2025 to 2050.

Here are some of the achievements of the YOSERA plan.

- Yobe State has its own social protection policy.
- Launch of a policy on internal displacement and sustainable solutions with the support of partners.
- Rehabilitation and development of insurgent areas.
- Establishment of the State Operations Coordination Unit through the creation of a database on poor and vulnerable households, known as social registry, which is integrated into the national social registry.
- A database in three key areas which is used as a mechanism for targeting beneficiaries for interventions in terms of social protection programs.
 - A first social registry called **State Social Registry (SSR)** for poor and vulnerable communities.
 - A second registry known as the **Unified Registry of Beneficiaries (URB)** which is the universal registry of beneficiaries of internally displaced persons.
 - A third registry named **Rapid Respond Registry (RRR)** designed for rapid emergency response, as in the case of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020.
- Implementation of a series of government policies covering education, development, infrastructure, health and agriculture, which are the government's main priorities.

2. Targeting in protracted crises: a case study from Nigeria - BASIC Research

Available on recording (18mn-33mn)

The first presentation in this webinar comes from **Better Assistance in Crisis (BASIC)**, an **FCDO**-funded program that examines why, how and when to use social protection approaches in different crisis contexts, to provide more effective social assistance that enables vulnerable people to better overcome crises and meet their basic needs.

As part of this meeting, a summary of the recently published report by **Fred Merttens, Louis Hodey and Alexandra Doyle** on targeting in protracted crises, covering three case studies in Ethiopia, Niger and Nigeria was presented. The focus of the presentation is on Nigeria and its context of conflict, violence and insecurity. The study used data from four different rounds of the General Household Survey covering the period from 2010 to 2019.

The aim of this study is to indicate the considerations and problems encountered when targeting social or humanitarian assistance in a context of insecurity and is not intended to provide recommendations.

- **Context:** National data show that the populations of the North are exposed to a multitude of shocks, especially the violence generated by the conflict. This is compounded by loss of jobs and income, high death tolls, climatic disruptions, disease outbreaks, high food prices and so on. At the same time, the resilience of households has diminished, resulting in a significant need for humanitarian assistance and social protection intervention.
- **The uniform distribution of social assistance** does not distinguish between the poor, the extremely poor and the non-poor, although poverty is strongly linked to sector of activity, geographical area and age group. The report also indicates a high level of vulnerability and a low level of resilience.
- **Social and humanitarian assistance:** Despite the multitude of programs implemented by the government, humanitarian and development partners, NGOs, and funded by the United States, the European Union and the British government, the lack of coordination is seen as a major challenge in responding to the current context of violence and insecurity, as well as other shocks. Another challenge is providing comprehensive routine social protection coverage to mitigate socio-economic dynamics and vulnerability to long-term shocks.

- **Policies and perceptions:** Information is needed on the perceptions of communities, beneficiary and non-beneficiary households on the approaches and targeting mechanisms in place in all these different programs within the country.
 - **Evidence to be considered:** Information on the perceptions of communities, beneficiary and non-beneficiary households on the approaches and targeting mechanisms currently in place in all the different programs within the country could be filled through feedback mechanisms to inform future policy development, both in terms of routine social protection and humanitarian aid.
- 3. CVA and Social Protection: joint lessons from communities. Cash Barometer Nigeria 2023-2024 - GTS and Fact Foundation**
Available on recording (35mn - 53mn)

In alignment with the findings of the BASIC study, the presentation by GTS through the "Cash Barometer" project monitors community attitudes, perceptions, and preferences regarding cash and voucher assistance. This GTS research was conducted in collaboration with the Fact Foundation. As part of this webinar dedicated to the Nigerian context, the CVA Barometer, an independent perception-based accountability and mixed methods initiative, will examine community perceptions of cash and voucher assistance and social protection in Nigeria, focusing on Yobe and Borno States (in the northeast of the country).

Lessons learned from the study:

- In Borno State, 42% of people said they would prefer to receive both in-kind food and cash assistance, and 33% of beneficiaries prefer restricted vouchers that can be used at specific vendors, while in Yobe State, a majority of 51% of beneficiaries prefer vouchers and 22% of people prefer unrestricted CVA.
- These quantitative data are supplemented by qualitative information that provides a better understanding of beneficiaries' choices.
- The responses obtained also show that in all the countries covered by the study, people are anchored in their initial choices and fear change. In the case of Nigeria, money management issues are the main reason why many beneficiaries prefer vouchers.
- 80% of respondents prioritise smaller CVAs over a longer period as opposed to larger transfers for a short time.
- **Preference for smaller cash and voucher assistance over longer periods** with greater community coverage.
- Like other CVA barometer studies, beneficiaries report a lack of information on the targeting and duration of aid. **SP and CVA programmes could use feedback mechanisms** to fill information gaps in social registers.
- In the analysis of qualitative questions, in both Borno and Yobe, livelihood support (80% of beneficiaries) and the opening of bank accounts (50% of beneficiaries) would help people to manage their cash.

Recommendations:

- **Create links between the SP and humanitarian** services to set up complementary support services to encourage cooperation.
- A more in-depth look at **the experience of women and CVAs**, specifically the risks and benefits.
- **Collect feedback in a proactive and reactive way** - Involve communities and put them at the centre of all decisions - Provide information to communities - Engage in dialogue with all parties concerned.

- 4. Contribution from Mr. Valentine Ezulu/ Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation - Government of Nigeria.**
Available on recording (56mn – 1h00mn)

This webinar was attended by the Federal Ministry for Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, represented by its Director for Humanitarian Affairs, **Mr. Valentine Ezulu**. He praised the relevance of the feedback mechanism and the importance of people being at the centre of CVAs and social programmes. He also pointed out that at the 7th meeting of the Technical Working Group on National Humanitarian Cognition, the national policy for cash and voucher assistance in the humanitarian context was reviewed and revalidated, then forwarded to the Federal Executive Council for consideration and approval. The new national CVA policy will help to develop stronger social protection systems and contribute to the resilience of people in crisis by providing more effective assistance. For this purpose, the new social policy envisages will consider:

- An inclusive approach with broader use and scaling up of CVAs.
- A parallel and autonomous approach to humanitarian programming, used without any link to the State's social protection system.
- An approach directly involving governments and beneficiaries.
- An aligned approach used by humanitarians as a reference point for the current state of the future social protection system.

5. Panel discussion

Available on recording (1h05mn - 1h46mn)

Moderated by **Steven Loyst from FCDO**, who has over 30 years' experience in humanitarian development in a variety of contexts, the panel discussion brought together **Abiodun ABANIWO/Action against Hunger (AAH)**, **Akeem AJIBOLA/World Food Programme (WFP)** and **Emmanuel Atam/Fact Foundation and Muhammad Bashir from the Nigerian government** for a series of questions and answers.

Question: In your experience, what are the barriers to using the complaints and feedback mechanism (or accountability to affected populations) as an entry point for linking humanitarian cash and voucher assistance and social protection systems?

Akeem's answer: Common Feedback Mechanism-CFM is part of the responsibility towards the affected populations, it is one of the fundamental entry points to link humanitarian assistance to CVA. We have reached over 2,000,000 Nigerians with CVA to truly meet their food and nutrition needs as part of WFP Nigeria's national strategic plan. For instance, during the period 2020 and 2022, WFP participated in "Joint UN SDG Fund" projects to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria and Sokoto State through the 'Institutionalizing Social Protection for Accelerated Implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria' Project.

At WFP, CFM is a two-way communication project that enables individuals, opinion leaders, community leaders, projects, staff, the community and all stakeholders to contribute to the design, implementation and final assurance of any intervention, whether in the humanitarian or social protection field. In this project based in Sokoto, the WFP is taking the lead in distributing CVAs, targeting people living with HIV and their nutritional problems.

Some results achieved through the feedback mechanism:

- o The deployment of the CFM facilitated the link with the design of the social protection project meeting the health needs of the most vulnerable groups in Sokoto State (pregnant women, children, people living with HIV and the elderly).
- o Increased enrolment in social insurance, especially of people in the informal sector.
- o Identify gaps in supply and demand needs to ensure that people can access the health insurance scheme.
- o Improving service provision, both in terms of social protection and material financial assistance (increased use of health services, etc.).

It is important to note that some of these results were expected despite the crises and conflicts, as Sokoto State differs from other states in the northern zone in terms of the presence of infrastructure and financial service providers. Socio-cultural or other norms may be the reason why people have not had access to healthcare. Surprisingly, when the project was implemented, communities proved keen to access healthcare, whereas in the past they had only been deterred by the lack of quality services and shortages of medicines.

Another challenge was the 'Know Your Customer' standards for obtaining a bank account, but this was overcome by mobilizing the International Commission on Identity Management to determine how to ensure that these people had access to their national identification numbers.

Question: In your opinion, how can we collectively operationalize the links between humanitarian cash and voucher assistance and social protection through concrete action points within your organization over the coming months?

Response from Abiodun ABANIWO: AAH currently has two projects, one dealing with humanitarian situations and using cash and voucher assistance. The other aims to strengthen the resilience of communities hosting internally displaced people. In our experience, one of the best ways to create linkages is to integrate a feedback and grievance mechanism for CVAs into humanitarian action and social protection or social safety net approaches.

Mechanism: A Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) is a formal, locally based means of accepting, assessing and resolving feedback or complaints from beneficiaries. This can be incorporated with the humanitarian FCM process as one mechanism which addresses both humanitarian cash & social safety-net transfers.

Challenges: at the start of the project, differences and challenges with feedback from different channels.

Means used: complaints booths, suggestion boxes and toll-free number for the humanitarian part and series of community engagements for the government part.

Question: In your opinion, what strategies have proved effective in increasing the confidence and participation of beneficiaries in cash and voucher assistance programmes using feedback mechanisms?

Answer from Emmanuel Atam / Fact Foundation: In the long term, the aim is to ensure that humanitarian aid is smoothly transformed into social protection aid. We therefore need a single, harmonized social register that incorporates elements of humanitarian CVA in order to provide emergency CVAs in the event of a crisis.

The results of the study show:

- Awareness and use of the Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) varies, especially among the most vulnerable groups.
- Beneficiaries prefer face-to-face interaction with humanitarian staff and local officials to provide feedback (modern methods of collecting information are not really appreciated by beneficiaries).
- Most people familiar with CFM have never left a comment.
- Not enough information on the end-to-end feedback process.

Recommendations:

- It is important to implement better complaints and feedback mechanisms and improve community confidence and involvement in the feedback mechanism.
- The whole process needs to be clearly explained to beneficiaries for better understanding
- More face-to-face interaction
- Use of interoperable feedback systems between cash and voucher assistance and social protection.
- Joint decision making
- Data protection and technology issues

Question: From the point of view of the government, but also in general, what kinds of challenges or solutions have you encountered, or do you see in general that might be useful/interesting to highlight or report?

Response from Mr. Bashir: He stressed the importance of the three social registers, which have different objectives but are linked. The types of challenges encountered are as follows:

- Minimal use of the social register, particularly the SRH for residents of rural and urban communities.

- Lack of coordination by humanitarian programmes.
- The need for third party monitoring where projects have their own monitoring design and certain aspects are ignored when the objective should be long term.
- In addition to CVAs, it is important to create income-generating activities, skills training and perhaps resettlement support in other areas and for this there needs to be an alignment of objectives between humanitarian programmes and SP.
- As well as feedback, the design of the programme itself, which takes too long to select beneficiaries, register and disburse funds.

6. Conclusion

Rami Beikhdar / CWG Nigeria thanked the rich contributions of the panellists, especially the presence of the Nigerian government representatives and all the participants.

He reiterated the importance of feedback mechanisms and the channels people prefer to share this feedback. He also highlighted how these systems are built and how we link all this information from the beneficiary to humanitarian organisations, development organisations and the government all along the chain.

In conclusion, **Mr Valentine Ezulu** recommended that the partners currently on the ground make good use of the national social register that has been set up to ensure that the benefits arising from the national cash and voucher assistance policy are fully utilised and to the greatest advantage of Nigerians in the process. It is important to note that the National Social Register is reliable and has been put in place with the active support of the World Bank.