



Outcomes of the Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) Policy Dialogue

The urgent need for new CVA policy commitments to drive progress on people-centred and locally-led response



Policy Dialogue
ON CVA

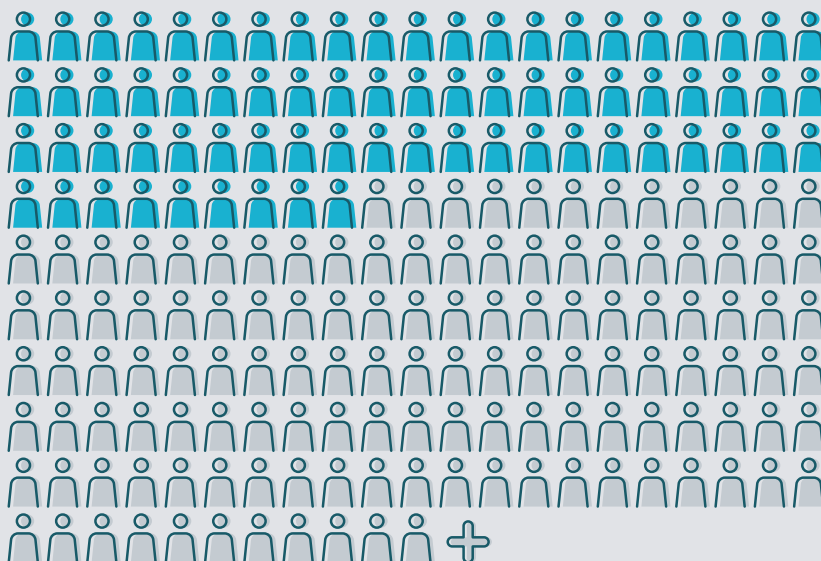
Foreword

As the incoming CALP Director, I welcome the powerful set of consultations that have taken place with over 500 people around the globe over the last year for the CVA Policy Dialogue. Beginning with local and national actors, the consultations identified areas of consensus around which to build new or refreshed CVA policy commitment. Whilst there are no big surprises, the policy dialogue further strengthened our collective understanding of the challenges for locally-led and people-centred CVA and contained some important insights and nuances. Over 200 participants joined the sense-checking event for the policy dialogue outcomes in July where speakers spoke compellingly about the need and desire for change. Most participants at the event support the findings of the dialogue but worryingly, only 36% believe there is the political will to take them forward.

A key concern that emerged from discussions was the extent to which the CVA community will act on the findings. Actors expressed their concerns about the extent of appetite for collective (as opposed to individual agency) policy commitment and action, especially given the headwinds the humanitarian sector faces. As the incoming Director, I am committed to ensuring CALP continues to do what it can to build our collective commitment and action to drive forward locally-led and people-centred CVA.



Cate Turton
CALP Network Director



Over 200 participants joined the sense-checking event



Only 36% believed there is the political will to take them forward

1. The urgent need for change

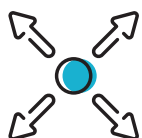


In 2023, [fewer people were reached](#) in most humanitarian responses compared to 2022. With major cuts to humanitarian funding, this trend is set to continue. In the words of the United Nations Secretary General, *'The global humanitarian system is on the verge of collapse. Needs are rising. And funding is drying up. Our humanitarian operations are being forced to make massive cuts. But if we don't feed the hungry, we are feeding conflict'*.¹

Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) can be part of the [answer](#). In most situations, cash is more efficient than other forms of assistance and, crucially, it is the form of support most people in crisis prefer.

The use of CVA as part of humanitarian response has grown dramatically in recent years. However, there are now concerns about the consequences of a perception by some that 'cash is done' and it is still not reaching its potential. If CVA were used whenever and wherever appropriate, it could account for up to [50% of all international humanitarian assistance](#).

2. An opportunity to amplify and accelerate progress



In 2024 and 2025, many influential policies that have shaped the development of cash assistance will come to an end. It is critical that we now act to drive new commitments, embed lessons learned into new policies, and drive momentum on CVA.

3. A policy dialogue



In June 2023, the CALP Network and USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance convened a [high-level meeting](#) with 140 senior leaders focused on 'The need for a humanitarian policy refresh' on cash. The event saw the launch of a global policy dialogue.

The policy dialogue process involved:

- A review of cash and humanitarian policies and strategies, building on a [review of CVA policies](#) in 2022.
- Discussion forums including two global meetings open to all stakeholders; two meetings with the Global CVA and Locally-led Response Working Group; four regional meetings with local and national NGOs (LNNGOs) in Africa, the Americas, and the Middle East; meetings with colleagues from the UN, Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC), INGOs, and the [Donor Cash Forum](#); bilateral meetings with financial service providers; a discussion with the CALP Technical Advisory Group; and multiple individual meetings. The process did not include consultations with national government officials as a separate group due to challenges in convening the relevant participants.

¹ OCHA. (2023). Global Humanitarian Overview, 2024. p. 20. Available at <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-enarfrs>

- Discussions started with LNNGOs. A ‘snowballing’ approach was taken, with questions framed around the definitions of locally-led and people-centred CVA, looking at opportunities and barriers to change.
- Sense checking of findings with the CVA community at an event in July 2024 (see annex for the event report). The vast majority of participants (79%) agreed to all findings as they were presented and the vast majority (75%) believed that change on locally-led and people-centred CVA could be faster.² A key concern is that only 36% of the event participants believed there is the political will to make changes.³
- The community was asked to provide any additional feedback on the findings by the end of July to inform this final Policy Dialogue outcomes document.
- Since the sense-checking event, various groups have questioned if we still have a desire as a CVA community for *collective* CVA policy commitments, and if we do, what mechanisms we will use to secure these commitments. This is a critical issue, which the CALP team intends to explore further.

4. The findings



a. Mixed definitions of locally-led CVA are causing problems

- The language of locally-led CVA means very different things to different stakeholder groups, causing misunderstandings and tensions. Various, locally-led CVA was talked about in terms of LNNGOs, any ‘Northern’ agency with a country office in a crisis-affected location, and national governments.
- The [IASC definition of local and national actors](#) does not include national governments.
- The Grand Bargain states ‘*There is no single definition of “localization”.*’ Under the Grand Bargain, the signatories have committed to ‘*making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary.*’⁴ Other stakeholders distinguish between ‘locally-led’ which aims to ‘*support and assist what exists within communities, rather than imposing pre-conceived norms or creating a parallel market*’⁵ and ‘localization’, which is the process of making the humanitarian system more locally representative.
- UN agencies identified national and municipal governments as their key national/local partner wherever the context allows, while the RCRC highlighted the role of national societies as auxiliaries of governments.
- LNNGOs considered that locally-led CVA involves them and communities as part of equitable partnerships – in terms of leadership mechanisms, programme design and implementation.

² 16% were unsure and 10% disagreed.

³ 40% disagreed and 24% were unsure.

⁴ Grand Bargain. (2022). Towards Co-Ownership: The Role of Intermediaries in Supporting Locally-Led Humanitarian Action. p. 6. Available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2022-08/Outcome%20Paper%20Towards%20Co-ownership%20-%20Caucus%20on%20Intermediaries%20-%20August%202022.pdf>

⁵ ALNAP. (2023). Learning to be more ‘locally led’? Current practice and evidence gaps in the international humanitarian sector. p. 24. Available at <https://library.alnap.org/help-library/learning-to-be-more-locally-led-current-practice-and-evidence-gaps-in-the-international>

b. There are different understandings of ‘people-centred CVA’ but it’s not stopping progress.

- The term people-centred CVA can mean different things to different stakeholders, yet views are broadly aligned and complementary.
- Common themes emerged with an understanding that people-centred CVA involves ensuring that:
 - The needs, preferences and priorities of crisis-affected people are at the centre of programme design. This understanding ranged from affected populations being consulted to them having a direct role in decision-making.
 - The diversity of the needs and preferences of affected communities are accounted for and addressed, including in ways which go beyond CVA.
 - Feedback from communities is responded to in a meaningful way throughout the programme cycle.

c. There is agreement that there are many ways to make CVA more people-centred.

- While everyone believes there are many ways to making CVA more people-centred, approaches differ.
- Most of the identified points of progress are not technically difficult and guidance in most areas exists, but they do require changes in mindsets and organizational ways of working.
- Many discussants highlighted the importance of community participation and partnerships with crisis-affected people.
- Multi-purpose cash assistance was highlighted as a key means of achieving people-centred CVA because in most contexts affected populations prefer it to in-kind assistance.
- The use of group cash transfers was recommended by many as an opportunity to enable both people-centred aid and a more locally-led response.
- Discussants talked of the need to consider the relationship between CVA and wider humanitarian assistance. They also raised the importance of taking a longer-term perspective, including considering linkages with social protection, financial inclusion and livelihoods, where appropriate.
- INGO discussants highlighted that people-centred CVA provides opportunities to improve targeting and design, but progress is often limited by the technocratic guidelines and behaviours of agencies and donors.
- Many stakeholders drew attention to opportunities for longer-term action through social protection programming with governments, while some also flagged challenges.
- The private sector spoke of opportunities to make CVA more people-centred, given increasing access to mobile technologies, falling data costs, and a wider choice of financial service providers with benefits for recipients and implementers. They highlighted the need for funding to test and implement innovative technological solutions to enable greater voice of crisis-affected people.
- The private sector drew attention to the need for better information about the challenges that people affected by crises face and the volume and flow of CVA to inform their planning and improve access to payments.
- Many stakeholders reflected on the need for greater donor flexibility.

- UN agencies noted that their decision-making is influenced by national governments, meaning that moves towards more people-centred CVA requires national government agreement.
- Some questioned if humanitarian assistance, including CVA, can ever be people-centred while sectoral experts remain at the centre of assessments and decision-making rather than people affected by crises.

d. Most agree that locally-led CVA is not automatically people-centred.

- Overlaps between people-centred and locally-led CVA were noted by many.
- Most discussants, both national and international actors, argued that locally-led CVA does not necessarily result in a people-centred response.
- LNNGO discussants underscored the importance of listening to people affected by crises and building response plans around evolving needs.
- It was widely noted that local actors who are from or familiar with affected communities can ensure aid is better tailored to the specific needs and context.

e. The need for equitable CVA partnerships is broadly recognized, but progress is slow.

- The need for equitable partnerships and resource sharing in CVA was widely acknowledged.
- Most discussants believed there is need for better partnerships with communities affected by crises.
- Most were agreed that locally-led CVA involves shifting the power in the system.
- Various discussants reflected that there is a need to increase humility among international aid actors, to change mindsets and listen more effectively to affected communities and local actors.
- There was broad agreement about the need for local actor leadership in decision-making and programme design as well as implementation.
- Discussants from INGOs talked about equitable partnerships with LNNGOs. Most referred to ‘delivering with’ or supporting LNNGO delivery. Some had a more instrumentalist approach, speaking about ‘delivering through’ LNNGOs.
- Most LNNGOs saw a continuing role for international actors but believe the system should be ‘flipped’ to be locally-led wherever feasible.
- Discussants from LNNGOs, INGOs and the RCRC were concerned that 66% of international CVA funding is allocated to UN agencies and that local partners usually fall into sub-contracting roles – limiting their experience in the programme cycle and unable to influence CVA design.
- Discussants highlighted the need to ensure the work of all actors is recognized and valued. They expressed concern about the impact of the work of sub-contracted partners being invisible in CVA tracking.
- Private sector discussants stressed the importance of longer-term partnerships and engagement with them to enable innovation and change.

f. The need to invest in local CVA capacity is not disputed.

- All were agreed that there is need to invest in local CVA capacity development and exchange.
- Most agreed that funding is essential to increase capacity to enable locally-led and people-centred CVA.
- Most were agreed that local actors should be funded and supported to enable leadership and meaningful engagement, including in relevant processes and fora for policy, programme design and implementation, including coordination mechanisms. LNNGO discussants highlighted the importance of preparedness to facilitate localized scaling of CVA. The RCRC spoke about their movement-wide vision for cash preparedness.
- UN agencies highlighted opportunities and constraints related to donor policies, including mechanisms to directly fund local actors and the need for budget flexibility to enable locally-led CVA.
- Some stakeholders requested more locally earmarked pooled funds to enable local actors to address community challenges directly.

g. Changes in mindsets and risk appetites are needed to accelerate change in some areas.

- The need for mindset changes and shifts in power was widely seen as key to making progress in some areas. This includes work to change systems and structures to truly enable a ‘locally-led first’ approach.
- Donors identified risk, particularly fiduciary risks, as a challenge to progressing locally-led response.
- Some stakeholders felt that the approach of donors to real and perceived risk, including in relation to work with national governments, is a barrier to change.

5. Charting a way forward



[Research](#) shows that the combination of system level commitments and individual agencies’ policies have played a key role in driving forward the use of CVA. Much as good progress has been made, there is still a wide gap between policy commitments and practice. The existence of a policy implementation gap is not unique to CVA. Such gaps are widely studied, summarized by some as ‘complex, multifaceted and multileveled’ issues ‘invariably resembling “wicked problems” that are resistant to change’.⁶

There are significant opportunities now to change the system to ensure all actors – international and national – think and act ‘locally-led’ first wherever possible.

The findings of the policy dialogue show that, at a conceptual level, there are many areas of alignment with, for example, agreement that CVA should be more people-centred and more locally-led. However, in some areas, there is much less agreement about what exactly should change, how, to what degree, and how quickly.

⁶ Full article: [Policy failure and the policy-implementation gap: can policy support programs help?](#) (tandfonline.com)

To accelerate change, new CVA policy commitments supported by robust implementation plans are needed. Given the findings of the policy dialogue, it should be possible to achieve quick wins in some areas and make inroads into others whilst, at the same time, advancing discussions to unlock issues that will enable greater progress around the issues that present truly ‘wicked problems’.

As things move forward, contextual issues should inform how, and how quickly, change is made in different places. While context is paramount, there is a risk that it becomes a reason for inaction where mindsets are resistant to change. Alongside this, greater flexibility is required throughout the system to achieve the changes that are needed and possible.

Against this backdrop, the way forward is mapped in terms of quick wins, issues that need more collective effort, and opportunities to be seized.

Promising areas to progress

Progress should be made on the points below, given there was full, or near full, agreement that:

- a. CVA should be made more people-centred by working closely with affected communities. This involves different ways of working – from consultation and engagement (easier to progress) through to communities having key decision-making roles (likely harder to progress).
- b. The use of multi-purpose cash should be increased to enable more people-centred aid.
- c. More consideration should be given to longer-term perspectives, with a focus on linkages with social protection, financial inclusion and livelihoods where appropriate.
- d. The use of group cash transfers should be increased as part of commitments to both people-centred and locally-led CVA.
- e. Stakeholders should explicitly communicate their understanding of localization and locally-led CVA to ensure clarity in discussions and enable faster progress. In addition, they should publish and track their commitments in this area.
- f. Rapid action should be taken to achieve equitable funding.
- g. Increased investment should be made to support local CVA capacity development.

More work needed to advance collective action

Divergent views and structural problems mean substantially more work is needed to advance progress on:

- a. Direct funding to local organizations. While commitments have been made, progress is very slow. Legal impediments are a barrier for some donors. Rapid progress should be made on equitable funding along with greater investment in innovative financing mechanisms. As well as representing real progress, this will signal the willingness to change while discussions and actions towards greater structural change continue.
- b. Tensions between technical standards and the preferences of people in crisis need to be addressed in various aspects of CVA e.g., developing MEBs and setting transfer values.

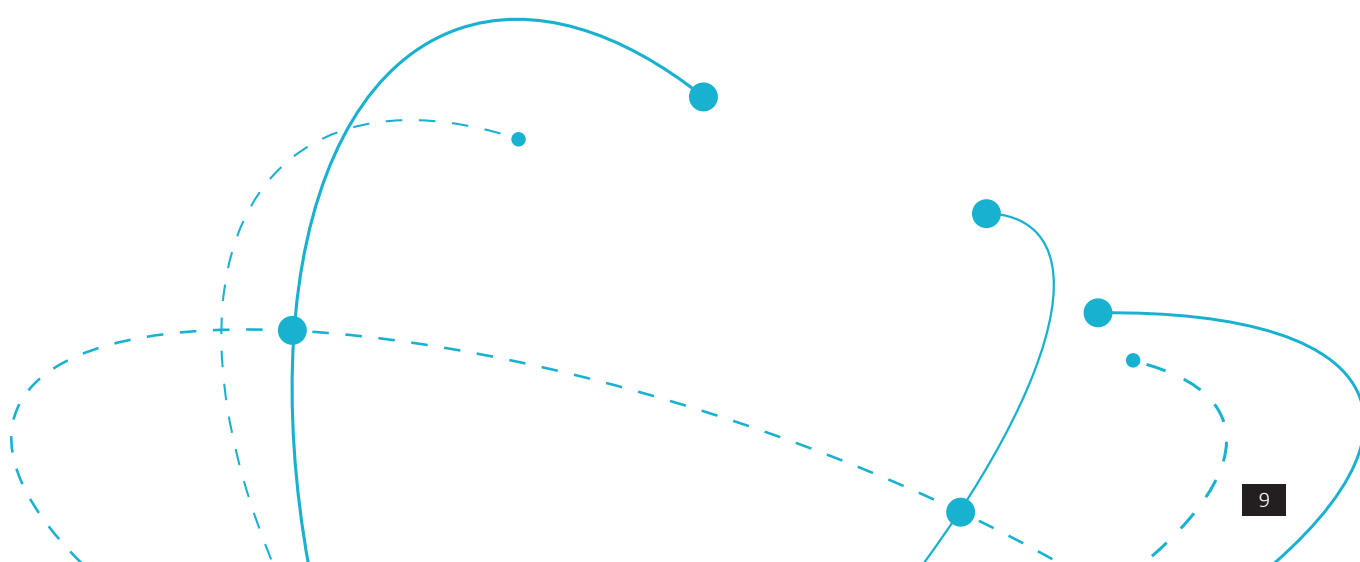
Opportunities to accelerate progress

Opportunities exist to make progress on quick wins and the more difficult issues, by organizations acting individually and collectively to:

- a. Refresh and renew individual agency CVA policies and strategies
- b. Embed CVA into non-CVA specific policies, including those related to locally-led and people-centred response.
- c. Reaffirm ongoing interagency CVA commitments, including continuing cash-related agreements in the Grand Bargain.
- d. Establish interagency policy fora to collectively advance and monitor progress related to CVA policies.
- e. Seize opportunities to engage with wider reform processes at country and international levels that would be beneficial to CVA and vice versa. This includes the Grand Bargain 3.0 commitments to localization, including tracking; the participation of people affected by crises; quality funding; commitments to catalyzing sector wide transformation, including anticipatory action and nexus thinking; and action on the risk sharing framework.
- f. International actors systematically recognizing, valuing and crediting the work of local actors, thereby contributing to greater understanding of locally-led CVA and helping address concerns about risk.
- g. Track the volume of CVA managed by local actors with a breakdown of direct and indirect funding. This will require establishing a common tracking mechanism, commitment by agencies and associated investments.
- h. Further strengthen humanitarian and private sector collaboration, including working together to identify solutions to problems encountered by people in crisis and by humanitarian agencies.
- i. Share good practice and failures in an active and timely manner.
- j. Continue discussions to identify additional points of agreement and enable action.

All this is underpinned by the need for mindset changes to help move the humanitarian system to one which recognizes and is guided by crisis-affected populations who are all too often the first and last responders.

September 2024



Annex

Summary report of the 16th July 2024 sense-checking event of CVA Policy Dialogue findings

In June 2023, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and the CALP Network convened a high-level meeting with 140 senior leaders from more than 100 organizations worldwide focused on 'The need for a humanitarian policy refresh' on cash. The event saw the launch of a global policy dialogue focused on locally-led and people-centred cash and voucher assistance (CVA) with the aim of achieving more effective aid. Over 500 people were consulted around the world. The process began with conversations with local and national actors, surfacing the issues for a wider set of stakeholders. Outcomes of the policy dialogue were presented to the community on 16th July 2024 to sense check them. More than 200 people attended.

This report provides highlights of the CVA Policy Dialogue findings and points made by speakers and participants at the July event, along with next steps.

Welcome and introductions by Karen Peachey, CALP Director

Karen Peachey, CALP Director, welcomed everyone, highlighting:

1. The growth in CVA to 21% of International Humanitarian Assistance, according to data from 2022.
2. The findings of a recent ODI report which discusses the narratives that have underpinned the adoption of cash: arguments about efficiency; and dignity and choice, which underscore the need for aid to be people-centred, shifting power from organizations and 'experts' to recognizing and supporting the agency of people in crisis. However, while cash has challenged the humanitarian system and progress has been made, change has been evolutionary rather than transformational.
3. Without further change, there is now a risk that progress will slip.
4. Synthesis of the findings of the policy dialogue has not been easy, given the nuance of discussions, but the clear points of agreement are striking.
5. The purpose of the event was to sense check the policy dialogue findings.

Opening remarks by Danielle Mutone-Smith, Acting Deputy Assistant to the Administrator of the Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs

Danielle welcomed everyone and thanked them for joining the event. As one of the largest donors of humanitarian cash assistance, and the current chair of the Donor Cash Forum, she said BHA was excited to work with the CALP Network on the initiative to refresh policies around cash and voucher assistance to ensure it is locally-led and people-centred. She was pleased that more than 500 people had participated in the policy dialogue over the last year, including many local voices.

Danielle stated that the humanitarian community stands at what we hope will be an important turning point. Over the last several years, we've made significant strides towards ensuring that people in crisis

have dignity and choice to make decisions about their own needs and to spend their assistance as they choose, in their own communities.

The ideals that have driven the expansion of the humanitarian cash and voucher assistance community – putting people in charge of decisions about their own lives and recovery – are highly compatible with the ideals that drive efforts to promote local leadership and people-centred assistance throughout the humanitarian system.

At the same time, to date, the design and delivery of most cash programming has been driven by large international organizations, implementing awards with terms from international donors, often relying on international payment systems. Those decisions were pragmatic – helping us reach scale, often with high efficiency – but the humanitarian system largely works for the organizations who have built it.

As we continue the journey to take cash to scale, we have a challenge and an opportunity to make ‘choice’ more than just a motto for the modality. The vision for people-centred assistance is local people and communities making choices, from project inception to delivery.

Additionally, there is a diversity of opinion on what ‘localization’ and ‘locally-led’ mean, and on how much affected people need to be involved for aid to be truly ‘people-centred’. Danielle stated these are good and healthy debates to have, although she also encouraged us to celebrate progress even if we have different visions of ultimate goals. For example, nearly everyone is likely to agree that local NGOs should receive the funds they need to carry out programmes effectively, that affected people should be consulted more, and that their feedback should be used throughout programme design and implementation to make adjustments.

Thornier topics might be about how much to work with and through national governments, how much we can devolve decisions around which communities get assistance, what constitutes vulnerability and eligibility to receive cash, or which voices in affected communities are authoritative.

Danielle shared her own experiences with this from her perspective at BHA. For example, recently the US Government’s Office of Management and Budget announced major changes to federal grant making, largely informed by vocal public comment. These increase the percentage of indirect costs that smaller and local partners can charge, allow proposals in languages other than English, and reduce unnecessary compliance costs. Danielle said these changes don’t fundamentally transform the relationship between USAID and its implementing partners, but they make it significantly easier for local entities to access its funding to carry out much-needed work. Large institutions don’t change overnight, but they can make meaningful steps on the path.

Locally-led and people-centred assistance requires time, attention and political commitment to be done in a thoughtful manner, but it has the potential to be transformative. It is up to us to make sure that we give it the time and attention it deserves.

We recognize that many of the challenges to localizing cash and voucher assistance are not unique to cash programming, but what is unique to cash and voucher assistance is this community that has come together and has already made meaningful changes to the international system.

Danielle stated that today we’re going to hear about many of the opportunities for change. She invited everyone to participate actively in the discussion. What changes can our institutions make in the short-term? What will be harder to do but is worth starting? What don’t we agree with, or won’t be possible?

She wished everyone a lively discussion and encouraged everyone to challenge next steps.

Overview of the Policy Dialogue findings by Kate Hart, Head of Policy, Evidence and Learning, CALP

Kate highlighted that there are no big surprises with the Policy Dialogue findings, but the findings are still important. There are significant areas of agreement and some divergence and opportunities for new collective action. Kate presented an overview of the draft CVA Policy Dialogue outcomes and participants were invited to share feedback in the zoom chat and 'Question and Answer' facility.

Polling by Lynn Yoshikawa, Head of Network Development, CALP

Participants were asked to respond to three questions/ statements:

- Do you agree with all findings of the policy dialogue as they were presented?
- I believe change on locally-led and people-centred CVA could be faster.
- I believe there is the political will and commitment from all stakeholders to make change happen on locally-led and people-centred CVA.

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of 108 respondents agreed to all findings as they were presented, 5% disagreed and 17% were unsure. Seventy-five percent (75%) of 102 respondents believed change on locally-led and people-centred CVA could be faster, 10% disagreed and 16% were unsure. Finally, 36% of 100 respondents believed there is the political will to make changes, 40% disagreed, and 24% were unsure.⁷

Other perspectives of event participants

- There was concern about the lack of progress and action on localization over the years, despite studies and speeches made. Some participants felt that the more powerful are reluctant to relinquish power and control. All stakeholders will need to make sacrifices for change to happen.
- Some participants raised concern that if the distinction between locally-led CVA and localization are not clear for stakeholders, it is unlikely there will be agreement on how to achieve them.
- There were requests of donors to show their commitment to locally-led CVA, including to directly fund local/national NGOs. One participant gave the example of SHF which is directly funding LNNGOs in Somalia.
- One participant felt that there is an important distinction to make around mindset change and risk appetite. Avoiding stereotypes/prejudices towards local organizations regarding oversight is an important element of expanding locally-led cash, but setting a different risk appetite standard for localized assistance could stigmatize it.
- Another participant argued that there are no big gains to be made without taking calculated risks to enable the desired change.
- One organization asked what the solution or mitigation measures could be to address 'perceived' fiduciary risk for locally-led CVA.
- One participant asked how greater exchange between local organizations and international actors can be promoted at the country level.
- Another organization stressed that changes in mindset require intense dialogue between stakeholders to build mutual understanding. An agenda is needed to promote these conversations.

⁷ Total percentages are greater than 100% because of rounding up of decimals.

Perspectives of speakers: Nabeh Allaham, IFRC, and Innocent Tshilombo

Nabeh Allaham and Innocent Tshilombo were both panellists at the CVA Policy Dialogue launch event with senior leaders in June 2023. At the launch they made compelling calls for action – challenging us all to do better. They now shared their reflections on the outcomes of the Policy Dialogue.

Nabeh Allaham, IFRC

Nabeh, a young leader at IFRC, thanked the community for the policy dialogue findings and said that he was excited by most of what Kate had shared, including the commitments donors and their partners are making in their policies and strategies towards locally-led and people-centred CVA. However, he asked why progress is slow. What more should we do to accelerate progress?

Nabeh felt that as well as the significant areas of agreement identified in the policy dialogue process, there are some gaps that should be addressed collectively to ensure that commitments, strategies and activities to increase the use of CVA and locally-led response do not just remain on paper but become practice. For Nabeh, real collaboration is needed between us all to ensure this happens. We have been talking for several years about localization and support to local actors' capacity. Today, we are still talking about it with little tangible progress. Is it because the definition is not clear? Or perhaps we are not accepting the required changes in our mindset and work to identify the right solutions to shift power to local actors and to ensure people affected by crises are at the centre. Technocratic guidelines and old-school techniques are still being used. We can see them in the behaviours of agencies and donors. These are things which are playing a key role in slowing down progress in moving to locally-led CVA.

Nabeh stated that the solutions are in our hands, where collective action, coordination, collaboration, and flexibility can make the difference. Considering the increasing lack of funding and resource, time is now of the essence to make a difference. We still have an opportunity to invest together to push for locally-led CVA through new policy and strategy commitments. If we do not take this opportunity, Nabeh argued that we will still be stuck having the same discussions at our next meeting.

He concluded by saying that in the end, shifting power to local communities empowers us as well.

Innocent Tshilombo

Innocent spent 10 years in Kakuma refugee camp on the receiving end of CVA and is now a development/humanitarian practitioner. He thanked everyone for getting this far in our collective journey to improve CVA.

For him, the policy dialogue recognizes the need for CVA to be more people-centred, ensuring that crisis-affected people's needs, preferences, and priorities are at the heart of programme design. This aligns with his call at the launch of the Policy Dialogue in 2023 for cash assistance that supports livelihoods and empowers individuals to make choices. CVA programmes should not be viewed as a mere stopgap solution but as a powerful tool to ignite lasting change in the lives of people affected by crises.

Innocent reflected that there is also a broad recognition by people consulted in the Policy Dialogue of the need for equitable partnerships in CVA, shifting power to local actors and communities. Innocent said his own experience as a recipient of CVA highlights the importance of empowering people with the flexibility to address their needs and contribute to community rebuilding. Reflecting on his own experience as a recipient of CVA, Innocent stated, 'We need the autonomy to prioritize and invest in what matters most to us. We need flexibility as the cornerstone of CVA programmes to ensure that assistance is tailored to our unique circumstances and aspirations. Understanding and accommodating these should make us feel heard and respected. Respect for our dignity as aid recipients should be the fundamental principle of CVA policies. The emphasis on respect should make us feel valued and integral to the CVA process. It would

enable us to unlock our potential and pursue a path to self-sufficiency and prosperity, which would inspire optimism and hope for the future. Respect is also conveyed through the trust placed in us to make our own decisions, acknowledging our capacity to manage cash effectively.'

Investing in local CVA capacity is undisputed, and it is essential for enabling locally-led and people-centred CVA. Innocent stated that his personal journey shows the transformative potential of CVA when people are given the means to move beyond dependency.

Innocent reflected that the Policy Dialogue has also identified a gap between policy commitments and practice, and rapid action on equitable funding and policy refreshment is needed. He urged the implementation of the policy dialogue recommendations and policies without delay, emphasizing the urgency of listening to and engaging with affected communities. He asked the community to commit to making CVA more people-centred by actively involving affected communities in decision-making, increasing multi-purpose cash assistance, and investing in local capacities.

He concluded by saying, 'It's time to listen, act swiftly and prioritize people's lives in humanitarian responses.'

Final comments and close by Karen Peachey

Karen stated that today we have heard that there is agreement on many issues and a broad belief that change is needed. Much as there are some easy wins that we need to act on, there are more challenging issues that need to be tackled with commitment and determination. To achieve the full change needed will require deep rooted and fundamental changes in the humanitarian system. The changes needed are not just about technical guidelines and evidence, though they remain hugely important, it is about mindsets and power. This is just a step on the journey, let us be bold and make the change happen.

Karen thanked everyone for joining the event, for being part of the policy dialogue process, and for showing their commitment to pushing for change. She thanked the presenters; interpreters; and the CALP team who have been managing the event, responding to questions, and facilitating the policy dialogue process.

Karen asked participants to share any additional thoughts they had on the policy dialogue outcomes on the online feedback form by 30th July. Whilst CALP waits for and analyses feedback, which will guide further changes to the policy dialogue document, she outlined a few immediate next steps:

- The Global CVA and Locally-Led Response Working Group will be looking at what has been discussed and will continue to drive forward action on some points.
- Karen urged everyone to explore links with other initiatives where there are opportunities for action and to reach out to CALP regional teams too to share reflections.
- There will be a meeting with the Donor Cash Forum to discuss donor-related findings in August.
- The CALP Technical Advisory Group will also be discussing findings at its next meeting in August.

Karen emphasized that these are just a few steps, there will be lots more. To achieve the change that has been mapped out will require the concerted efforts of the whole humanitarian community. She hoped that because participants had joined the call, this signaled their intention to champion the change needed and to turn words into actions.