

CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE FOR PROTECTION: TAKING STOCK OF CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE TO ACHIEVE PROTECTION OUTCOMES IN THE PROTECTION SECTOR IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

Executive summary



UNDERSTANDING CASH FOR PROTECTION OUTCOMES WITHIN STAND-ALONE PROTECTION PROGRAMMING

WHAT IS CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE FOR PROTECTION?

Protection in humanitarian action is about helping people stay safe, reduce the risk of and recover from the harm posed by violence, coercion, deliberate deprivation and abuse perpetrated against them. Protection activities seek to keep people safe, addressing immediate protection concerns, as well as preventing or reducing protection risks. **Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA)** refers to all humanitarian programming where cash transfers or vouchers are given directly to individuals, households, or community recipients so they can buy goods in the local market and access services. **While “protection cash” or “cash for protection” and “the use of cash and voucher assistance to help achieve protection outcomes” are terms increasingly used among humanitarian practitioners, there is still a lack of common understanding around these concepts, as well as an absence of a common policy and operational framework.**

IS CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE USED FOR PROTECTION?

Despite the lack of common policy and operational framework, CVA are fast-growing evidence-based tools in the humanitarian community especially for enhancing food security and basic needs.

To date the use of CVA in the protection sector has been rather limited. However, vouchers are and should be considered for protection in specific contexts, e.g. to support access to legal documentation and ensure that displaced individuals access qualified legal assistance.

Humanitarian practitioners recognize that CVA are well positioned to address needs across many sectors and —along with service provision, case management and, at times, in-kind assistance—may contribute to positive protection outcomes.

WHY THIS PAPER?

This paper aims to contribute to developing a common understanding of the use of CVA for protection outcomes among humanitarian stakeholders—including implementing agencies,¹ donors and host governments— sharing up-to-date evidence and practice. The stocktaking outlines the critical areas of focus for key humanitarian stakeholders (donors, clusters, etc.). Moreover, the paper identifies gaps in evidence and practice that require critical attention and resources and highlights opportunities for the effective use of CVA within the protection sector to achieve protection outcomes.

¹ Implementing agencies include UN agencies, international and national nongovernmental organizations, and community-based organizations.

EVIDENCE, PRACTICE AND GAPS

There is an understanding that cash assistance and/or vouchers have the potential to contribute to positive protection outcomes. Evidence suggests that CVA alone are unlikely to achieve meaningful long-term protection outcomes unless integrated into holistic and cross-sectoral programming that includes case management and referral systems. For example, a cash transfer delivered through case management might help address aspects of a gender-based violence (GBV) response, for example, when core GBV response services, such as legal services or health services, are not accessible due to financial barriers. Therefore, cash can be considered instrumental to a survivor's recovery. The challenge is to ensure that sufficient resources, including longer funding timeframes, staff capacities and availability of quality services, are in place to enable comprehensive protection programming.

While the evidence on the use of CVA in protection programming is growing, there are still critical gaps in determining the best complementary services for CVA to reach longer-term protection outcomes. **Efforts are still needed to adequately integrate CVA within protection programming and understand the breadth of possible uses of CVA in the protection sector in a strategic and coordinated manner.**

Calls to action include:

- 1. Breaking down silos between CVA and Protection actors through mutual capacity building and improved coordination on CVA for Protection.** The Protection sector should proactively reach out to other sectors, including cash working groups where they exist, to initiate and maintain ongoing dialogue through local, national and international fora.
- 2. Meaningfully prioritizing and centering local partners' capacities to support CVA for Protection to realize the localization agenda.²**
- 3. Developing clear eligibility criteria and harmonize targeting and implementation approaches** of cash for Protection activities at the country/sector level.
- 4. Sharing, publishing and disseminating lessons learned from integrating CVA into stand-alone Protection programming.**
- 5. Conducting more research on CVA for Protection outcomes and protection risks.**

MEASURING PROTECTION OUTCOMES AND THE IMPACT OF CVA FOR PROTECTION

Further research is needed to fully understand the impact of the use of CVA on protection outcomes within stand-alone protection programming. Rigorous, ethical, longer-term evidence that adheres to the principle of "do no harm" is particularly lacking in conflict settings.

Cash and Voucher Assistance for Protection: Taking stock of cash and voucher assistance to achieve protection outcomes in the protection sector in humanitarian settings is available at: <https://wrc.ms/cash-protection-outcomes>.

This paper will be updated annually to reflect the current state of evidence and to elevate evidence gaps. The current paper addresses CVA for child protection and gender-based violence outcomes; future versions will reflect evidence on CVA for Housing, Land and Property and Mine Action outcomes. A position paper will be developed.

This paper was prepared by the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) Task Team on Cash for Protection (TT C4P). The Task Team was established in 2017 with the aim of increasing knowledge about the use of CVA in the protection sector and increasing the effectiveness and quality of programs using CVA to achieve protection outcomes. It hosts open membership, currently bringing together more than 40 participants across 30 organizations representing a diversity of organizations, countries and experiences on both protection and CVA.

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² The Grand Bargain, launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, confirmed a commitment from the largest humanitarian donors and aid organizations to make sure national and local partners are involved in decision-making processes in any humanitarian response, and deliver assistance in accordance with humanitarian principles.