

## **CASH DELIVERY IN HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS**

SHOW AND TELL HIGHLIGHTS REPORT #3

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MSF's Displacement Unit organises a series of informal gatherings for humanitarian innovators based in Nairobi called "Show and Tell". This open forum aims to showcase specific initiatives that are relevant to technical problem solvers in the sector. The gatherings are kept purposely small and are geared at gaining insight on technical solutions – products and services – from the Nairobi's humanitarian community. The initiatives presented describe tangible and thought provoking field operations innovation.

## **WHY CASH ASSISTANCE AND WHY THIS GATHERING?**

The humanitarian aid sector faces increasingly complex challenges today. From addressing the needs of populations who traditionally were not beneficiaries, to situations where facility-based interventions are no longer adequate to the needs of a moving population. Some beneficiaries are more connected, while others are trapped in political conflicts and harder to access. Today too, more actors than ever, are responsible for shaping aid delivery. The intervention of actors like the diaspora or new institutional donors, and the modalities introduced by the private sector, challenge the concept and standards of aid delivery.

The introduction of cash or voucher assistance, as an alternative to non-food items distribution, although not new, remains under development and is not yet a consolidated practice. This new model of aid delivery offers as much opportunities as risks. It changes the usual roles and engagement relationship between donors, operational implementers and the populations in need. Cash assistance challenges the relevance of proximity by introducing a "lighter" system. However, its potential to result in real impact and effective accessibility by end beneficiaries needs yet to be proven. The key objective of this Show and Tell is to learn about the experiences in cash programs built up by the participants, and to understand its practical aspects as part of the response to humanitarian crisis: What are the key drivers and challenges of cash assistance? When should it be chosen over other models? What assessment tools are available? What is the best use of technology?

### **The OneSystem: Web based solution for humanitarians (online)**

Jeremy Cole, Director RedRose

### **Introduction to CaLP East and Southern Africa**

Sahara Dahir, Regional Officer, Cash Learning Partnership

### **Agile delivery of cash-based humanitarian responses**

Glenn Hughson, Cash and Market Specialist, ICRC

### **Cash assistance in hard to reach areas**

Fredrick Orimba, Cash and Voucher Programming specialist, Kenyan Red Cross;

### **A technology perspective of cash assistance in Somalia**

Nelson Kinoti, Pre-sales consultant, Compulynx

# THE ONESYSTEM: WEB BASED SOLUTION FOR HUMANITARIANS

JEREMY COLE, DIRECTOR REDROSE

## Project description

RedRose is a social enterprise specialized in cash programming in over 30 countries. It offers NGOs an integrated platform to manage cash transfer interventions throughout a program's lifecycle and that is adaptable to the different modalities and assets. The OneSystem offers functionalities of online and offline beneficiary registration, compliance with privacy certifications, assets delivery and monitoring and evaluation.

The evaluation insights of remote programs in North East Nigeria (2015-2019) were shared, where 10 NGOs and 20 donors carried out 100 million USD worth programming using offline food e-vouchers and smart cards to set-up and support new small scale shops. Despite the setting insecurity and the lack of a robust mobile connection, the interventions engaged over 900 vendors and 350.000 households. The advantages mentioned include real-time monitoring and business intelligence with oversight of resources, nutritional rates, demographics, and sales analytics through comprehensive dashboards, efficiency savings, control over wastage and leakage, sustainable vending practices and stable prices, and a positive appreciation by beneficiaries and vendors of the system.

## What we learned

- Cash programming is an incentive for donor engagement;
- Time and space available for training of staff is one of the most important requirements to run such a system;
- In a large scale intervention, biometrics registration reduces double dipping and wastage up to 10%.



## **INTRODUCTION TO CaLP EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**

SAHARA DAHIR, REGIONAL OFFICER, CASH LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

### **Project description**

The Cash Learning Partnership is a leading platform in the field of humanitarian cash assistance, and related policy, practice and research. CaLP brings together international actors from the humanitarian sector and is committed to support them to apply and scale quality interventions. In this presentation, key insights and lessons learned from evaluations and studies of the Somalia drought response in 2017 people were shared and discussed. The following key aspects were highlighted: 1) impact expectations and a realistic framing of what cash assistance can achieve must be clarified early in the design process of an intervention, 2) a clear role division and interagency coordination is required in order to analyse risks, avoid differing and incoherent cash transfers in value, frequency and duration, 3) improved communication with the populations served is needed, and 4) a systematic comparison is needed regarding effectiveness and accountability of the different delivery mechanisms between agencies and donors.

### **What we learned**

- Cash and voucher assistance requires intense collaboration and coordination between actors in order to be effective;
- There is a vast body of literature and expertise in the field of cash transfers that support purposeful, ethical and effective interventions;
- CaLP offers several capacity building resources and insights at: <http://www.cashlearning.org/about-us/overview>.



## **CASH ASSISTANCE IN HARD TO REACH AREAS**

FREDRICK ORIMBA, CASH AND VOUCHER PROGRAMMING SPECIALIST, KENYA  
RED CROSS

### **Project description**

The Kenyan Red Cross has a track record of cash implementations in food, livelihoods, health and shelter assistance. From an organizational perspective, there are four key enablers for the adoption of this aid modality, namely resources and staff capacity, adapted project cycle tools, comprehensive communication and coordination and enabling management systems. Despite the growing interest in cash assistance and in the number of available transfer mechanisms, there are a number of programmatic challenges that can potentially result in more harm than good. The implementation of cash programming requires an iterative approach, even when relying on already existing systems (e.g. governmental social support system through bank transfers).

In this very insightful, the Kenyan Red Cross sheds light into practical challenges and lessons learnt in the response to needs in hard to reach communities, focusing on the response to the 2017-2018 drought emergency in Kenya. Technology offered a solution to the risk of diversion of cash and to the insufficient road infrastructure to deliver goods. It bypassed the lack of official registration, and allowed the community to make own choices through electronic value vouchers at trusted local vendors. However, the access to the population still required use of NFIs for negotiation and the system relied on the local vendors' capacity to look for connectivity and interact with the digital interface errors.

### **What we learned**

- The use of an integrated system (as opposed to different systems used by different actors) must be promoted, independently of length and scale of emergencies, and when possible, amongst a number of responding actors. The stronger the preparedness for this modality, the most effective it is;
- The "Cash in Emergencies Toolkit" offered by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement can be found online at <http://rcmcash.org/>.

## **AGILE DELIVERY OF CASH-BASED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES**

GLENN HUGHSON, CASH AND MARKET SPECIALIST, ICRC

### **Project description**

This presentation offered an insightful view on ICRC's Economic Security Unit approach and challenges to introduce cash assistance as a way to elevate the organization's response to humanitarian needs. With over 7 years' experience in cash assistance worldwide, ICRC continues to increase the number and comprehensiveness of programs where cash is delivered in the areas of food, shelter, agriculture, and business support. Cash assistance is very adaptable to the different and changing needs of a program or the supported individuals, households and communities. It transforms cash or other assets into impactful resources: as a top up of health or education services, as a support to commercial or technical activities the community wants to carry out, incentives on good nutrition or children vaccination, in form of transport or accommodation.

Three factors are key for the success of a cash intervention: 1) community desire and acceptance, with consideration for the individual priorities and community variations in needs and preferences. 2) market capacity to respond to a scale surge, to offer diversity and quality, and to effectively allow access by the beneficiaries. Herein, the guidance of all people in the community cannot be set aside. Finally, 3) the adequacy of service and technology providers must be assessed every time. In order for cash assistance to function, several departments of the organization need to work together consistently. The ongoing institutionalization of cash assistance within ICRC required the creation of delegate positions, centralization of resources and socialization through capacity building trainings and "elevator" conversations, adapted to the different perspectives of those departments.

### **What we learned**

- Cash programming is an assessment-intensive activity and challenges the autonomous nature of humanitarian organizations;
- Cash is inherently transversal, it can meet multiple and simultaneous needs, in small or large interventions.

## **A TECHNOLOGY PERSPECTIVE OF CASH ASSISTANCE IN SOMALIA**

NELSON KINOTI, PRE-SALES CONSULTANT, COMPULYNX

### **Project description**

Compulynx offers an identification and authentication platform for mobile payments that can be accessed by different technologies. The company has experience working with public, private and humanitarian sectors and continuously explores new applications enabling personalized and secure transactions. The presented case studies described the services provided to NGOs in Kenya and Somalia, where a variety of technologies and models were used. There is a clear evolution of technologies and models in response of the challenges of implementation in humanitarian settings.

A service that was initially based on biometric registration and bank cards – today adopted by Kenyan banks and governments – must adapt to contexts where the technology is not accepted. In face of this, the company developed smart face recognition software based on photographs taken through mobile devices – of individuals and families. In Kenya, Compulynx partnered with Safaricom to deliver special SIM cards that can be owned without a mobile phone to withdraw assistance in form of physical assets or loans. Currently the company is building on its lessons learnt and developing innovative solutions such as a blockchain-supported “mobile wallets”, where different organizations use a single digital identity with highly individualized “sub-wallets” that carry different values and assets. Open source software and new business models, promise a more collaborative and accountable assistance.

### **What we learned**

- The speed of technology development must be considered when adopting a cash assistance modality. Today, many non-traditional actors can play a coordinated role in beneficiary support and empowerment.



## **CASH DELIVERY IN HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS**

### **KEY MESSAGES**

The “Good Ideas, Shared Practices” discussion was centred on some of the most pressing challenges of MSF’s work: hard to access and very vulnerable displaced populations. There is a consensus on the value of cash assistance to satisfy donors requirements and to increase beneficiaries’ agency and autonomy, to lean the supply chain, reduce the risk of economic disruption in a context of crisis, generate local economic activity, it is usable in remote manner, so adequate for difficult to access populations. However, there is little internal criticism/visibility on the specific and global weaknesses and risks.

### **Tech-centred challenges**

With some exceptions, cash assistance is heavily based on digital identification (biometrics) and digital data and systems. Currently many organisations subcontract and run incompatible or standalone systems (and as a result, in camps as Dadaab, the refugees have up to 5 or 6 id/distribution cards to get access to different services, offering different values), but there is a push to rationalize the model, integrating all the different systems or replacing all by a unique system. The attempt to fix the “data mess” is mostly driven by arguments of efficiency coordination, fraud prevention, coherence on market values. Data protection seems to be understood by the sector as compliance with legal frames that protect individuals against commercial abuse, with little consideration expressed on potential misuse by governments and security agencies. Exceptions in the sector define data protection as a threshold, rejecting the collection of biometrics, centralizing information is physically owned servers. The interoperability/integration of tech platforms within the cash sector must be driven by protection and interest of beneficiaries, not through commercial lenses. That means prioritizing and respecting population preferences and not losing a grip on the real lifesaving nature of humanitarian objectives.

### **The risk of dehumanizing aid**

There is a risk of taking for granted the advantages of cash transfer with regards to the agency and dignity it provides beneficiaries when compared to the classic interventions of indiscriminate asset delivery (e.g. unnecessary or inadequate assets). However, cash interventions must stay flexible to accommodate for variations across different contexts.



Variations amongst individuals, households and communities, in their particular circumstances, literacy, genre, age and status may undermine the benefits of cash assistance and result in harmful inequality. Aid providers are responsible for the beneficiary representation, for understanding their familiarity with technology, and for informing all beneficiaries and staff in the organization regarding the personal and societal implications of e.g. face scanning. For this to happen, proximity to populations cannot be under-prioritized and operations cannot justify their intolerance for risk.

### **Fast development, slow adoption**

The development and adoption of digital technologies, driven by the private sector have an unprecedented reach. The private sector develops and in occasions runs digital solutions and technology, essential to most agencies for the deployment of the system. Banks and Financial corporate as Visa and Mastercard are already integrated in some of the crisis response through cash assistance. There are yet however, no shared practices on how to deal with data integrity and privacy. To the day, many NGOs still resort to paper based systems, others on online shared data facilities. The wider introduction of blockchain or digital currencies will develop at a faster pace than the humanitarian sector. As much as technology tends to become technically safer and more individualized, there are risks to producing more harm than good that must be avoided. It's on the humanitarian sector to create opportunities for literacy and safe spaces for experimentation.



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We would like to thank the participants of this Show and Tell for their contribution and openness to discussion.

The MSF Displacement Unit was created with the aim of delivering adapted products to the field operations that address emerging operational challenges related to the assistance of refugee, internally displaced and people on the move.

**[displacementunit.msf.es](https://displacementunit.msf.es)**

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