

FINAL: Summary Note on Cash Working Group (CWG) Meeting

Date/ Time & Venue	8 July 2021, 10.00 – 12.00 (via MS Teams)	
Chair / Co-chair	Mercy Corps (John Nelson), WFP (Thin Thin Aye) and MRCS (Moe Thida Win)	
Participants	Action Aid, Acted, American Red Cross, ACF, AVSI, CARE, CRS, CSI, DCA, DFID, FCA, FCDO, Health Poverty Action, HelpAge, Helvetas, ICRC, IFRC, INGO Forum, IOM, IRC, MA-UK, Malteser, Mercy Corps, MRCS, NRC, OCHA, UNHCR, PUI, PiN, Protection Sector, TDH, TGH, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNICEF – WASH, UNOPS, UN Women, USAID, WFP, WFP – FSS, WFP – Sittwe, WFP- Myitkyina, WHH, WVI, WVM	
Agenda items and summary of discussion	Action Points	
<p>1. CVA situation update and feedback from partners</p> <p>The CWG Co-Chair provided an update on the current CVA situation. The current situation around cash/banking remains essentially the same - no improvement or deterioration was noted. There are still high charges for accessing physical MMK above bank withdrawal limits - organisations are trying different ways to get around the regulations. The use of special flexi accounts is being explored by some organisations. While CVA activities are still affected by the lack of cash liquidity, most agencies manage to continue programs with various workarounds.</p> <p>Partner Updates</p> <p>WFP continues to implement cash programs in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan. Due to banking constraints, only 30% of beneficiaries in Northern Shan and Rakhine have received monthly assistance, and WFP is considering switching to in-kind distributions. WFP is monitoring the cost of the food basket, but transfer values are still adequate despite price increases.</p> <p>As part of the program adjustment to support affected migrants and families, IOM plans to implement cash-based interventions from July, including one-off emergency cash assistance and interventions in existing programs.</p> <p>SI is implementing cash for work activities, however, due to the cash unavailability, many CVA activities in Sittwe and other areas are being delayed.</p> <p>CARE received a cost extension for a livelihood project and IGA cash assistance in Maungdaw, Rakhine State. The project will continue in July if Travel Authorisation (TA) will be granted.</p> <p>NRC Myanmar is implementing cash for work activities in Maungdaw, as well as other ad hoc emergency assistance.</p> <p>UN Women is rolling out a new cash assistance program in Kachin and Rakhine.</p> <p>UN Habitat is implementing a one-time cash assistance programme for migrant workers in Yangon, Shwe Pyi Thar Township, targeting some 2700 migrants, of whom about 300 have been reached. The programme is delayed due to the unavailability of cash.</p> <p>PiN is implementing a cash assistance program in Yangon, Shwe Pyi Thar township, reaching more than 700 households.</p> <p>AVSI has an education program in Northern Kayah and southern Shan, targeting around 600 households, and is looking into shifting to in-kind distribution, working with suppliers with bank accounts outside Myanmar.</p> <p>TDH Lausanne is planning a three months' cash transfer program starting in July in Hlaingthaya township, Yangon, distributing around 40'000 MMK/month through Wave Money.</p>		
<p>2. Sub-national CWG updates</p> <p>Rakhine</p> <p>In Rakhine, the CWG is jointly led by WFP and UNDP. No significant changes were observed regarding access to cash and commodities in the markets last month, and prices remained</p>		

<p>mostly stable. Access to cash remains a challenge, and agents continue to charge fees for cash disbursement. The increase in COVID-19 cases is likely to deteriorate the situation. De facto authorities are discussing the suspension of cross-border trade between Rakhine and Bangladesh, likely leading to shortages of commodities and price spikes. The value of cash transfers is currently under review due to the changing situation.</p> <p>Kachin</p> <p>The Kachin CWG was established in 2016 when organisations started to shift from in-kind distributions to CVA. The CWG is combined with the Food Security Sector, as most participants overlap. Constraints in banking remain a challenge, especially access to cash. Non-government controlled areas prove particularly challenging. Market prices are rising, and a review of transfer values may be needed.</p> <p>Southeastern Myanmar</p> <p>While there is no CWG in SE, synergies between the South-East Working Group (SEWG) and the CWG need to be strengthened. OCHA noted an assessment presented in the SEWG indicating a strong preference of beneficiaries for in-kind modalities. AVSI confirmed that beneficiaries in Kayah indicated a strong preference for in-kind modalities.</p>	
<p>3. Markets Update</p> <p>WFP market price report update (June 2021): WFP updated on latest price developments. Compared to May, prices of rice, chickpeas, onions and tomatoes increased, while oil prices stabilized. Among the key factors driving price changes are domestic transportation challenges, banking issues and import restrictions. The high price in tomatoes is caused by a short supply and transport delays. Also conflict, particularly in Kayah and southern Shan, are causing higher prices.</p> <p>Overall, prices have significantly increased since 1 February. The price of rice has particularly increased <u>compared to pre-crisis</u> in Central Rakhine (+25%) and Kachin (+61%). For palm oil, the increases are most significant in Central Rakhine (+52%), Northern Rakhine (+38%) and Chin (+45%). Mixed oil prices have particularly increased in Northern Rakhine (+50%), Southeast (+64%) and Magway (+68%). In Mandalay and Yangon, compared to pre-crisis, palm oil prices were higher in June by 4-5%, and mixed oil prices by 15% in Yangon and 23 % in Mandalay.</p> <p>Mercy Corps market reports: Mercy Corps Market Analysis Unit (MAU) will publish the results for June in the coming weeks.</p> <p>The MAU dashboard and full reports are available on the MIMU website: http://themimu.info/rakhine-market-analysis-unit</p>	
<p>4. Cash-Based Programming and Protection</p> <p>The Protection Sector briefed on Protection and CVA. Concerns linked to CVA programming include, inter alia,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inclusion/Exclusion, including concerns around extortion, abuse of power by community leaders or volunteers and gaps in CwC and AAP; ● Constraints around access to cash, e.g. safe access to cash, inability to cover the needs of a household and more exposure to harmful coping practices; ● Challenges around delivery modalities, including inflation and decreased purchasing power, cashing-out constraints, preference for in-kind distributions by beneficiaries. <p>Certain groups are at higher risk, particularly persons with specific needs. It was also observed that changes of extortion are high if new family members are to be included in the list. Women and girls face a risk of domestic violence, and young people risk of recruitment.</p> <p>The recommended aspects for considerations are risk-focused monitoring to identify suitable CVA modalities, considering the complex current situation. Hybrid models could be an option. Whichever modality is applied; the AAP components needs to be reinforced. Protection risk</p>	

<p>analysis in should be integrated in CVA programming/monitoring, and trends regularly analyzed. Risks linked to personal data and data protection principles need to be considered thoroughly. WFP noted that findings from peri-urban areas indicate a strong preference for in-kind modalities, particularly in informal settlements. Conversation with beneficiaries revealed concerns around credits and fears that the money will be taken away from them. Concerns around data protection were noted, and the importance of informed consent by beneficiaries to the involved risks in CVA. The need to only collect the absolute minimum data in CVA was highlighted, e.g., only phone numbers without names for mobile money distributions.</p>	
<p>5. CVA capacity building for CSOs</p> <p>The Regional Cash Working Group presented a proposal for a systematic approach to build capacity and identify partners for cash programming. The steps include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWG subgroup to work on a training package and develop an implementation plan; • Jointly developing a training package, which will be delivered for agency field staff; • Agency field staff to conduct trainings for CSOs in their geographical areas. <p>The proposal on CVA capacity building will be circulated and interested partners are requested to provide feedback by Wednesday, 14 July, and to indicate interest in supporting the development of the training package.</p> <p>IOM noted an ongoing CVA program in rural areas through local partners, including CSOs, and the need to build capacities in CVA.</p>	<p>#CWG to circulate proposal, members to provide feedback</p>
<p>6. MEB update</p> <p>The CWG began work on establishing and updating the MEB in late 2020. The process started with discussions with the CWG members, the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), and relevant sectors/clusters, to define the scope and approach for establishing the MEB. The CWG leadership has now finalized the MEB analysis and developed a proposal. The MEB task team will be reconvened to share feedback on the draft MEB. The proposed MEB will then be presented to the CWG for endorsement, followed by a formal endorsement of the ICCG.</p>	<p>#MEB task team to share feedback on draft MEB</p>
<p>7. Social Protection Update</p> <p>UNICEF briefed on the Social Protection Working Group (SPWG), co-chaired by governmental counterparts before 1 February, and now led by UNICEF. As activities and strategies overlap between the CWG and SPWG, monthly briefings are introduced. Current discussions are focused on revising the TOR for the group, reflecting the new leadership. In addition, a smaller group is developing a joint advocacy and communication strategy on social protection in the current complex environment. Members expressed interest in developing a joint approach to CVA with the CWG, especially given the need to discuss the MCCT programme. Possible areas of cooperation and mutual support are being explored. .</p>	
<p>8. AOB</p> <p>UN Women introduced Su Sandy (su.sandy@unwomen.org), who will be covering the GiHA work stream after Merit Hietanen's departure.</p> <p>The HARP Facility is planning to do a cash and voucher review and is looking for a consultant to support them. Interested persons can contact John Nelson (jnelson@mercy Corps.org) for more information.</p>	
<p>Useful links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myanmar: Cash Working Group (CWG) on MIMU Page • Myanmar CWG final Terms of Reference (June 2020) • Myanmar CWG 4Ws (as of 10 November 2020) 	

Next CWG meeting: Thursday, 10:00 – 12:00, 12 August 2021