

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

Date/ Time & Venue	5 November 2020, 10.00 – 12.00 (via Webex)	
Chair / Co-chair	WFP (Thin Thin Aye), Mercy Corps (John Nelson) and MRCS (Moe Thida Win)	
Participants	ACF, ACTED, Action Aid, American Red Cross, AVSI, CARE, Christian Aid, CIDA, CRS, DFID, DRC, ECHO, FCA, Helvetas, ICRC, IRC, IRW, LIFT, Malteser, MA-UK, Mercy Corps, Metta, MRCS, NRC, OCHA, PUI_ DPC, Solidarites, Tearfund, Trócaire, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF – Social Protection/WASH, USAID, WFP, WHH, World Vision	
Agenda items and summary of discussion	Action Points	
1. Program updates		
<p>WFP updated that 83 percent of the WFP emergency response in central Rakhine is now under full cash-based transfer (CBT). The first batch of e-cash in Sittwe will be sent to the beneficiaries by wave money on 6 November, and the second batch is planned for the second week of November. WFP started distributing 2,500 keypad phones to support households that have no access to mobile phones. There were some pending from the September cycle, and SMS will be sent to them during the first week of November.</p> <p>WFP provided monthly food and cash assistance to 45,000 beneficiaries in Kachin and about 7,000 in northern Shan. WFP also assisted 500 HIV/TB patients in Yangon and some 2,000 beneficiaries in urban Yangon.</p> <p>There was a question on the plan to expand the programme in central Rakhine. Finding a financial service provider is one of the challenges in implementing e-cash in Rakhine. WFP conducted a pilot cash programme in Meezar, Paletwa rural, as the beneficiaries in the area have access to rice from nearby markets, though at more than double the normal market price. Once road and waterway access is restored WFP will move back to in-kind assistance. At the moment, WFP plan to continue providing food assistance in both Paletwa and Sami area.</p> <p>There was a discussion around the target caseload, the frequency of assistance, and the challenge of accessing mobile phones/SIM cards. 60 to 70 percent of households have their own mobile phone/ SIM card. WFP facilitates beneficiaries to register SIM cards with their own ID/ NRC and will distribute the handset to those who do not have one.</p> <p>There was a question from ECHO on whether WFP is following up on the concerns around protection breaches in Rakhine State because of reports of increased extortion. <i>(There was a connection issue from WFP Sittwe, and WFP will liaise with ECHO bilaterally)</i></p> <p>The phones provided by WFP can be used to access other similar assistance. The SIM cards belong to the beneficiary households. However, the beneficiaries must return the phones to WFP upon return to the place of origin. The major recipients of mobile phones are women in Kachin and Shan.</p> <p>CARE Myanmar updated on its cash-based programme on COVID-19 response. Emergency cash transfer was provided to over 8,000 garment factory workers in Hlaing Thar Yar, Shwe Pyi Thar, and Htan Ta Pin townships. There is a plan to provide cash assistance to pregnant women in garment factories in Yangon. CARE planned to distribute livelihood and income generation activities cash grants for the IDPs in five villages, returnees in Maungdaw Township. CARE has also planned to support emergency cash assistance for new IDPs in Kyaukme during the next months.</p>		

<p>PUI has a cash programme in Kayin State, funded by MHF. There were some difficulties and delay in cash transfers due to COVID-19. The e-cash will be transferred to beneficiaries through wave money by the end of November/early December.</p> <p>WHH shared that there was a delay in implementing its cash-for-work (CFW) programme in Pathein due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Meanwhile, WHH is developing an operational manual for CFW, and the group was requested to share any existing manual/guidelines to be used as a reference.</p>	
<p>2. Information sharing on the market monitor</p> <p>Mercy Corps’ Transporter, Farmer Survey and Market Prices (Rakhine): The Mercy Corps’ market analysis unit (MAU) team leader briefed on the functions of the MAU. The MAU provides development practitioners and policymakers operating in Rakhine State with data and analysis to understand better the present and potential impacts of COVID-19, conflict, and other crises. The information is useful for humanitarian and market development organizations operating in Rakhine, donors, private sector actors, and policymakers.</p> <p>He shared the list of MAU past and forthcoming releases and the snapshot of transport providers in Yangon and 11 townships in Rakhine, and paddy and winter crop farmers in 6 townships, including key findings and implications. MAU produced a market price report (MPR) in September 2020 that tracks prices to support cash and voucher programs and provide insights on price volatility/trends. The study covered 8 townships in Rakhine comprises 10 markets, and it will carry over monthly. The report outlines key takeaways, trends by product category/ township, limited longitudinal analysis, and price table. The scope of the upcoming October report was also shared. MAU is developing an MPR dashboard.</p> <p>WFP’s mVAM markets monitor report: WFP updated on price developments from mid-September to mid-October. Information was collected from 90 markets in 64 townships. Average retail prices of rice, pulses, and palm oil remained stable from mid-September to mid-October. The price of rice increased in Rakhine, and the price of pulses increased in Magway, Rakhine, Southeast, and Kachin mainly due to COVID-19 related restrictions. Prices of onions increased due to COVID-19 transportation restrictions and the end of the harvest season.</p> <p>Most monitored markets are functioning normally except Paletwa Township in Chin State. Rice continues not available in the Paletwa market since September. According to the responses from traders, the situation is nearly the same as in mid-September. The lead time for commodities varies across the locations.</p> <p>There was a discussion on the possibility of price fluctuation due to the upcoming election, the reasons behind prices increased in some areas, and monitoring of the non-food items. The cash transfer value for some areas might need to be reviewed based on the price increased.</p>	
<p>3. Update on Government’s cash transfer program and Social Management Information System (SMIS)</p> <p>UNICEF, on behalf of the UN Social Protection Working Group (SPWG), presented a brief on the Social Management Information System (SMIS) for social protection programmes. SMIS is an integrated MIS platform for key flagship social protection programmes led by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement (MoSWRR). The system is owned and led by DSW/MoSWRR with technical support from UNICEF.</p>	

<p>SIMS was developed to strengthen accountability mechanisms and serve as a foundation for harmonizing the beneficiary databases and delivery mechanisms for social cash transfers. It will also allow DSW to expand programmes as/when necessary (e.g., in the event of natural disaster/shock) and deliver the support efficiently and effectively. The detailed architecture, different modules, and key functions of the SMIS were shared with the group. The current social protection programme does not have the mandatory link with any national ID and this SMIS will allow to create of the social protection unique ID and enable to track of the beneficiaries to avoid duplication.</p>	
<p>4. Update on 2021 planning process and Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF)</p> <p>OCHA provided an update on the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and next steps. The 2021 HRP will target more than 954,000 people from Rakhine and southern parts of Chin, Kachin, northern Shan, and Kayin, and adjoining areas of Bago. It covers four population groups such as IDPs, IDP returnees, non-displaced stateless people in Rakhine, and other vulnerable crisis-affected people. About 276 million USD is required for 2021 HRP.</p> <p>Improvements have also been made in 2021 HRP with better intersectoral prioritization and linkages with other plans. There was also an effort to improve monitoring and costing. The cash component was well reflected in the document with support from the CWG leadership. The government consultations will take place by mid-November, and the HCT will have a final review at the end of November. The Global Launch will be in early December.</p> <p>The Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF) will launch its second standard allocation and undertake consultation with clusters/sectors. The focus area of the allocation, different elements in the strategy, and a detailed process were shared with the group. The selection process will be finished and release funding by mid-December. With support from CWG leadership, the cash component was well reflected in the strategy and considered within responses. There will be an opportunity for CWG members to put forward proposals incorporating cash and voucher projects.</p>	
<p>5. Task teams update</p> <p>Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB): Two task team meetings have been organized and discussed way forwards. The group was requested to share existing data on household-level expenditure and their choice of items. The CWG leadership will have a meeting with cluster/sector coordinators to discuss the data availability, the scope of the upcoming MEB exercise, and available support/commitment from stakeholders.</p> <p>Financial Service Providers (FSP) mapping: WFP is recruiting a person to conduct the mapping and UNICEF is also hiring a national consultant to review the available FSP for the Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT) programme. The two agencies are liaising to complement each other rather than duplicating the work.</p>	
<p>6. CWG Information Management</p> <p>Revised 4Ws template: The revised template which incorporated social protection elements was shared with members for feedback. The members are requested to review the updated template and provide feedback. The CWG leadership is aiming to finalize the template by early December and start data collection.</p> <p>CWG online platform: The platform will be launched soon, and it will be used for communication and information sharing.</p>	<p># CWG members to provide feedback on the revised 4Ws template</p> <p># CWG leadership to launch the online platform</p>

7. AOB

Call for Expression of Interest: UNHCR launched its call for expression of interest related to cash-based programmes in Rakhine for 2021. The detailed link will be shared with CWG members after the meeting.

Useful links

- [Myanmar: Cash Working Group \(CWG\)](#)
- [Myanmar CWG final Terms of Reference \(June 2020\)](#)
- [Myanmar CWG 4Ws \(as of 10 November 2020\)](#)

Next CWG meeting: 10:00 – 12:00, 3 December 2020