How is Cash, Voucher, and Food Distribution Changing due to COVID-19?

Learn from IDEAL's Cash, Voucher, & Food Distribution Learning Stream

As part of the Food Security COVID-19 Learning Series, IDEAL is facilitating a learning stream focused on **Cash, Voucher, & Food Distribution.** The learning stream began with a virtual event that drew a diverse set of food security implementers, including both development and humanitarian/emergency actors. During two interactive sessions held on May 13, 2020, participants from both headquarters and field-based projects working on USAID/Office of Food for Peace (FFP) funded activities in Asia, East Africa, the Middle East, and West Africa shared examples of emerging challenges and adaptations to food assistance delivery mechanisms. Over 200 attendees participated in the two sessions and reflected broadly on constraints including:

- Movement limitations and restricted access to beneficiaries due to safety measures instituted to control the pandemic;
- Difficulties in conducting programmatic assessments and monitoring; and
- Disruptions in direct, on-the-ground program management due to restrictions around social distancing.

The discussions also revealed some promising adaptations that have been developed in the face of these challenges. For example, some implementers have managed to consolidate the locations for distributions, adhering to and enacting social distancing requirements. Other implementers have begun utilizing hand washing stations at distribution sites. Implementers have limited exposure and risk by reducing the number of distributions by combining multiple months of distribution into a single transfer, reducing associated costs and allowing for more cash for beneficiaries up front. Other implementers have found success in integrated approaches, such as adding WASH items to expenditure baskets. Implementers have also shifted the conditionality of their distributions or moved to unconditional assistance to address the needs of vulnerable populations.

Key Takeaways and Resources

During the discussions, the following key takeaways arose from the food security implementing community:

- Implementing partners are facing a variety of challenges when adapting programming to effectively address the needs of vulnerable populations;
- Logistics of distribution remains a significant challenge across all food security activities;
- Multiple adaptations are being made to safely reach participants; and
- Issues with remote monitoring and management exacerbate current gaps in knowledge and skills.

As COVID-19 continues to impact cash, voucher, and food distribution, the following resources are available to assist in program adaptation:

- CVA in COVID-19 Contexts: Guidance from the CaLP network
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Policy Briefs directly related to COVID-19 response

- Compiled Programmatic and Operational resources from the Global Food Security Cluster (gFSC)
- USAID/FFP & USAID/OFDA Interim Guidance for Applicants Engaging in COVID-19 Humanitarian Response

Follow-up engagements will be scheduled in the coming months to further explore the issues identified. IDEAL will assess linkages between the **Cash, Voucher, & Food Distribution Learning Stream** and the other learning streams around constraints related to remote monitoring, conducting assessments and addressing the needs of at-risk populations. Email us at info@fsnnetwork.org for questions or visit the FSN Network to learn about future events.

Stay Engaged

- Explore the FSN Network's list of COVID-19 resource.
- Subscribe to the FSN Network newsletter to receive announcements on food security news.
- Have a food security resource that would be helpful for activities' COVID-19 response? Email us at info@fsnnetwork.org to share the resource with the FSN Network community.