"Better Gender Outcomes in Food Assistance Through Complementary And Multi-Modal Programming"

BACKGROUND

Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) is now a commonly used humanitarian action, used to meet the diverse needs of people displaced by crisis and conflict. Preliminary findings suggest an estimated 60% increase in cash and voucher delivery from 2016 to 2018. A substantial body of evidence shows that CVA allows people in crisis to meet a variety of needs with more dignity[1]. Consensus is that CVA is more efficient, effective, and better for communities in need than other forms of assistance; a market-based lens to programming can further increase the potential to accountably meet the needs of affected populations.

As the use of CVA matures, humanitarian and development actors have been looking at the best combination of modalities[2] to better meet the needs of crisis affected populations. The United States Agency for International Development/ Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) promotes the use of its modality decision making tool and the use of complementary programming[3] as part of its strategy to deliver the best outcomes for project participants.

Despite these positive steps towards food assistance programming that fosters dignity and choice and stimulates markets, there are obvious gaps in understanding of how multi-modal, "cash plus" or complementary[4] programming can best contribute to gender equity and women's empowerment. There is limited evidence on the topic. In shock responsive social protection, a recent study found that most of this programming is gender-blind, with little attention given to the specific needs of women and girls across the life cycle in the context of crises[5]. Similarly, a study of social safety nets in Sub-Saharan African countries found that existing quantitative evaluations have provided little understanding of what design features matter to promote empowerment of women[6]. The World Food Programme found that CVA can contribute to food security and nutrition-related outcomes, including improved livelihoods and income, enhanced resilience, and access to services. As a result, they recommend designing integrated programs with a range of activities to lead to promotive and transformative changes[7].

A multi-country study[8] recently completed by CARE found that combining CVA with complementary interventions need to be considered a central part of every response. However, the community of practice is not systematically designing multi-modal responses when using CVA. Furthermore, there is a recognition that

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1 Sarah Bailey and Paul Harvey. (2015). "State of evidence on humanitarian cash transfers." ODI. Magdalena Mikulak. (2018) "Cost-effectiveness in humanitarian work: cash-based programming."

2 Catholic Relief Services, CaLP, Samaritan's Purse. (2017). "Cash or In-Kind? Why Not Both? Response Analysis Lessons from Multimodal Programming."

3 USAID. (2016). "2016–2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy."

4 This refers to programming where different modalities and/or activities are combined to achieve objectives. CaLP "Glossary."

5 Rebecca Holmes (2019). "Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in shock sensitive social protection." ODI.

6 Amber Peterman, Neha Kumar, Audrey Pereira & Dan Gilligan. (2019). "Towards Gender Equality: A critical assessment of evidence on Social Safety Nets in Africa." Presentation.

7 World Food Programme. (2019). " The potential of cash-based interventions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment: a multi-country study."

8 CARE. (2019). "What does gender-sensitive cash and voucher assistance look like?"

the communities of practice need more examples[9] of how this could be done. However, there is little evidence on what this range of activities could be and there is a hunger and interest amongst stakeholders to understand how to better design programs to encourage these outcomes.

In April 2019, more than 40 stakeholders representing the NGO, UN, donor, and research communities met at "The Potential of Cash and Voucher Assistance to Empower Women and Reduce Violence: Evidence, Practice, and Future Research" and identified critical areas of research at the intersection of gender and multi-modal programming[10]. These stakeholders represented a wide range of researchers, practitioners and donors working throughout the world on humanitarian and development food and nutrition responses.[11] Key research questions that emerged were:

- *How does CVA work with different types of complementary programming to produce greater or more long-lasting gender impacts?*
- *What are the characteristics of the CVA or complementary programming that drive improved outcomes?*

Study overview

CARE through the Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) project, will review of FFP (ESFP and DFSA) and Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) projects that **focus/ed on concrete examples of gender-focused programming in FFP projects—promising practices, innovations.** The study proposes to review multiple grantees' projects that use promising practices that contribute to and enhance the understanding of these synergies between the different modalities. The goal and objectives of the action are:

Overall Goal:

- To contribute to the knowledgebase of promising practices for complementary and multi-modal food assistance programming that promotes positive gender outcomes.

Objectives:

- To identify common complementary and multi-modal practices from FFP partners and analyze gender considerations.
- To inspire dialogue between distinct technical actors on promising practices on complementary and multi-modal programming and gender equity and empowerment.

The focus of the study is the combination of different types of modalities and complementary activities, for food security transfers or safety-nets (including CVA), which contribute to positive gender outcomes and practice. However, experience has shown that there are very few interventions that meaningfully take gender into consideration at the design stage especially in humanitarian contexts. This is the reason why this activity is being proposed. Therefore, the scope of this work has been widened to include projects that have gender elements integrated as part of the design, implementation or evaluation that can contribute to a wider knowledge base.

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9 CARE and UNWOMEN. (2019). "The Potential of Cash and Voucher Assistance to Empower Women and Reduce Violence: Evidence, Practice and Future Research." Workshop report.

10 CARE and UNWOMEN. (2019). "The Potential of Cash and Voucher Assistance to Empower Women and Reduce Violence: Evidence, Practice and Future Research." Workshop report.

11 The event mentioned above focused on gender in CVA, thus assumed that was the lead and The study uses the Cash Learning Partnership definition as a basis of understanding: Complementary Programming : This term refers to programming where different modalities and/or activities are combined to achieve objectives. Complementary interventions may be implemented by one agency or by more than one agency working collaboratively. This approach can enable identification of effective combinations of activities to address needs and achieve program objectives. Ideally this will be facilitated by a coordinated, multisectoral approach to needs assessment and programming.

While the emphasis will be on projects that explicitly focus on gender, the larger community of practice may find it more accessible to find examples that look to mainstream gender rather than lead with it. So, the approach to this will not only demonstrate to this larger community of practice why these elements are so critical (which may still be an issue for many of them), but also promote the fact that they are not difficult to adopt and are practical for use in emergency food security programming.

The gender considerations will include:
- designs with gender-focused outcomes (i.e. equal access to nutritious food, transfer mechanisms that facilitate equal access to women, men, boys and girls; women and girls empowered to participate in household and community decisions regarding food security),
- approaches that build on gender social norms (i.e. transform gender relations and roles,
- participation of different genders, especially women in different phases of projects, and
- integration of gender specific protection concerns (e.g. GBV, IPV).

These elements will be identified through comparing against industry standards including:

- Gender-sensitive elements: based on CARE's recent study[12] on gender-sensitive CVA and it Gender Equality and Women's Voice Guidance Note[13]
- Adherence to standards in gender standards: based on the IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action[14], USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy[15]
- UNWOMEN's "How to Promote Gender Equality In Humanitarian Cash And Voucher Assistance Guidelines"

The project will include 1) a call to action and inquiry from key stakeholders to shape the study, 2) a review of projects that include or have included multi-modal or complementary programming, 3) consultations with stakeholders—one event in Washington DC and up to two virtual meetings, and 4) a webinar. At each stage CARE will seek a balance between food and nutrition security, CVA and gender experts, and researchers from a range of organizations and geographic focuses to promote diversity of experiences and perspectives. Each activity will be spaced so that participation in the steps is not a burden and that stakeholders will have time to collect data and reflect.

The study will use the Delphi technique[16] to validate the findings through in-person and virtual methods. The technique uses quantitative methods aimed at generating consensus. The technique seeks to solicit opinions from groups through an iterative process of answering questions. After each round of questions, the responses are then summarized and redistributed for discussion into a next round. Throughout this process, common trends are identified, and outliers interrogated until, a consensus is reached.

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12 CARE. (2019). "Cash and Voucher Assistance that works for women: 6 lessons from the field".

13 CARE. (2018). "Gender Equality and Women's Voices Guidance Note"

14 IASC. (2017). "Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action"

15 USAID. (2015). "Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy"

16 For more on this see: https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/delphitechnique