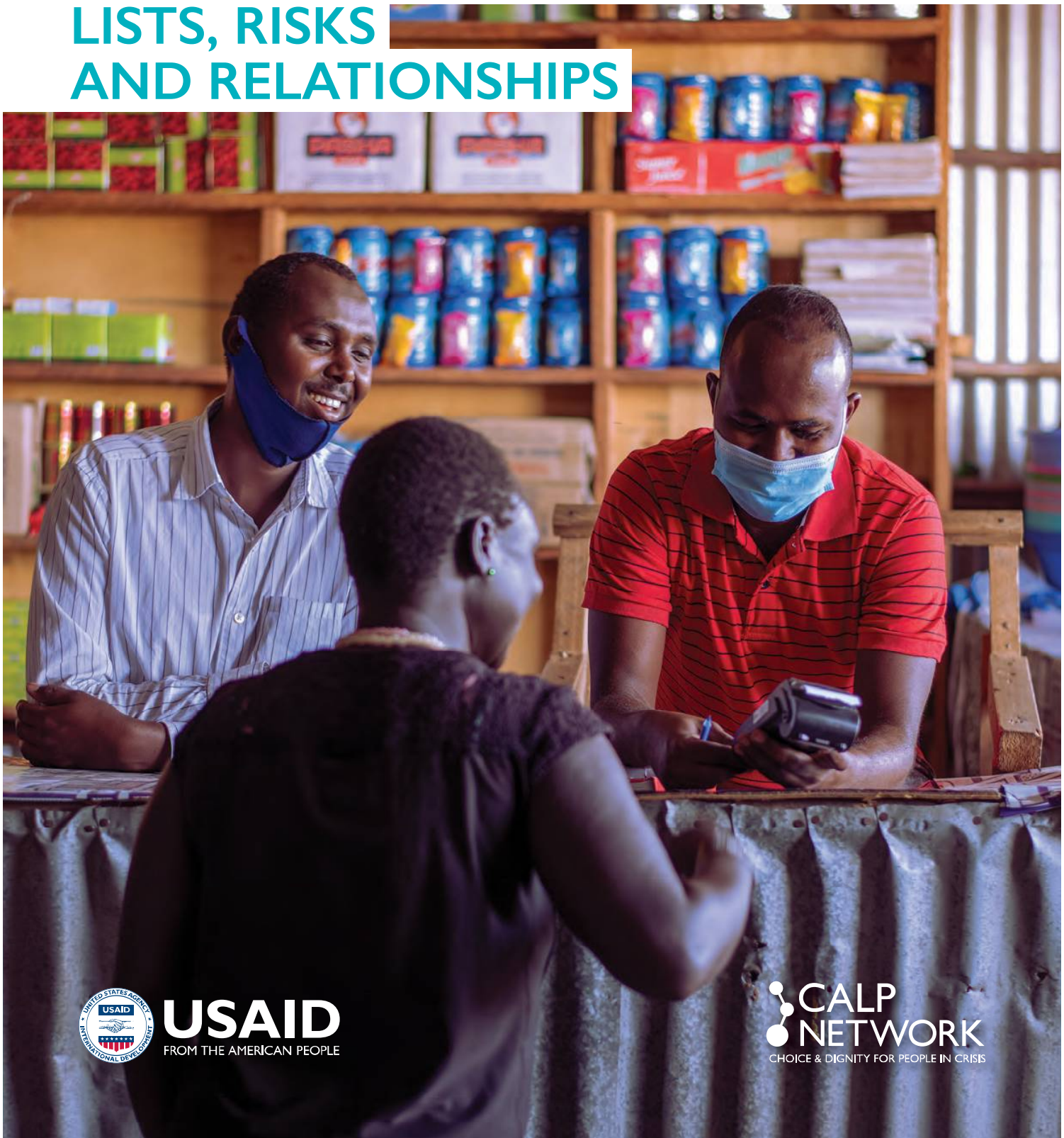
REAL TIME LEARNING FROM THE HORN OF AFRICA AUGUST 2022

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF CASH PREPAREDNESS:

LISTS, RISKS AND RELATIONSHIPS



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COVER PHOTO: SILVIA DONGO ENOSA VALIDATES HER ATM CARD USING HER FINGER PRINT AT A SHOP IN KALOBEYEI

ABBREVIATIONS

API	Application Programme Interface
BRCiS	Building Resilient Communities in Somalia
CALP	CALP Network
CBT	Community-Based Targeting
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
CWG	Cash Working Group
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit
FSP	Financial Service Provider
HSNP	Household Safety Net Programme (Kenya)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MEB	Minimum Expenditure Basket
ODK	Open Data Kit
PMT	Proxy Means Testing
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme (Ethiopia)
SomRep	Somali Resilience Program
WVI	World Vision International
WFP	United Nation's World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With predictions of a fifth consecutive season of poor rainfall, concerns are mounting for already vulnerable populations in the Horn of Africa. While humanitarian agencies have been responding, the prospect of poor rainfall continuing through 2022, and possibly into 2023,

The ability to reach those in need at speed is of utmost importance.

This study is designed to help CVA actors to review their existing CVA preparedness with a view to supporting further scale-up when and where that is needed. It looks at the speed of the current response in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia and explores what CVA actors themselves believe is required to improve timelines for delivering quality CVA in the coming months and beyond.

Over 200 people were consulted through interviews, an online survey and during country-focused (online) workshops. Their contributions give a sense of what may be considered realistic lead times between the receipt of funding and its delivery to the intended recipients, and guidance on how to achieve them. Solutions take the form of a mix of improvements on current practices and the development of new working approaches, engaging with new actors as well as adapting to a changing institutional context that spans humanitarian, development and government action. While there are differences across the three countries, CVA actors report impressive lead times of between seven and 30 days. Achieving these lead times is contingent on several factors, including an existing and verified beneficiary list, a shock-responsive feature in existing programmes, and a good relationship with a financial services provider (FSP). However, organisations emphasised that speed is not everything. A frequent requirement is to conduct targeting exercises, which delays response times, and there is much interest in improving the accuracy and timeliness of targeting. There are also significant gaps in coverage for populations that are hard to reach, owing to a combination of challenges around distance, insecurity and the absence of programming by CVA actors, as well as those subgroups within a population that are invisible to current targeting norms, generally not being served. As the importance of recipient lists is increasingly appreciated – whether for a timely response or to serve excluded populations – the need to share data or access information grows more important. These efforts are impeded by clear evidence that not all lists are up to date or may not include people affected by the crisis.

Solutions to these preparedness issues are being explored. While agencies recognise a need to continue improving their internal administrative, logistical, and financial processes to enable a more proactive and timelier response, an important overarching theme is the need to build new relationships and partnerships with a range of stakeholders. A starting point for these efforts is to build on what is already working.

CVA actors feel that urgent effort is needed to develop more effective partnerships with FSPs to develop innovative ways of working that have the potential to enhance efficiencies and address some of the more substantive issues of targeting and coverage of CVA programmes.

Partnerships with donors: Collaboration with donors to mainstream shock-responsive or crisis modifier mechanisms was emphasised as an important strategy. In addition, current financial and contractual disincentives need to be addressed to support exploration of alternative targeting methodologies and ways to serve 'hard to reach' and 'invisible' populations.

Partnerships between CVA actors: A range of targeting issues were also prioritised for action, including a need to better understand different targeting approaches, ways to assess existing lists, how to identify and serve hard-to-reach and excluded populations, or how to better respond to increasingly diverse and idiosyncratic needs. Possible solutions

included working to reduce the time and resources needed to conduct targeting exercises through pre-positioning staff and logistics or by using existing lists from other programmes, agencies or even through partnerships with FSPs. Innovative solutions to access beneficiary lists in this way requires the development of stronger relationships between those involved in CVA.

Partnerships with national and social protection mechanisms: Growing national social protection programmes, particularly social registries, along with new challenges posed by rapidly increasing urbanisation and its implications for needs and operations, all require closer working relationships with government ministries and other stakeholders.

A final area of preparation relates to engagement with the changing CVA landscape. Not only FSPs, but national social protection programmes and, eventually, social registries will define the future of CVA work in the region. Actors involved in CVA are identifying opportunities in the current response to collaborate with these programmes to extend each other's reach and coverage. In the process, they will begin building tomorrow's partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

Drought is a regular feature in the Horn of Africa and a major contributor to humanitarian crises in the region. Depressed rainfall has been observed in parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia since 2021. With dry conditions continuing into mid-2022, there are deepening concerns for poor populations living in arid, rural parts of the region. Against a backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing war in the Ukraine and significant economic disruption globally, hardship in the Horn is expected to worsen, with more people unable to meet their basic needs. Some external assistance is being provided but is insufficient to meet the needs of affected populations, and further scale-up is needed. The efficient action of cash actors is of critical importance.

Since 2011, CVA has grown to become an important tool for drought response in the Horn of Africa. Response times have varied; in 2011, the response took two to three months following the declaration of famine to scale up; in 2017 the collective scale-up of CVA in Somalia took three to four months. Similar delays were seen in Kenya in 2017, while in Ethiopia there was limited use of cash assistance for the 2017 response and there were concerns of a delayed humanitarian response overall. For the 2021/22 drought, agencies are reporting significantly improved lead times. But the consensus remains that humanitarian responses to drought-affected communities could be faster.

This report documents views from agencies involved in CVA responses in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia since mid-2021, based on consultations conducted from May to June 2022. Drawing on their own experiences, participants reflected on cash preparedness, shared their views on feasible lead times and how the fastest times are achieved, and set out broader issues shaping CVA preparedness.

The study involved 16 key informant interviews (KII), an online survey which elicited 30 responses, and the views of 208 participants who attended the three, country-focused (online) workshops in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The study involved participants drawn from international and local NGOs, national and regional authorities, Red Cross, UN and donors.[1] The KIIs and workshops focused on the study's six key questions but often saw wider debate on CVA preparedness more broadly.

6 KEY QUESTIONS

01 **To what extent are lessons learnt on CVA preparedness during previous drought crises being applied to the current drought response?**

02 **What measures have been taken or still need to be taken to facilitate a timely CVA response?**

03 **What is a realistic expectation in terms of lead time for cash and vouchers responses?**

04 **Which operational processes would need to be in place to enable this?**

05 **What are the enablers and detractors of organisational and collective cash preparedness?**

06 **Which best practices could be applied immediately to the ongoing drought response?**

CALP UNDERSTANDS CVA PREPAREDNESS AS:

…actions that would contribute or have contributed to what organisations do to ensure they have as small a lead time as possible for a quality response, regardless of when they occur.

1 Details of Key Informants and participants in the three country workshops are included in Annex 2.

THE CURRENT STATE OF PREPAREDNESS

"The coronavirus is not the only problem we have. We are at the centre of an interclan and ethnic conflicts. We faced the desert locust attacks which troubled our farming. Our farming is our source of food and income next to livestock. Besides this, we have had to go through many waves of drought for the last five years, which diminished our coping capacity," says Muhubo, who lives in Ethiopia's Somali region.

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sponse consistent across all three countries and described key changes with the emergence of new actors, programmes, evolving contexts and the implications of all of these for a timely response.

Current lead time: Participants said it took them between seven days and one month to respond to the current crisis. There was considerable variation across countries, with lead times in Kenya at 7–21 days, 14 days to one month in Somalia, and one to two months in Ethiopia. There was no reason provided for why the lead time was longer in Somalia than Kenya. The lead time in Ethiopia appeared to be slower because of government approvals processes.

Ideal and realistic lead times: There is a strong belief that lead times can improve further. Views on an ideal and feasible response time vary from 3–5 days in Kenya, 7–14 days in Somali and one month in Ethiopia. Lead times did not seem to depend upon agency type but on the degree to which an agency had specific operational processes in place.

Improving Lead Times: Participants explained that rapid lead times depend on the degree to which specific operational systems and processes are in place. These *preconditions for timeliness* are summarised below:

- **The agency has an operational presence/programme in the affected area.**
- **There is an up-to-date verified beneficiary list of individuals or families affected by the event or crisis.**
- **The agency has a valid contract with a financial service provider (FSP) and beneficiaries are enrolled in the FSPs payment system or, at a minimum, registration data has been confirmed.**
- **The FSPs are willing to make transfers before the implementor's funds have cleared.**
- **The agency has a contract/grant agreement in place with provisions for response (contingency funds or permission to reallocate budget lines). These funding provisions were referred to as: shock-responsive, surge capacity, crisis modifier, adaptive or early action.**
- **A contractually agreed and mature partnership is in place if the response is to be implemented through partners.**
- **Internal finance and logistics processes are in place that expedite approvals and payments.**
- **In the case of Ethiopia, timely permission from government is granted to respond or withdraw funds.**

Speed isn't everything: Agencies cautioned against an overemphasis on speed, as other issues must equally be addressed. These issues can be organised in two groups:

In the first group are operational processes – the most important being to improve relations with FSPs. As well as needing to take individual steps, organisations felt that Cash Working Groups (CWGs) could help by engaging FSPs to enable them to better understand humanitarian CVA, its organisational ecosystem, and the requirements of CVA programming, and to help them develop standard contractual components. Agencies also said that improvements to their own financial, administrative and programmatic processes must be made. In Ethiopia, agencies are looking at how they can strengthen their partnerships with government bodies to expedite approval processes for responses or financial transactions.

Other operational processes rest outside the control of agencies and are determined by donors. Of these, the most important were identified as changes to contractual provisions to allow for shock-responsive/crisis modifier components. In addition, there is a need to examine and modify contractual and programmatic conditions which serve as disincentives for agency innovation or efforts to respond to hard-to-reach populations (an issues that is examined further, see page 15).

The second group of issues relates to the need to identify and assist all priority populations – this includes appropriate coverage, relevant modes of assistance, and how agencies coordinate with growing social protection programmes and private sector financial services which deliver assistance. In this group, the most referenced issue was ensuring priority populations are identified and assisted in a timely manner – including hard-to-reach populations and populations excluded or not prioritised in current targeting mechanisms. A common theme in these discussions was that preparedness must include pre-positioning new relationships with other stakeholders in the area of financial assistance.

In sum, the feedback reflects that CVA preparedness is about ensuring timeliness, taking actions that ensure quality and equity, and integrating new or emergent opportunities. All this lays out a different CVA preparedness agenda which includes new areas of focus.

Preparedness must include pre-positioning new relationships with other stakeholders in the area of financial assistance.

Somali Red Crescent assisted Fatuma with cash to purchase food for her family. 'It is a strenuous time for me', she tells Suleiman. 'It is not just food but also healthcare'. Another season of failed rains has resulted in drought and hunger crisis in the Horn of Africa.

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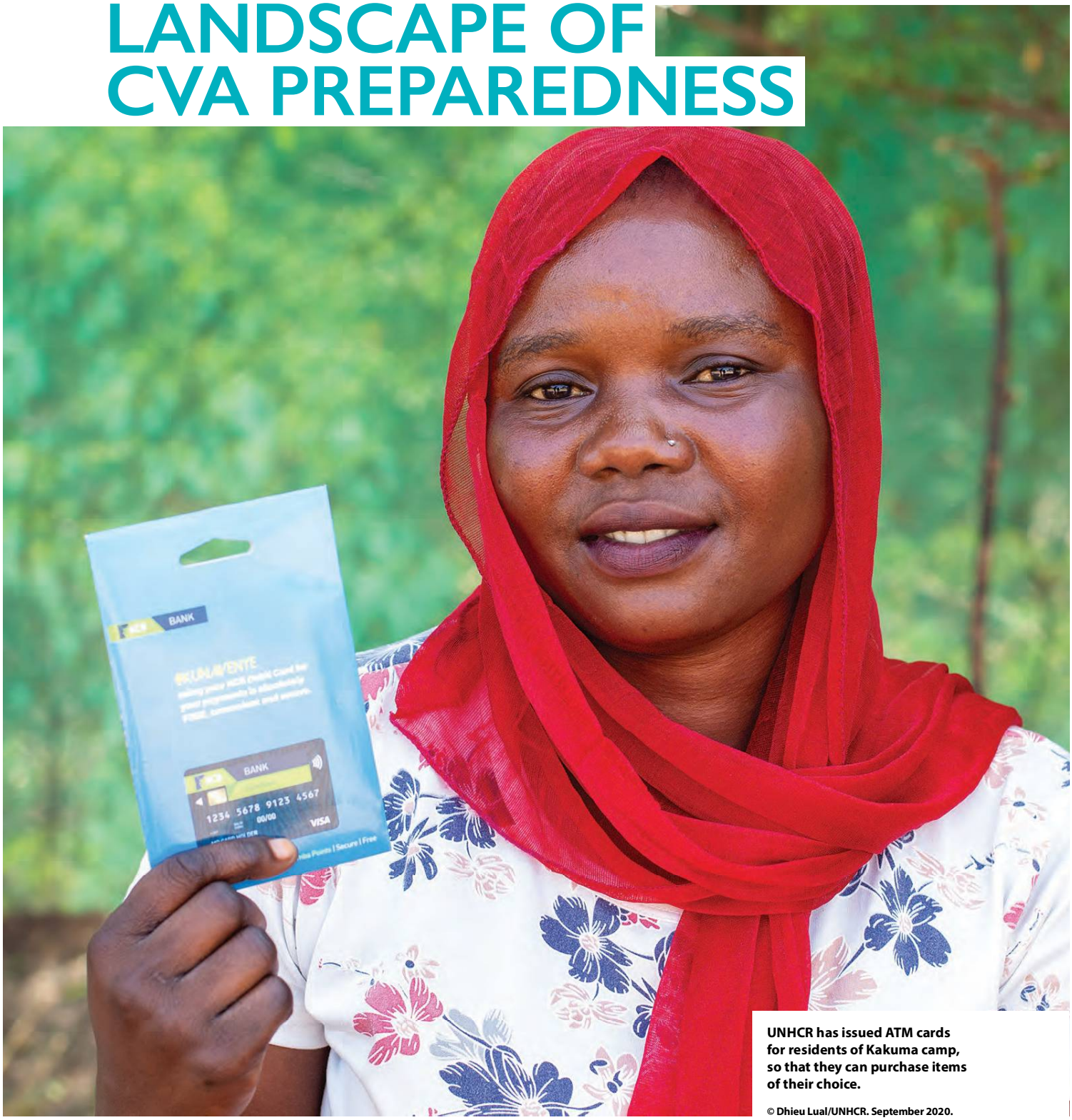
THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF CVA PREPAREDNESS



UNHCR has issued ATM cards for residents of Kakuma camp, so that they can purchase items of their choice.

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Preparedness, to date, appears to have focused on and resulted in new solutions and approaches to see more money disbursed faster. CVA actors believe they can still make gains in timeliness and feel those gains are increasingly embedded in the extent and quality of engagement with a changing context.

This section looks at issues and priorities shaping timeliness and CVA preparedness more broadly. Agencies identified challenges facing the current drought response as well as solutions. Solutions take the form of a mix of improvements on current practices and the development of new working approaches. Suggested solutions are not ones which can occur in an organisational or sectoral vacuum, rather they are seen to be nested within a wider set of processes which are the product of a changing context. This has implications for what is done, how and by whom. Comments are organised under four headings: targeting and beneficiary lists, coverage, working with FSPs and partnerships, and collaboration and coordination.

TARGETING AND BENEFICIARY LISTS

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT:

KII and workshop respondents emphasised two targeting related issues facing a scaled-up response: firstly, they discussed the need for solutions to the time and resources required to conduct targeting exercises and, secondly, mechanisms needed to access or share beneficiary lists and to assess, update or validate existing lists before they are used.

ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED:

Targeting exercises are felt to be the single most important factor in a slow response time. While the use of a pre-existing list can avoid this problem, there are situations where targeting and registration processes are necessary. Means to expedite current community-based targeting exercises or to identify new or different targeting methodologies are a priority.

The use of existing beneficiary lists largely explains the current fast response times. Recognising the value of lists to a timely response, agencies are keen to use their own or other lists for a scaled-up response. Further, with pressure to serve hard-to-reach or excluded populations, agencies want lists to facilitate the extension of their response into different populations or geographies. The demand for beneficiary lists is an emerging priority.

However, there is a growing awareness that not all lists are fit for purpose. Lists may not be accurate or up to date (individuals may have moved, their circumstances may have improved, or they may be deceased); may not be credible due to concerns of duplication; or may have an internal bias or may systematically exclude certain populations, e.g., the list may have been developed for a different purpose or with different assumptions. Validating, updating or revising existing lists to ensure accuracy and integrity is a time-consuming exercise which requires new, efficient measures.

ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY CVA ACTORS:

Community-based targeting:

The most commonly reported targeting methodology used by agencies was community-based targeting (CBT) using food and nutrition targeting criteria (i.e. poverty criteria derived from traditional livelihoods). This methodology requires time-consuming collaborative processes and the development of a rapport with the community and local leadership, often through a local partner. Agencies valued CBT, but some are exploring other methodologies that could complement or replace it. Equally, to improve the speed of CBT processes in Ethiopia and Kenya, agencies are discussing how they could pre-position field staff and logistics, while negotiations with donors and (in Ethiopia) government are being finalised.

Pre-existing lists:

Using pre-existing lists was felt to be one of the most important preconditions to a short lead time. In 2021–22, the shortest lead times were reported by programmes with a pre-existing list together with a shock-responsive component. The government of Somalia, EU/ECHO funded Sagal programme made shock-responsive disbursements within days. Somalia's large resilience programmes, Somali Resilience Program (SomReP) and Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS), reported similar response times. The 'no regrets' adaptive component of Kenya's Household Safety Net Programme (HSNP) also allowed for a timely response to existing beneficiaries, and similar features are found in Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). Somalia's World Bank funded Baxnaano programme also is developing a shock-responsive feature. In all cases, these features use existing beneficiary lists for additional payments (i.e. vertical expansion).[2]

In Somalia, agencies mentioned that different programmes[3] may have already identified and registered individuals who qualify for the drought response. Of particular interest were lists from the safety net programmes and the national Baxnaano programme due to its coverage and reach in poor rural and urban populations. In Kenya, agencies discussed whether they might use the lists from the HSNP programme, although in Ethiopia, there was little discussion of how agencies might collaborate with the PSNP. There was also discussion, particularly in the Somalia workshop, of the potential to use lists prepared by other agencies, but participants recognised that this is a complex option due to concerns about data protection and security. However, World Vision Somalia (WVS) highlighted that it had negotiated to use a WFP SCOPE list to identify beneficiaries to extend their coverage to locations where WVS were not present.
A new source of lists may be through FSPs. Discussions in the Kenya and Ethiopia workshops indicated that there is potential to use FSPs or cellular service providers to compile lists or identify beneficiaries in areas where there is no agency presence. In Somalia, agencies felt that this approach might prove problematic due to levels of mistrust between the humanitarian sector and the FSPs and cellular service providers. In all countries, agencies felt that the risk appetite of donors would not permit this collaboration due to a higher probability of inclusion or exclusion errors, the lack of agency presence and limited monitoring.

Accuracy of lists:

Existing lists facilitate short lead times but will only reach those most in need where the lists are accurate. A useable list must have current information about registered individuals (i.e. removing individuals who have moved, changed their economic or social situation, or are deceased) and current personal and payment details. Verifying, validating and updating lists is complex and time-consuming. However, agencies said that some of those requirements could be anticipated and planned for better. They also noted that verification of basic personal and payment information could be made more efficient by using call centres or online verification exercises.

Where there are concerns around duplication (i.e. the same individuals may be enrolled in multiple cash transfer programmes), a list will need to be verified and de-duplicated. These concerns were raised more by agencies in Somalia and Kenya than in Ethiopia. Donors in Somalia would like to see more de-duplication, particularly for agencies operating in the same geographic areas. Agencies are exploring options, for example, NRC Somalia conducted a de-duplication exercise using Excel-based functions across lists in its own programmes based on name, location and phone number (the exercise revealed very little duplication). An interagency example comes from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and WFP, which have signed a data-sharing agreement to de-duplicate some of their beneficiary lists.

Generally, agencies pointed out that more systematic de-duplication exercises across agencies will remain a challenge. In Somalia, pilots to make databases interoperable have been hampered by the limited use of the databases, absence of unique identifiers, lack of beneficiary consent to share data and limited technical capacity. Single registries, planned

2 PSNP has scope for vertical expansion.
3 For example, young poor mothers may have been identified to receive subsidies or inducements to attend mother-child health services. Even if those populations are not rural nor targeted by a community-based food security assessment, the agencies believed them to be significantly impacted by the economic disruption to receive additional cash assistance in the drought response.

in Kenya and Somalia, may help to resolve concerns of duplication in time, but those registries are not yet in operation and bring their own challenges in terms of remaining current.

Bias (inclusion/exclusion) and crisis-affected populations:

Debate in the three workshops suggests that one of the more substantive issues facing the use of existing lists is whether the list has targeted the right people for the response.

Some lists may include people who have not been affected by the current crisis, or lists may not be able to distinguish those who actually require emergency assistance. Depending on why and how they were generated, lists may partially capture or may systematically exclude the most affected or most at risk of death. Agencies discussed that, before any list can be used, it needs to be assessed to ascertain if it is fit for purpose – examining why (i.e. for what programmatic objective) and how (i.e. targeting methodology) it was generated.

Using existing lists (even from CVA exercises) for a response is fraught with difficulties for a number of reasons, including the assumptions upon which pre-existing lists are based, such as assumptions about how people live (i.e. populations dependent on traditional rural livelihoods); how depressed rainfall impacts traditional, rural livelihoods, and how rainfall affects food production, and the health and mortality rates of affected populations.

In a drought, it is difficult to know who requires assistance and who does not. Much drought hardship is linked to economic frailty and extreme poverty, but mobility, often considered a key indicator of need in drought (populations move to seek assistance and are extremely vulnerable at this point) has diverse causes, with people moving for a range of reasons (e.g. young, urbanising populations). There are other varied and idiosyncratic consequences that make it difficult to attribute needs entirely to decreased rainfall. This challenge was discussed with regard to assessing existing lists, but no easy solution was identified.

For most agencies in the workshops, beneficiary lists are generated using the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)-based food security and nutrition criteria predicated on traditional, subsistence rural livelihoods. They noted how national social assistance programmes, such as the PSNP, HSNP or Baxnaano, use or are planning to use

TABLE 1

PROS AND CONS OF CATEGORICAL TARGETING

THE PROS

- **Categorical targeting is simple for potential recipients and agency staff to understand**
- **Highly transparent**
- **Closer to an accepted best practice of a social protection life cycle approach**
- **Requires less extensive data to be collected, is less intrusive and puts less personal data at risk**
- **Quicker to perform**
- **Removes the need for community involvement**
- **Categorical targeting – blended with community input – facilitates identification of not only 'categorical' conditions but also social factors** (i.e. the poorest, elderly, without assistance from extended family)

THE CONS

- **Categorical targeting often reduces targeting to physically observable characteristics**
- **Generally, it has to be combined with geographical targeting if there is not enough budget to support a category at country level**
- **May be easier to game once criteria are understood**

proxy means testing advocated by the World Bank. In contrast, Sagal uses categorical targeting, which is used in some of Kenya's national social protection programmes (i.e. age, marital status, physical condition (e.g. disabled, chronic illness) or family support (e.g. orphans). Others observed yet other targeting methodologies in cash programmes in urban areas, serving young populations, health needs or water subsidies.

A range of different approaches have been tried to overcome challenges to accurate targeting. HSNP, in its original shock-responsive design, included a 'no regrets' approach for its first disbursement and made payments to all beneficiaries. Subsequent payments were then made to beneficiaries where HSNP felt there was evidence or a justification. By contrast, Sagal reported that it was difficult to identify which of their beneficiaries justified additional payments. Their beneficiaries are extremely poor, and even if they live in settled or urban areas and do not farm or keep animals, their economic existence is so fragile that it could be argued that almost all qualify to receive additional payments. However, owing to limited resources, it was not possible to make shock-responsive payments to all beneficiaries over an extended period. No immediate solution was evident.

An emerging challenge is that previously trusted indicators of poverty for pastoralist societies may require review. Some Somali agencies observed that they assist poor rural people who have few if any farms or animals as, by definition, *to be a pastoralist you must have many animals*. Another Somali agency commented that most of their beneficiaries are young and living in urban or peri-urban centres. Sagal has observed more hardship for their beneficiaries in the last year, even though most are not rural, nor farmers, nor pastoralists. All this tallies with research which raises questions about the assumed relationship between food security and excess mortality (Maxwell, et al., 2021) (Chechi, Testa, Warsame, Quach, & Burns, 2018) & (Checci, 2022). These researchers suggest that other pre-existing conditions or factors[4] may better predict and explain mortality than food insecurity levels - similar to COVID-19, the probability that someone dies from a disease doesn't just depend on the disease itself, or rather it is the confounding factors not the COVID, which predicts risk of morality (Ritchie, et al., 2022).

Building on the need to assess existing lists before using them, agencies also discussed how they could address targeting methodologies that systematically exclude high-risk populations. For Somalia, participants discussed how existing targeting approaches and the lists thereby generated do not incorporate ethnic or security issues which correlate with excess mortality. Mortality in the 2011 famine correlated strongly with ethnicity (clan) together with security (Majid & McDowell, 2012) (Maxwell & Majid, 2014). Equally, security, ethnicity and political factors also played a defining role in excess mortality in South Sudan (Chechi, Testa, Warsame, Quach, & Burns, 2018). Ethnicity within agencies and political structures has also been shown to bias targeting and inclusion on beneficiary lists (McDowell, Yusuf, & Aden, 2019). Ethiopia, it was noted, has experienced challenges in prioritising assistance between highland and lowlands and assistance in the recent conflict. Participants recognised that these omissions and biases may still generate lists of very poor people, but not necessarily the poorest, nor the ones at greatest risk of death during a drought crisis. Options they discussed was simply to use different targeting criteria or methodology.

With this range of targeting methodologies serving such a diversity of programmatic aims, agencies discussed how they must assess an existing list to their own programmatic needs before using it. An agency in Kenya chose not to use a beneficiary list from the HSNP as their drought response priorities required a greater emphasis on factors they felt to be important causes of child malnutrition, and so they conducted their own targeting process. In Ethiopia, to reduce targeting confusion, the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) has prepared targeting guidelines for a drought response.

The proliferation of different lists may offer a way forward. Agencies observed that there are now many CVA agencies mounting very diverse programmes and discussed the growing availability of lists from other sectors and programmes, which could be useful to a drought response. This diversity, they said, requires a technical understanding and assessment of each list before it can be used, to avoid bias or exclusion of the neediest.

4 The authors make specific reference to violence and displacement as important causes of excess mortality (they are not able to specify actual causes of death in displaced populations). They argue that these deaths are hunger related, if not hunger caused, and reference the Somalia famine, where almost half of the deaths *took place either before IPC famine thresholds were reached or in areas outside those declared to be in famine.*

Moges received cash assistance from the Red Cross in Arba Minch, Ethiopia.

© Johannes Chinchilla/IFRC. April 2021.

COVERAGE

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT:

Cash actors pointed out that they are aware that needs, and perhaps even more urgent needs than those currently being tackled, may exist in populations not currently served. Current operational modalities either limit or make it difficult for agencies to move into new locations. Equally, several factors either make it unfeasible or impossible to provide assistance to hard-to-reach populations in geographically remote locations, populations inaccessible for logistical or security reasons, or those invisible to targeting and response norms.

ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED:

Operational modalities:

Perhaps one of the frequent self-critiques in workshops was that agencies tend to continue to provide assistance in locations where they have an existing operational presence. In all three countries, this practice occurs for sound reasons, including continuity with ongoing programming, cost efficiencies, existing relationships with local authorities and communities, operational, logistical and administrative infrastructure and placement of staff and, importantly, existing beneficiary lists. Another factor mentioned in the Somalia and Kenya workshops is an ability to provide quality assurance or monitor CVA work where the agency has an established presence. Critically, agencies reported that they are under pressure to maximise the number of people assisted within limited budgets, and that is only possible where they can minimise overhead and administrative costs. Also, as pointed out by an agency in Ethiopia, agencies have had operations in some locations for over 30 years and have developed an organisational commitment to those communities and have some staff who have built their careers in and around those locations.

Hard-to-reach locations:

Many populations were said to be hard to reach simply because of the cost implications, administrative and contractual disincentives to an agency. Quite simply, their geographic isolation and/or the absence of appropriate infrastructure incurs large additional costs. According to CVA actors, existing financing and contracting arrangements neither encourage nor actively discourage agencies from trying to reach those populations. Similarly, it was said that there are not yet contracting arrangements in place to engage local NGOs which may be better placed to access hard-to-reach populations.

Insecurity:

Insecurity is an even greater barrier to CVA operations. Insecurity creates physical dangers to both agencies and beneficiaries, and currently, donors and agencies do not have agreements in place to mitigate the additional costs nor address the programmatic risks or the higher potential for disallowed costs.

Priority-setting norms:

Norms continue to influence which populations will receive assistance. Bodies that set geographic priorities or beneficiary profiles for drought responses, such as the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit - Somalia (FSNAU), , National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) or the Ethiopian government and their partners, use assumptions and targeting approaches which may unintentionally exclude or de-emphasise ethnic, social or security factors. Populations perhaps most at risk to excess mortality are then 'invisible' to CVA responses, as their conditions are not recognised and operations for these populations are unlikely to be financed. For example, concerns were raised about the situation of minority clans or ethnic populations, peri-urban populations, or communities in al-Shabab–controlled areas of Somalia and conflict-affected populations in the north of Ethiopia. In any discussion of bias, it should be acknowledged that all agencies – from donors, to the UN, to INGOs to local NGOs – bring their own embedded organisational and methodological biases, and there is a critical need to increase awareness of such bias and find ways to reduce it. One agency remarked that this may be the most important lesson to be learned in the current drought response.

ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY CVA ACTORS:

Agencies are aware of coverage limitations and are looking for solutions. Various efforts are underway to *reduce the costs or operational impediments* associated with serving populations outside of existing operations. Suggestions from Somalia included working with existing programmes – whether in other sectors or with other agencies – and building on their operational presence to facilitate targeting requirements and monitoring.

In both Kenya and Somalia, discussions focused on better or more innovative uses of mobile phones, mobile money and evolving financial service provision to help identify recipients, make payments, manage grievances and possibly even different, lighter-touch monitoring exercises. However, in both workshops, an identified constraint to this was the disproportionate risk of disallowed costs, as it would be considerably more difficult to meet current donor accounting or programmatic requirements.

Agencies felt that adapting programming norms to access hard-to-reach populations would require donors and partners to agree new risk thresholds (e.g. less direct monitoring, lower thresholds for verification). Agencies in Kenya felt that donors had little appetite for these changes despite their concerns for coverage. In Somalia, however, BRCiS reported that they were working with donors to develop innovative mechanisms (working with existing lists, partnerships with FSPs or local businesses) to allow for financing operations in new locations.

These challenges are many times more complex to address in locations of insecurity. Particular mention was made of communities in Kenya along the border with Somalia and al-Shabab–controlled areas in Somalia and in the north of Ethiopia. For example, those considering assistance to populations in al-Shabab–controlled areas of south and central Somalia know that mobile cash transfers are likely to be taxed by al-Shabab or may place beneficiaries in danger. Work

in such areas is not only much more difficult to monitor, but there is also a higher likelihood of incurring disallowed costs or, potentially, the risk of prosecution and the potential for 'blacklisting'.

Local NGOs in all countries advocated that the localisation agenda should be considered as a strategy to redress coverage issues. Local agencies felt that their lower operational costs, ability to access harder-to-reach populations, combined with growing levels of accountability and capability, made them an important untapped resource. However, preparation would need to include the contractual arrangements to allow them to work and partnerships to ensure they successfully fulfil both local and international requirements.

Coverage of hard-to-reach populations, agencies said, is being reshaped by the growth and increasing coverage of national cash-based social protection programmes. Ethiopian agencies highlighted that the PSNP, which has traditionally been focused on rural highland populations, has extended its coverage into the lowland Somali region and is growing its urban safety net programme. Somalia's Baxnaano programme is both growing and is planning an urban safety net component. While the coverage of the HSNP programme in Kenya is static, there have been significant and important changes in the social protection landscape with the strengthening of the three other programmes (severe disabilities, older persons, and orphans and vulnerable children) which constitute the national safety net programme, Inua Jamii. Also, the Kenyan government continues to move towards a single social registry and plans to make national health insurance compulsory. Agencies recognised this important trend and feel it will influence how they approach coverage and hard-to-reach populations in the future.

Invisible populations:

Providing assistance to *invisible populations* is felt to be a lesson which the cash sector has not yet learned. The term *invisible populations* refers to those whose socio-ethnic standing or physical well-being places them at high risk of mortality, but whose conditions are not recognised or prioritised by predominant, food security and nutrition-based targeting methodologies. They are not *hard-to-reach populations*, but simply *not seen*. Agencies noted little progress since 2011 or 2016/17 on this issue. In Somalia in 2016/17, efforts were made to recognise and serve these populations. However, by 2022, agencies felt that these populations are neither prioritised nor well served by the CVA response. ECHO Somalia, which advocated strongly to serve invisible, high-risk populations and for improvements in coverage more generally, is challenging itself and its partners to continue to innovate and find solutions. However, most agencies said that, given the range of social and political challenges that impact available resources, as well as the high costs of such measures, there is little they can currently do. Of course, when invisible populations are also in hard-to-reach areas, then additional factors compound reach e.g., security.

FINANCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT:

Preparations for the ongoing drought highlight the need for specific partnerships or timely innovative approaches. CVA actors strongly emphasised a need to expand and deepen their relationships with FSPs.

ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED:

FSPs, once seen as simply a conduit for cash, were said to have become a crucial pillar to the quality and timeliness of CVA operations. Research participants argued that existing business relationships must evolve into mature, business partnerships to capitalise on the growing presence of FSPs and their potential to improve the CVA response. Similarly, static relations between CVA actors and donors were felt to limit uptake of proven innovations in the current response. This was a reference to the shock-responsive, adaptive, early action, surge capacity, and crisis modifier programmes. Agencies requested that these contracting, administrative and programmatic mechanisms be mainstreamed. Similarly, there were requests to evolve the role that local NGOs play to exploit their potential to address constraints to targeting or coverage, in other words, to operationalise the localisation agenda.

ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY CVA ACTORS:

Ways of working with financial service providers:

Agencies, particularly in Somalia, felt their current administrative, operational processes and organisational culture need to shift to take on a more pro-business approach to develop improved relationships with FSPs. Building respect and confidence of FSPs can unlock discretionary FSP services. An example from Somalia was FSPs who make disbursements prior to receiving funds in their accounts. Cash actors in Kenya and Somalia also placed importance on how contracts are structured or forward contracts arranged to foster long-term partnerships. Kenyan agencies suggested that with familiarity and confidence, there is ample scope for both FSPs and agencies to learn how to improve and innovate. Agencies in Somalia are beginning to explore how these relationships can be better exploited, such as through changing how and when beneficiary lists are shared with FSPs. WFP Somalia, for example, is using an online portal to make payments through mobile money and exploring how Application Programme Interface links between their SCOPE system and FSPs can increase quality/data protection and decrease lead times. NRC Somalia is partnering with FSPs to explore how they can access to hard-to-reach areas or underserved populations.

Things are rather different in Ethiopia: the FSP sector is nascent, it was perceived that the volume of business transacted is less, and the government plays a much larger role in the sector than in the other countries. As a result, business processes within FSPs have not yet evolved to the same degree as in Kenya or Somalia. Nonetheless, agencies in Ethiopia similarly underscored the importance of developing business relationships to aid CVA preparedness. They observed that FSPs often have bureaucratic processes, are not familiar with cash transfer programming and suggested that it might be useful to help FSPs better understand the business of humanitarian cash transfers. Such initiatives, they felt, could be advanced by leadership from CVA actors or CWGs, for example, in developing boilerplate agreements (standard sections for contracts that might outline certain conditions, including when a contract is broken and how any problems and disputes are resolved).

Even in Kenya and Somalia where FSPs are a large, dominant presence and already make payments for the national social protection programmes, research participants felt that preparedness could be improved through improved dialogue and coordination across the sectors. They also thought it possible to work through the CWG to help FSPs better understand their business needs or develop common approaches, elements of contracts or standard processes to make it easier and cheaper to do business together. Having in place these arrangements, and more importantly, constructive, long-term relationships, would ultimately provide greater speed, cheaper costs and greater flexibility.

Existing partnerships between agencies and donors:

Agencies in all countries highlighted shock-responsive elements such as crisis modifiers, adaptive, early action or surge capacity as important innovations and with potential to improve timeliness. CVA actors believed that greater shock-responsiveness should simply be a normal way of working, regardless of how CVA programmes are labelled – whether humanitarian, social protection or resilience. They noted that crisis-modifying features are currently only found in a limited number of programmes. In Ethiopia, crisis modifiers exist in some EU/ECHO funded 'resilience' programmes and some work funded by USAID, particularly in the Somali region, and they also exist in Somalia's large resilience programmes – BRCiS and SomReP (supported by a number of different donors). Research participants welcomed the approach taken in the Sagal programme. The Sagal programme is funded by the EU, but the shock-responsive feature is financed through ECHO, thus complementing development cash nicely with humanitarian cash. ECHO also provides shock-responsive support to a collection of CVA actors working under the Cash Consortium umbrella. There were two key discussion points here. Firstly, as crisis modifiers, shock-responsive features were considered fundamental to a fast response, such that CVA agencies felt they should be a new normal for all CVA work or cash-based social protection programmes. Secondly, participants in this research believed that shock responsiveness helps advance, in a practical manner, how donors, government and agencies can better bridge humanitarian and development priorities and systems.

Localisation:

The localisation agenda has been much discussed, and resources have been invested in this transition over the last number of years. Now localisation may offer a new opportunity in terms of CVA preparedness. In Kenya, CVA agencies felt that the large, international agencies have lost their humanitarian response capacity. Local agencies in Somalia are increasingly providing services previously provided by international NGOs. In both countries, it is local NGOs who access hard-to-reach populations, or populations in areas too dangerous for international organisations and staff.

COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT:

Agencies spoke about working collaboratively and building long-term relationships with new actors and systems to remain effective and relevant amidst the changing context in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Their reflections mark a shift from an agency-centred approach to engaging with, complementing or shaping systems to fill gaps or address limitations and benefit entire populations. While such a shift would imply less direct control for CVA actors, it offers potential to better address deep structural challenges and to position themselves to respond to changing context. Pre-positioning relationships would become an ever more important component of preparedness.

ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED:

CVA actors highlighted that they see a growing need and opportunity to coordinate and collaborate with national social protection programmes and single registries (as they come online). They also believe that the national social assistance programmes (PSNP, HSNP, Baxnaano/Sagal) and other social protection programmes (pensions, orphans, vulnerable populations, national health insurances) are likely to include the same populations served by CVA actors during droughts. In the immediate term, CVA actors want to evolve what they do and how they work, to increasingly collaborate and complement the national social protection programmes. CVA actors believe they could bring a certain nimbleness and spirit of innovation to partnerships with national programmes. This collaboration would include engaging with youth-focused and urbanisation interventions and the growth of urban-based social protection programmes.

A second issue is the need to evolve CVA coordination. CWGs, as mentioned, have an opportunity to advance business relations between FSPs and CVA actors. They are uniquely placed and could help forge relationships between CVA actors to advance some of the key issues discussed (sharing of existing beneficiary lists, use of common templates, government approval processes [in the case of Ethiopia] and so on). CVA coordination, which currently tends to focus on NGO/UN work, may need to engage with wider social protection sector coordination (as it already does in some countries) and/or with the wider disaster management sector. Until now, much CVA coordination focuses on common transfer values and shared market assessments. While these are important issues, agencies said they did not use them practically in the current response and so their value to coordination in the future may need to be reassessed.

ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY CVA ACTORS:

Working with government-provided services and programmes:

CVA actors all recognised the growing presence and importance of *government-provided services or programmes* and the opportunities and benefits they offer. Equally, they were enthusiastic about the potential for planned single registries to facilitate targeting and an ability to reach remote or underserved populations. They also discussed how the growth of government CVA programming for social protection or as a shock-responsive modality creates a different dynamic that requires active, ongoing engagement to build meaningful partnerships. This was a common theme in all three countries, yet the various responses of agencies reflected the unique context of each country.

In Ethiopia, partnership with the government and the social protection sector went beyond operational complementarity towards advancing national development aims and capacity. Agencies saw how their CVA work contributes to the growth of the financial services sector and the evolution of government controls and engagement in this sector. They felt that humanitarian CVA efforts during the current drought ultimately can help create demand for mobile money services, as well as evolve business processes in FSPs. Ethiopian agencies also discussed the possibility of leveraging such partnerships through provision of phones/SIM cards or infrastructure investments and also suggested working with the GSMA to support improvements to the mobile money systems and penetration of mobile financial services. This same collaboration could be used to address administrative bottlenecks to timeliness – for example, to shorten approval times or approvals from the National Bank for multiple withdrawals. Actual collaboration with the PSNP was not discussed.

In Kenya and Somalia, partnership referred to collaboration with the national social assistance programmes, HSNP and Baxnaano/Sagal. Agencies discussed complementarity of coverage, extending shock-responsive benefits or accessing beneficiary lists by working with these programmes. They also touched on working through or supporting these programmes, including efforts to establish national social or common registries.

The Somalia Baxnaano programme, for example, is planning both to handover to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and to expand. It has no staff on the ground to support targeting, registration exercises (linked to the planned social registry) or case-management/grievances and expects to be able to outsource these functions to their CVA development partners. Agencies pointed out that while these plans are ongoing, FSPs and communications services continue to be a growing force and some are planning to negotiate directly with donors or the government to take on the targeting, registration and payment services currently provided by NGOs and the UN. Such contractual arrangements are a possibility because while Somalia's single registry may be rolled out in the next year, without the presence of government offices, it is not yet clear how the registry will be populated. One discussed option is to continue working with Somalia's CVA partners to help with identification, registration, and ongoing verification. A

TABLE 2

PROS AND CONS OF A SINGLE REGISTRY

THE PROS

- Makes government a meaningful stakeholder in cash transfer and social protection programmes
- Can be quicker to disburse funds when the system is up and running
- Reduces the need for bilateral agreements between cash actors and FSPs
- Can reduce duplication of support to individuals if the single registry collects details on the support being provided
- Improves geographic coordination between cash actors

THE CONS

- Can increase inclusion and exclusion errors if the list is not updated frequently
- Requires sophisticated data systems and expertise to run
- Requires data-sharing and data protection agreements, which can delay disbursements
- Not all funders will allow cash actors to use single registries
- Efficiency benefits are reduced if cash actors undertake their own verification surveys
- Can reduce the diversity of vulnerabilities supported by cash actors
- Working with governments is more bureaucratic and time-consuming than in-house targeting
- Requires a unique identifier which in Kenya and Ethiopia is linked to a formal citizen ID. No such ID exists in Somalia (alternatives are being explored)
- Lack of identification documents can people from accessing assistance

single registry together with Somalia's growing safety net programmes may displace CVA actors from their traditional roles, as was seen in northern Kenya[5]. Single registries are only effective when they are current and keeping them up to date is expensive; they may also not be well suited to facilitate emergency responses. Agencies were aware of changing needs to support the success of these initiatives, the opportunity to use them to be more effective, and to complement them by recognising their limitations.

In Kenya, since the considerable efforts made by CVA partners to identify and register households for the second phase of the HSNP programme in 2013, they have played a more modest role on the cash stage. This trend has been accelerated by the rise of Inua Jamii which also serves as a common operational platform to the country's four main cash transfer programmes (one of which is HSNP). With *Inua Jamii*, the government's work on a single registry, and with health insurance expected to be compulsory, there is more interest in complementarity across these programmes and a rationalisation of cash-based assistance rather than introducing more CVA actors. Kenyan CVA actors supported this shift but also pointed out the limited reach of the programmes as well as the absence of discrete cash-based emergency response mechanisms, distinct from HSNP's shock-responsive component. They highlighted that there is likely to be an ongoing need to verify and update the single registry once it is established. Within this discussion were reflections about how the localisation agenda or shifting roles, responsibilities and funding for local versus international NGOs might play out.

Looking at social protection programmes more broadly, however, agencies noted that drought-affected populations are served by different social protection programmes and social services, beyond the large social transfer programmes. Situating CVA assistance within this broader canvas also raises the possibly of new partnerships and collaboration to effectively assist the rural poor as well as newly emerging target groups.

Urbanisation:

The region's youthful population and trends towards urbanisation are shifting the locus of traditional CVA work. Ethiopia has launched its national Urban Safety Nets programme in 11 cities. Somalia is planning an urban complement to its Baxnaano programme, and the Sagal programme largely supports peri-urban and urban-based populations. CVA actors in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya all recognised the growing importance of addressing needs in urban contexts, but also for populations in transition from traditional rural life and employment in quasi-urban environments. It was noted by agencies that already support urban or peri-urban populations how people have experienced additional hardship in 2021–22. Some agencies are looking for greater opportunities to support CVA work in urban contexts and also to support programmes for young people.

Coordination:

Agencies in all three countries commented that CWGs have evolved well to serve members' interests to date, but that, owing to the changing context, the role of CWGs may need to adapt. Suggestions included working more closely with FSPs to help advance the business relationships between CVA actors and the FSPs.

Questions were also raised regarding how CWGs could help develop useful collaborations between CVA actors and the large national social protection programmes.

In the three workshops, there were in-depth, technical discussions around common transfer values, needs and market assessments. There was also discussion around their role in coordination. When asked who had used these products in the current drought response, most agencies had not. While these products address important issues, the fact they are not used calls into question the priority they are accorded. Part of further preparation to improve coordination mechanisms may need to examine more closely why these products are not proving to be as useful as anticipated.

5 The growing reach, long-term presence and shock-responsive component of the HSNP reduced the space normally occupied by international NGOs and CVA actors in northern Kenya. Also, with the government of Kenya's commitment to national safety nets, donors had to reconsider the justification or relevance of their investments outside of national systems. See also e-Pact (November 2021).

KEY LEARNING POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Husband and wife, Huka And Dadi, inside their home in Borena zone, Moyale. Drought has killed many of their livestock, leaving them without a livelihood. Following the prolonged drought in Ethiopia, they receive multi purpose cash grants from the Ethiopia Red Cross Society.

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The CVA preparedness agenda has evolved considerably over the last decade. Progress on timeliness has been made, and this is evident in the current drought responses in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. CVA actors consulted during the preparation of this report provided clear suggestions for how they might improve further. Their suggestions often require that preparedness encompasses a wider set of issues, actors and systems than it has in the past. Below are suggestions to improve preparedness in the current response.

BUILD ON WHAT IS WORKING

CVA actors compiled suggestions on how they can improve on what is already done. The following were identified as the most practical actions to address in the coming months:

01 **Work with FSPs to address operational bottlenecks – forward contracts, sharing information, approvals, validation etc. – which can improve timeliness. Explore technological options that facilitate data sharing.**

02 **Extend shock-responsive/crisis modifier features into more CVA responses. Different contracting modalities may provide donors with the flexibility they need: a contract to a single agency, a contract with an umbrella agency representing a number of agencies (e.g. in Somalia, SomReP, BRCiS or the Cash Consortium) or a contract for a shock-responsive feature to be added to an existing development programme (i.e. outsource a vertical expansion of the programme).**

03 **Continue to improve internal processes, including putting operations on stand-by, ensuring beneficiary lists are verified and de-duplicated; financial and logistics processes are prepared to expedite approvals and payments. In Ethiopia, preparations should be made, to the degree possible, for government approvals to conduct the CVA exercise and to withdraw funds.**

TARGETING

It is increasingly important to learn how to improve the efficiency of targeting exercises, share lists or information, update and verify lists, or to assess the value of existing lists:

01 **Where community-based targeting exercises are necessary, establish donor and agency agreements that allow for staff and logistics to be pre-positioned.**

02 **Update, validate and de-duplicate beneficiary lists before a response by using innovations that can expedite these processes – from collaborations with FSPs to using basic Excel functions.**

3. Use lists based on different targeting methodologies to better respond to diverse and idiosyncratic consequences of drought and target hard-to-reach or invisible populations.

COVERAGE

There are options to serve hard-to-reach and invisible populations. These options have differing degrees of complexity and engagement with other actors but could all be undertaken in the current response.

01 **Enable agencies to serve populations outside of their existing area of operations which, at a minimum, would require donors to make a provision for the additional costs and time incurred.**

02 **Support innovative targeting approaches i.e. categorical targeting, targeting through FSPs that can be**

cost-efficient, and safely allow responses in hard-to-reach populations. This effort must be accompanied by negotiations between donors and agencies on quality assurance and disallowed costs.

03 Build on existing programmes – whether in different sectors or agencies – and use their operational footprint to facilitate an expansion of the drought response into new or hard-to-reach populations.

04 Collaborate with national safety net programmes. Explore immediate-term opportunities to cooperate or complement each other's work i.e. supporting vertical expansion/shock response (using their beneficiary lists) or by addressing geographical and social gaps in the safety net programme.

COORDINATION

Coordination requirements are evolving in-step with the changing CVA context.

01 CWGs can continue to help the CVA agencies to coordinate with the national safety net programmes (complementarity of coverage, access to beneficiary lists) as well as with FSPs (common sections in contracts, helping FSPs understand the CVA business)

02 CVA actors can re-examine the value addition of efforts such as transfer values, needs and market assessments

Adoy, 35, and her son, Kalid, sitting outside their home in the Somali region of Moyale which has been affected by prolonged drought. Adoy's family are included within a scheme by the Ethiopian Red Cross Society to distribute multipurpose cash grants.

© Berhanu Gezahegn/ Ethiopian Red Cross Society. June 2022

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ANNEXES

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ANNEX 01
COUNTRY WORKSHOP SUMMARIES

ETHIOPIA

Cash transfers have been a significant part of the humanitarian response in Ethiopia since the 2015 El Niño crises and subsequent drought responses. While the government of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is the dominant cash-based instrument in the country to both stabilise conditions for extremely poor individuals and to cushion them from periods of disruption, international CVA partners play a role within the framework of the government's annual Humanitarian Response Plan. The largest implementing agencies are the 14-member Ethiopia Collaborative Cash Delivery (CCD) network, WFP, IOM, UNICEF and the government of Ethiopia through the PSNP.

Significant CVA funders include USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the World Bank, the EU's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation (DG-ECHO), the EU's Delegation to Somalia, the Famine Relief Fund (FRF) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Additional funders also include Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and DanChurchAid.

Distributions by international partners are completed using bank accounts and bank branches/ATMs or Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs)and agents, mainly in urban areas. Physical cash distributions are used in areas not served by financial institutions, often more rural areas. Use of mobile money systems such as HelloCash and M-BIRR are relatively limited.

CVA coordination is under the auspices of the government of Ethiopia National Disaster Risk Management Commission and is led by the Ethiopia Cash Working Group (CWG) which is co-chaired by UNICEF and CARE, with support from of the Ethiopian CWG Strategic Advisory Group. The subnational CWGs are an important component, coordinating across the large geography and population. The global Collaborative Cash Delivery Network (CCD) has 14 members in Ethiopia who provide technical support to CVA actors on key areas such as protection and digital cash transfers, the latter supported by the GSMA's Mobile for Development team.

Caseload data is collected through a sectoral 4W process but not routinely collated and shared with cash actors. However, the area-based coordination agreed by implementors reduces the challenges this would present. The PSNP allows implementors to target existing households in areas already covered. The remaining households are mainly selected using community-based targeting (CBT), with some categorical targeting. Transfer values are set by the CWG, based on MEBs, but these have not been endorsed for all regions. The PSNP transfer values are set using wage rates.

VIEWS FROM THE ETHIOPIA COUNTRY WORKSHOP

To what extent are lessons learnt on CVA preparedness during previous drought crises being applied to the current drought response?

- There has been a significant increase in CVA capacity at all levels, HQ, national, regional and field, attributed in part to CALP's training sessions.
- Subnational CWGs have been set up and are operating.
- Generally, within the humanitarian sphere, there is trend towards cash-based assistance from more traditional, commodity-based support (grains). This is in part enabled by the presence of more robust commercial food systems, together with the opportunity to use cash to reinforce those systems and provide fungible assistance to beneficiaries.

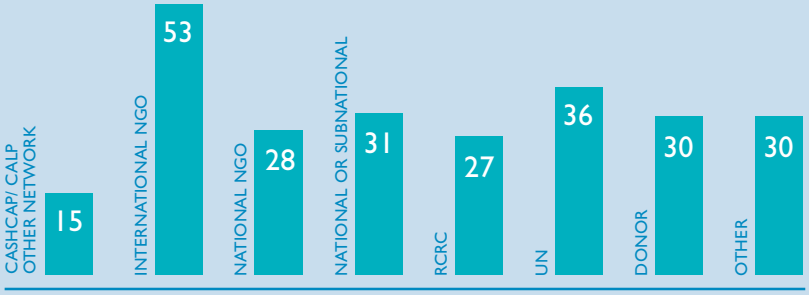
What measures have been taken or still need to be taken to facilitate a timely CVA response?

The following measures were raised in previous drought response evaluations but have yet to be implemented:

- Embedding harmonised transfer values;
- Coordinate market assessments to avoid overlap and duplication;
- Map financial service providers per region;
- More collective work between CWGs and FSPs to better understand each other;
- More usage of the mobile money transfer.

What is a realistic expectation in terms of lead time for cash and vouchers responses?

- On average, respondents suggested 30 days could be realistic.



What are the enablers (E) and detractors (D) of organisational and collective cash preparedness?

- **E** Use of existing beneficiary lists.
- **E** Categorical/geographical targeting instead of community targeting processes (but there is little interest). The standardisation of approach of the joint targeting guidelines by the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) has reduced confusion.
- **D** While Ethiopia is improving their mobile money/banking systems, many rural communities require cash payments. Mobile phone ownership was low.
- **D** A lack of harmonised transfer value delays transfers, although where transfer values were recommended, they were not necessarily used (NOTE: This was mentioned repeatedly in the Key Informant Interviews but much less so during the Ethiopia Country Learning Workshop).
- **D** FSPs often have bureaucratic processes and are not familiar with cash transfer programming. Poor infrastructure to physically access populations in remote areas.
- **D** The time required to obtain government/Central Bank permission for each individual cash programme.
- **D** Security concerns when moving large amounts of cash.

Which best practices could be applied immediately to the ongoing drought response?

- Work with the GSMA support improvements to the mobile money systems in the country [see GSMA Report]
- Improve working relationships with FSPs. National and subnational CWGs to work with FSPs to help them better understand each other and work together. It may be possible to develop boilerplate agreements with FSPs to standardise and streamline processes.
- CWG/agencies agree a contract annex that outlines a standard process for humanitarian cash transfer programmes.
- Continue building on current collaboration with government to address administrative bottlenecks to timeliness (i.e. permissions, targeting) and to align these humanitarian investments to complement the growth and transformation agenda.
- Seek broad approvals from the National Bank for withdrawals avoiding repeated requests.
- Where there is coverage, provision of basic mobile phones, together with SIM card registration, can be considered (reducing CVA costs, increasing financial inclusion).
- Collection and sharing of contextual data. The CWG will shortly be publishing a strategy covering this issue.

Additional Comments:

- The longer the money takes to come from donors, the more difficult and slower it is to implement programmes.

KENYA

NGOs in Kenya helped pioneer CVA work (particularly ACF in Mandera and subsequently as a response to the post-election violence of 2007/8). Since then, cash transfers have been a significant part of the humanitarian response and helped to drive the creation of the Household Safety Net Programme (HSNP) (operating in four arid counties).

With the introduction of the HSNP programme as well as the government of Kenya's four cash-based social assistance programmes, the role of non-governmental agencies has reduced in the CVA sphere. They may most often be financed by international donors to distribute cash in response to discrete events and outside of government of Kenya channels.

The largest agencies currently undertaking cash transfers are Kenya Cash Consortium, Kenya Red Cross, UNICEF and WFP.

CVA funders include USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the World Bank, the EU's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation (DG-ECHO), the EU's Delegation to Somalia, and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Distributions are predominantly completed using mobile money or cash via bank branches. Coordination is led by the Kenya CWG that is co-chaired by Kenya Red Cross Society and the government of Kenya, represented by the NDMA. CALP provide regular advisory support. 5W data is collected but is not collated or shared.

Kenya has an Enhanced Single Registry administered by the NDMA that donors can fund directly or implementing agencies can apply to for a list of vulnerable households in a particular location, or to de-duplicate a caseload to avoid supporting a household twice on a similar programme. De-duplication takes place using an ID number issued by the government. Most of the remaining households are selected by community-based targeting (CBT). The National

Targeting Tool.

Transfer values are set by the CWG, based on MEBs, which are monitored quarterly by the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) led by REACH.

VIEWS FROM THE KENYA COUNTRY WORKSHOP

To what extent are lessons learnt on CVA preparedness during previous drought crises being applied to the current drought response?

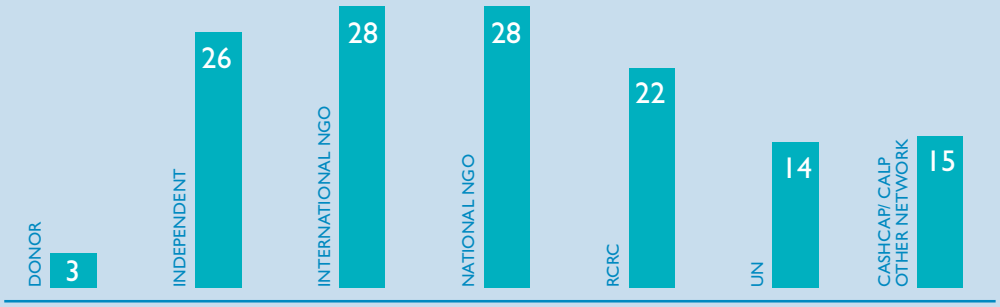
- A lot of the lessons learned are more operational ones such as forward contracts with FSPs and pre-existing beneficiary lists (NDMA).

What measures have been taken or still need to be taken to facilitate a timely CVA response?

- Greater geographic coordination to reduce agency and recipient overlaps.
- Formalisation of how agencies can collaborate on needs assessments and market monitoring.
- Learnings should be shared more frequently between partners.
- Kenya Cash Consortium has developed rapid targeting/selection processes.
- Invest in local NGOs for a quicker response.

What is a realistic expectation in terms of lead time for cash and vouchers responses?

- The respondents placed the acceptable time between receipt of funds from donor to delivery to recipients at 14 days. The ideal time would be 3–5 days.



What are the enablers (E) and detractors (D) of organisational and collective cash preparedness?

- **E** Targeting identified as the main factor that determines lead times – use of existing lists, such as Kenya's Enhanced Single Registry helps.
- **E** Ease of setting up contracts with FSPs.
- **E** Potential to collaborate with HSNP and government cash-based social protection programmes.
- **D** Verification of Kenya's Enhanced Single Registry is necessary and delays lead time.
- **D** Larger agencies have lost their humanitarian response capacities, but national NGOs have not.
- **D** Efforts to establish harmonised transfer values ultimately leads to confusion on the ground and delays implementation. The CWG has set harmonised transfer value based on MEBs. Most agencies aren't using them as they're not updated frequently enough to reflect price changes, they are not easily accessible/ understood, they don't reflect local prices, or their timing does not align with proposal submissions. Some agencies complained that they do not reflect the sector aims of specific projects.
- **D** Increasing speed invariably increases risk, for which donors and agencies have little appetite.
- **D** Accessing harder-to-reach populations incurs greater risk, both in terms of security and the ability to verify to the same level, which is not acceptable to donors or agencies.
- **E/D** Agencies prefer to use their own criteria to identify recipients rather than using NDMAs.

Which best practices could be applied immediately to the ongoing drought response?

- Begin using the harmonised targeting tool once it has been finalised.
- Move all payments to mobile money.
- Pre-positioning staff – plan to move field staff to locations early.
- Create a CWG workstream to work directly with digital payment providers driving innovation and efficiencies. Familiarity is the first step.
- Remote targeting – use Covid experience to reduce lead times.

Additional Comments:

- The ideal response time versus the current response time. We are as fast as we can be in reality – so maybe the ideal time is not actually possible.

SOMALIA

Cash transfers have been a significant part of the humanitarian response since 2012 (although they were being piloted years before). The biggest humanitarian and development cash implementors are the federal government of Somalia through the Baxnaano programme, WFP, the Somali Cash Consortium and FAO. CVA funders include the World Bank, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the EU's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation (DG-ECHO), the EU's Delegation to Somalia, and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Most distributions are made using mobile money. E-vouchers from WFP's SCOPE account for approximately a quarter of the money transferred.

Coordination is led by the Somalia Inter Agency CWG, which is co-chaired by WFP and the Somali Cash Consortium. The CWG works through subnational working groups and thematic workstreams which are dedicated to Market Analysis, Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability to Affected Populations, Financial Service Providers, and Cash and Protection.

An online dashboard administered by UNOCHA reports the number of households supported by agency, location, sector outcome/cluster with a three-month delay. Transfers are also mapped against FAO's Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit's projections to highlight areas of unmet need.

it with households selected using Proxy Means Testing (PMT). At the moment, no other implementors are using the USR, although this is expected to change. The majority of the remaining households are selected by community-based targeting (CBT), with categorical targeting being piloted with some success by the EU's Sagal programme. Transfer values are set by the CWG based on percentage of MEB, and MEBs are monitored using market price data monthly. Actual use of the CWG recommended transfer values is mixed.

VIEWS FROM THE SOMALIA COUNTRY WORKSHOP

To what extent are lessons learnt on CVA preparedness during previous drought crises being applied to the current drought response?

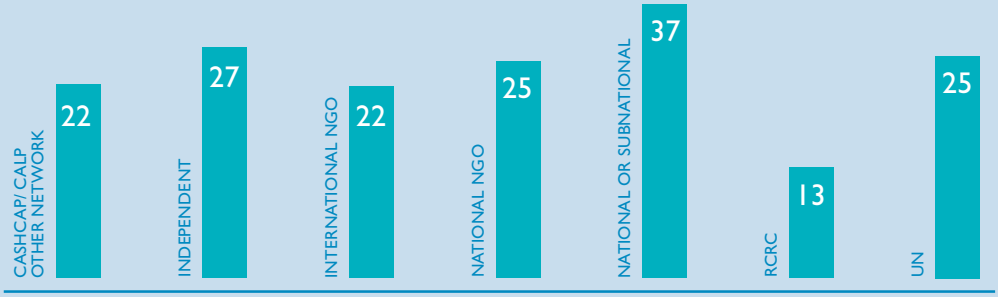
- Most agencies now have framework agreements with Financial Service Providers (FSPs), removing another significant cause for delays in 2017. WFP are using an online portal to make payments through mobile money and are exploring linking their SCOPE system and the FSPs through Application Programme Interface (API) which increases quality/data protection and may decrease lead times.
- A greater number of international agencies are partnering with local agencies, which has quickened response times.
- Contracts allow flexibility to respond (provisions for adaptive social protection, shock response, early action or surge capacity). Through these mechanisms, additional funds can be made available, budget reallocation can be allowed, or reserve funds are provided in advance. These have allowed some agencies (Sagal and the Cash Consortium) to respond within ideal lead times.
- The Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) dashboard shows where and how agencies are responding. The data being collected isn't always forecasted and doesn't include transfer values and timings. This form of coordination, however, was not mentioned as a factor of, or a precondition for, timely assistance.

What measures have been taken or still need to be taken to facilitate a timely CVA response?

- Provide assistance to populations outside of agency areas of operations.
- Address biases that exclude specific clans/ethnic groups from assistance.
- Provide assistance to populations in hard-to-reach/al-Shabab–controlled areas.
- Develop or improve mechanisms or processes for fully remote programming and secure donor approval.
- Evolve collaboration with business. NRC are partnering with businesses to enable access to hard-to-reach areas or underserved populations.

What is a realistic expectation in terms of lead time for cash and vouchers responses?

- The group suggested that between two weeks and one month was an acceptable lead time. If a targeting or verification process was required, a month is needed.



What are the enablers (E) and detractors (D) of organisational and collective cash preparedness?

- **E** Prevalence of mobile money in Somalia – even in remote and very poor households.
- **E** Not having to check with a central list system reduces the time taken at registration/verification.
- **E** Progress to develop contractual mechanisms allowing flexibility for agencies to respond as needs arise.
- **D** Lack of understanding/misperceptions around cash transfer/sanctions risk.
- **D** Access to underserved populations, certain clans or hard-to-reach locations – although there seems to be a lot of work going on around this at the moment.
- **D** The single registry isn't available yet and few people are able to share lists due to data protection rules, and internal/donor processes.
- **D** FSPs take two days to transfer money.
- **D** Community-based targeting is common and causes delays. Delays relate to community sensitisation and selecting committee members.

Which best practices could be applied immediately to the ongoing drought response?

- Agencies can agree with FSPs to transfer money in advance of its being in their accounts.
- Piggyback on existing programmes for already served areas to reduce time and costs.
- Engage more with the Somali business community to improve access and operational efficiency.
- Reconcile actual versus assumed contribution of common transfer values and market assessments (including price monitoring), as considerable resources and energy are invested in them, and although they were recommended in previous droughts, only some agencies actually use them. Although they were mentioned in the country learning workshop, they were not mentioned as a precondition for timely response.
- Targeting is the single biggest factor in a timely response. Conducting quality poverty targeting takes time. Sagal are exploring using categorical targeting, which is simpler and quicker.
- Concerns of double dipping were often mentioned, although evidence suggest it is uncommon. Actions can be taken to assure agencies individually, to control for double dipping. NRC has been using their M&E teams to de-duplicate between their programmes based on name, location and phone number. We may have more difficulty doing this across agencies due to data protection requirements. IOM and WFP have managed to sign a data-sharing agreement to de-duplicate in one programme.
- Adapt programming approaches to address risks associated with cash in hard-to-reach areas e.g. less direct monitoring, lower thresholds for verification. Agree on thresholds and risk sharing across donors and partners.

ANNEX 02
DEEP DIVES

01: CONDUCT INTERNAL SEARCHES FOR DUPLICATE BENEFICIARIES

NRC Somalia is using straightforward Excel functions to search for duplicate beneficiaries between programmes they implement. This is to prevent households from receiving payments for similar programmes, ensure accurate reporting of unique beneficiary numbers in annual internal reports and confirm the accuracy of categorical targeting.

Donors have been keen for de-duplication to take place between cash transfer implementing agencies in Somalia for several years to ensure households aren't supported twice under similar programmes, therefore depriving other households from receiving transfers. Pilots to make databases interoperable in Somalia have been hampered by limited use of databases, lack of unique identifiers, lack of consent from beneficiaries to share data and limited IT capacity.

NRC Somalia has been searching for duplicates using telephone numbers as a proxy unique identifier. They generally search within programmes running in the same year. When potential duplicates are found, their registration data is examined for additional data points including the name of the mother, location, age and household size to make a final decision. NRC uses Excel's conditional formatting highlight duplicate cells function to complete this analysis, drawing on registration data from Village Relief Committee lists, Excel or various Open Data Kit (ODK) registration platforms, including RedRose, Kobo and ONA.

When a duplicate registration is confirmed, a decision needs to be made on whether to exclude a person from a programme. Duplicates are allowed across some interventions such as a shelter programme and a drought response. In others, a duplicate may indicate incorrect information on a categorically targeted household, such as a head of household being registered as pregnant in their third trimester and also as a person aged 55 years and above.

De-duplicating between agencies is also happening with NRC caseloads registered with the Somali Cash Consortium, which uses online Power BI[6] models to automate the process.

02: PROCESSING PAYMENTS THROUGH A PORTAL

WFP Somalia uploads payment lists to online portals created by the Financial Service Providers (FSPs) instead of sharing lists by email or links to online folders. WFP says that this reduces the risks that data could be leaked and used by fraudsters or that it could be incorrectly modified by FSPs. At the moment this hasn't resulted in any time savings but improves the process as it is a more secure process.

The three main FSPs in Somalia have each developed sections of their online portals for WFP to access. WFP staff log on to the portal and their credentials are verified using multi-factor authentication by SMS or email. Each staff member has a role i.e. uploader, approver level-1 or approver level-2. Payments lists are downloaded from SCOPE and uploaded to the portal, where they are then reviewed and approved by two levels of approvers. Funds are then transferred to beneficiaries' accounts.

All the portals check for duplicate phone numbers within each file, the Dahabshiil (majority owner of the Somtel network) portal checks that the name on the SCOPE dataset matches the name registered with Somtel for each telephone number, a process that would normally have to be carried out manually and ensures that the funds only reach the actual owner of the mobile money account.

WFP described some challenges to using the system. Small errors that would normally have been resolved by the FSP if they had received the file manually now have to be resolved in collaboration with WFP and the FSP, which takes longer. In addition, the FSP and SCOPE systems run on different formats, which requires reports to be manually transformed – a time-consuming process that also increases the potential for errors. WFP is exploring linking SCOPE and the FSP systems through APIs, reducing the need for any human intervention. The study team discussed with WFP whether scripts written in Microsoft's Power Query M language (available within Excel) or Python could automate the file transformation.

Most agencies in Somalia are still sharing lists with FSPs by email.

6 Microsoft Power BI is a suite of business intelligence (BI), reporting, and data visualization products and services for individuals and teams.

ANNEX 03
DETAILS OF THE METHODOLOGY

The study was led by a team of four consultants who brought extensive experience and contextual knowledge. A Steering Committee was formed to provide oversight to the study and to provide additional support to a broad range of partners as well as to help deliver the work within its tight, 'real-time learning' timelines. The Steering Committee was composed of representatives from CALP Network and other stakeholders working on CVA in the region. The CALP team assisted the consultants to gather desk review materials, develop KII interview guidelines, and prepare for the workshops, as well as advising on the direction of the research and emerging findings. Also, they maintained social media communications during the study.

The process consisted of a preliminary phase, country workshops and report/validation sessions.

The **preliminary phase** was intended to both orient the work and to prepare the consulting team for the country workshops. The CALP team and the Steering Committee worked with the consulting team to make available documentation, develop the inception report, identify Key Informant Interviewees, and review the preliminary findings. The consulting team interviewed 47 Key Informants and received questionnaire responses from a further 47, to identify gaps and gain understanding of the dynamics within organisations and coordination mechanisms. Their feedback was used to draft an internal, preliminary findings report. The entire process allowed the consulting team to identify key country and regional issues and to prepare for the country workshops.

Three **country workshops** were conducted between 13 and 17 June. They were online sessions with 208 participants. As real-time learning workshops, they explored key facts (identified in the preliminary phase) as a group to set a baseline of knowledge and understanding. As a learning process, the workshops were structured to offer collegial engagement and to promote inclusive participation. Visual tools (MURAL) and simple, widely understood unambiguous terms and indicators were used. There were no PowerPoint presentations. Participants contributed via voting, creating virtual Post-it notes, speaking and through the written chat function. The MURAL board allowed discussions, reflections and debate, with participants offering responses to the study's key questions. Debriefings were held after each workshop, allowing the consultancy team to make modifications and to improve the experience for participants. The team remained in constant contact via WhatsApp throughout the sessions, providing guidance and support to manage challenges or exploit emergent opportunities.

The learning workshops were considered critical to ensure real-time learning. Meaningful communication is required for real-time learning, as well as discussion of issues for which cash practitioners and stakeholders are looking for answers now. This discussion on meaningful issues enabled the workshops to transcend information sharing to knowledge acquisition that would lead to action. Workshops were increasingly tailored with each event, to help participants arrive at answers that can help them to work more productively, effectively and in a timely manner. Workshops included retrospective sessions on how learning has shaped the current response (or not) to reinforce that progress has been made. Other sessions were forward-looking, recognising that even with progress, the current response requires yet more flexibility, adaptability and innovation.

Sowda Omar Abdile makes black tea in her home. As many as 28 million people across East Africa are at risk of extreme hunger.

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Within the framework of the **learning process**, data collection occurred principally during the country learning workshops but also through the KIIs and online survey responses. KIIs and survey responses were collated in a tabular form to facilitate collation and review. All workshop participants were required to register, providing information about themselves and their organisation. The workshop proceedings were recorded. Very usefully, the MURAL board helped to capture individual experiences and priorities. It allowed participants to vote and indicate the degree to which issues did or did not resonate with them. MURAL board results, together with chat contributions, were also recorded. Results from the country workshops were summarised after each session (which also allowed key workshop findings to be shared with CALP, who communicated them via social media and email D-groups). At the end of the three workshops, a debriefing session allowed the consultancy team to pull together information and begin a preliminary analysis. The consultancy team used a Notion workspace to store information and track the project's progress.

The **report/validation** phase consisted of analysis, draft report, validation of the report and final communication products. The report was based on the KIIs (interviews and survey), feedback and guidance from the Steering Committee, and principally input from country learning workshops. These results were analysed by the consultancy team collectively, and reviewed and discussed with CALP in order to draft the report. A draft of the report was firstly reviewed by the Steering Committee. With their guidance, a final report was prepared.

Finally, some **key risks** related to concerns that participation might be muted if CVA actors in the region were not well engaged, and there were also concerns that it may be difficult, given the current political situation in Ethiopia, for robust participation. However, the topics identified by CALP immediately garnered interest, with almost 50 early registrations for each country workshop. While technology did not present a significant challenge to the country workshops, constant improvements were made to sessions to accelerate participant engagement and enthusiasm. By the third workshop (Ethiopia), fixes to the above-mentioned issues were in place and despite concerns, participation was robust and constructive.

ANNEX 04
KIIS AND WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Feedback involved responses from people working for the following organisations, among others:

- ACT Alliance
- ACTED
- AICS
- AISDA
- AVSI
- CALP Network
- CARE
- CashCap
- CBM Christian Blind Mission
- CCD/WVI
- Centre for Emergency and Development Support
- Child Fund
- Christian Aid
- Christian Blind Mission
- CIFA
- Concern Worldwide
- COOPI
- Cordaid
- CRS Ethiopia
- CRS
- Danish Church Aid
- Danish Refugee Council
- DCA
- Development and Empowerment for Humanity (DEH)
- Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH)
- Dutch Relief Alliance
- ECHO
- ECHO Somalia
- EU Delegation
- FAO
- FCDO
- Finn Church Aid/Kirkon Ulkomaanapu
- Finnish RC
- Friendship Support Association (FSA)
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
- HelpAge International
- HIA
- ICRC
- IFRC
- International Center for Humanitarian Affairs (ICHA)
- International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)
- IOM
- IRC
- Islamic Relief France
- JEOP Programme
- Kenya Red Cross
- Mercy Corps
- Norwegian Church Aid
- NRC
- Oxfam
- PAH
- PIN
- Plan International
- Raagsan
- Racida
- REACH
- Red Cross Kenya
- Red Cross Netherlands
- Red Cross Tanzania
- Red Rose
- Save the Children
- Self Help Africa
- Somali Cash Consortium
- Concern Worldwide
- South Omo Zone Livestock Sector
- Swiss Church Aid/HEKS
- Tearfund
- UN-FAO
- UNHCR
- UNICEF/Cash Working Group
- UN-OCHA
- USAID Somalia
- USAID, Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)
- Wako Gutu Foundation
- Welthungerhilfe
- WFP
- World Concern
- World Vision
- ZoA from Relief to Recovery

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