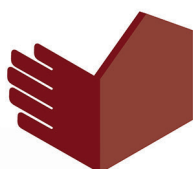


# BASIC GUIDANCE ON CASH AND VOUCHER FOR SHELTER PROGRAMMES IN NORTHWEST SYRIA



Photo Credit: Binaa Organization



**Shelter/NFI Cluster**  
**NW Syria - XB Hub**  
ShelterCluster.org  
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter

## Introduction

Northwest Syria (NWS) response has demonstrated a growing use of the Cash Transfer Programme (CTP) to support communities impacted by crisis. When markets are functioning and able to adapt, cash is often perceived as faster and more cost-effective than in-kind assistance. CTP has been promoted by cash experts as it provides beneficiaries with choice, flexibility and dignity whilst stimulating the economic recovery.

The provision of cash and vouchers assistance (CVA) to people while in displacement, or in the immediate phase following a disaster, can help people access what they most need while allowing maximum choice, provided that relevant markets are functioning, supplies are available in sufficient quantity, and that they are of sufficient quality. CVA in shelter interventions have been traditionally delivered to the affected population through phased payments linked with conditions and restrictions. This is to allow sector-specific technical and social protection objectives and outcomes to be met. Moreover, conditionalities and restrictions reduce exposing CVA recipients to risks associated with the highly unregulated shelter value chain.

Shelter and settlement responses cover a wide range of interventions, this guidance focuses on repair, retrofit, reconstruction or construction of more dignified and durable shelter solutions, in line with the [\*SNFI Cluster's Dignified and Safer Living Conditions\*](#) approach.

## Guidance Goal

The purpose of this document is to develop a greater understanding of cash-based programming for shelter, of a conflict situation in NWS. This will reinforce decision making on the potential use of cash and provide guidance on adequate implementation tools for cash shelter programmes.

This also promotes shelter development and establishment through self-help modalities (Cash for Shelter) where humanitarian actors show accountability to affected population and address the needs effectively. This will also promote a harmonized approach to CVA for shelter programming.

## Important Notes

- This guidance currently excludes the rental market as a focus area due to the complexity of rental subsidy interventions in the NWS context. This is not to say that expenditures for rent and utilities are insignificant. On the contrary, they are often the largest financial burden facing families compared to expenditures for food, clothing, and others. While rental support is increasingly a common sheltering option in urban settings globally, in the ongoing conflict context of Syria, repairs remain a less complex focus of shelter responses.
- Markets need to be assessed by shelter specialists prior to engaging in CVA programmes for shelter since in order to reach the needed scale of response in shelter and settlement, reliance on local markets may be insufficient.



*“Shelter programming ... traditionally takes more of a capabilities approach, as the shelter sector consults with communities and attempts to foster beneficiaries’ ownership of their shelter solutions based on local building practices. Affected communities and survivors of conflict and natural disasters are deprived of basic capabilities due to the circumstances in which they find themselves. Money itself is usually not sufficient to cover the need, it is rather about a person’s ability to achieve safe and healthy living conditions, and achieve an ability to cope with stressors. In this way, shelter programming should set standards based on objective shelter indicators and on local building cultures while also enabling affected populations to either build back better (for natural disaster) or to recover after conflict situations. This will ensure that the toolkit of shelter policies in responses better correspond to shelter recovery and enable local populations to innovate their own shelter responses. Consistent with this capabilities approach is the recognition that shelter is a process and not a product.”*  
(Source: GSC Cash Working Group, 2019, ‘The Shelter Companion to the CaLP Cash and Voucher Assistance Glossary’, Basic Needs)

## Users

This general guidance is intended for:

- Senior managers, and generalists responsible for shelter and settlement programming, working in the field or remotely managing from Turkiye, who are considering different CVA options as a component in their programme design.
- Cash experts supporting shelter programmes who wish to better understand sectoral approaches and requirements to achieving programmatic objectives, such as the provision of structurally sound, healthy, safe, secure and dignified sheltering to the affected populations.

*Note: While CVA can provide a route towards meeting programmatic outcomes, it is often the technical assistance component part of project design that adds the real value and allows for the targeting of specific objectives to ensure physical safety, prevent the use of hazardous materials, mitigate and respond to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and other sectoral protection concerns, such as privacy in shelters, or address issues related to Housing Land and Property (HLP).*



## Modality/ Type of aid

- Self-help modality through delivering cash for shelter. This is delivered one time upon intervention.
- Cash for Work: Please refer to the [\*“Cash-for-Work Recommended Minimum Actions”\*](#) developed by the NWS Cash Working Group with technical support from the Early Recovery and Livelihoods Cluster
- Voucher to compliment both cash for shelter and or cash for work.

## Scope of Work

In/Out IDP sites and communities where affected populations are vulnerable and live in dire shelter conditions in NWS and based on actual verified needs. It could be provided in emergencies and pro-longed ongoing crisis to address the needs on shelter.

## Precautions

- Construction material, labour, land markets are functioning, and supply is able to meet demand in terms of quality.
- Local markets are able to respond appropriately to changes in demand in these sectors.
- Shelter implementing partners are able to assess and analyse qualitative elements of the markets related to shelter, housing and construction, which go beyond availability of materials and labour in the markets.

## Delivered Value

Cash for work and conditional and unconditional cash are recommended to meet shelter needs in NWS. The value may vary as it depends on what is the purpose of using the cash within emergency or in ongoing conflict zone:

- **Shelter rehabilitation**

In reference to the SNFI Cluster [\*\*SHELTER REPAIR AND REHABILITATION GUIDELINES\*\*](#) and based on technical assessment and BOQs, shelter rehabilitation will be considering the following:

- o Light rehabilitation to already existing units/ damaged ones; up to 400 USD
- o Moderate rehabilitation to already existing units/ damaged ones; between 400 USD and 1,000 USD.

- **Shelter establishment**

It depends on what specific material and space the affected population would prefer, and it ranges between (1,500 USD and 3,500 USD). Please refer to the SNFI Cluster [\*\*Dignified Shelters Technical Guidance\*\*](#).

The cost might exceed here 10%-20% depending on specific vulnerabilities and specific humanitarian cases.



*Decision makers, supported by shelter and settlement and cash experts, as well as advisors from other fields, choose which modality or combination of modalities to apply, based on the findings of the assessment of local market capacities. In order to determine whether CVA is feasible, it is necessary to determine whether working through the local market is feasible.*

## Transferred Currencies

- **USD** as much as possible to preserve the value of the cash assistance and protect the purchasing power of recipient HHs.
- **SYP or TRY** may be considered as alternative currencies, if local/current context justifies; and provided decision is consulted with the CWG, donor, and partners in the same area.

There may be key considerations in currency decisions that humanitarian actors are best placed to decide on, in agreement with stakeholders. Such key considerations should include timely delivery, do-no-harm principles, cost efficiency and cost-effectiveness

## Targeting Strategy

- Coordinate with the Shelter NFI Cluster on the plans and scope of work.
- Be guided through the **Shelter NFI Cluster DIGNIFIED SHELTERS TECHNICAL GUIDANCE** and **SHELTER REPAIR AND REHABILITATION GUIDELINES**.
- Initiate focus group discussions that can guide on shelter type and materials that will also help addressing acute needs. Consider gender participation in the discussion and taking decision.
- Split the Cash amount on multiple installments vs. achievements.
- Do contract with the direct beneficiaries and sign the required documents that include the BOQs and designs details.
- Do Check and verify HLP documents to avoid ejection incidents and adhere to the HLP DD.
- Ensure building the capacity and experience of the field staff.
- Do monitor through all the programme phases and update the tools and reports accordingly.

## Coordination

- Ensure the sites selected aren't overlapping with other humanitarian actors through engaging the cluster and sharing the required plans and reports.
- Reach to the required stakeholders and communicate on the earlier stages in the field.
- Engagement and coordination with the affected population is also a good practice.



## Quality Assurance & Quality Control

Humanitarian workers are accountable to affected populations and enjoy full responsibilities to deliver good quality humanitarian services.

- Ensure the implementation quality in all project phases and designs.
- Harmonize and unify the Quality Assurance & Quality Control processes in the implementation of shelter activities.
- Organize and structure the available Quality Assurance & Quality Control.

Please ensure that Quality Assurance & Quality Control is an ongoing process through all the programme phases (before, during and after implementation).

## Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

In order to ensure good quality programme implementation please ensure developing SOP covering the following:

- Criteria of selecting the site/ unit/ beneficiaries
- Identification of the needs in the sites
- Protection consideration; PWDs, Gender, Fire hazards, Privacy, Security, IDPs movements
- Verification and assessment
- Markets, modalities, and capacity
- Shelter service delivery
- Reporting
- Roles and Responsibilities; Stakeholders, local communities, IDPs representatives, Staff, site management and inter-sectoral actors.

## Risk Management

Cash interventions always involve a range of risks and liabilities for the shelter sector that should be balanced with the cost-efficiency and choice it provides. In the design phase of the shelter programme, ensure taking into account valid related risks to the scope of work. Design this section addressing financial, access, human resources, logistics, operational and cross cutting risks. It is recommended to consider targeting related risks and revisiting the damaged units for improvements in a context so similar to NWS where the sites and units could be directly targeted and damaged eventually. Technical risks measure should be taken into account.



## Assessment, Monitoring & Analysis

- Decisions on modality (Cash for shelter) must be based on market assessment & analysis beside considering technical capacity within the implementing NGO. Essential assessments highlight the state and capacity of markets relevant to the shelter response, the most important being the labour, service and commodities market (building materials, tools, transportation), the property market in terms of available land, but also Housing Land and Property (HLP) rights, as well as an assessment of financial service providers.
- Proper assessment helps on selecting the transfer mechanisms.
- A rigorous monitoring and evaluation system is essential to ensure that people not only received the cash but also to what extent the use of cash enabled the project to reach its objectives. Monitoring and evaluation should also consider the wider intended and unintended impacts of cash transfers, such as those on market systems or social dynamics.
- Cash intervention requires high monitoring and specifically for shelter it needs technical attention while monitoring. Technical staff has to be heavily engaged in implementation and monitoring. It is recommended to hire female staff members for the process and encourage reaching/ communicating with female HHs and beneficiaries.

*For an effective shelter and settlement monitoring, vouchers should be tracked as vouchers, while cash should be tracked unconditionally or conditionally. Tranches of cash or voucher delivery for construction programmes should be linked with regular monitoring of the construction works according to local or locally agreed building standards.*

- Before implementation: Conduct deep technical assessment, check and validate these assessments results, use validated tools, and check lists, use the recommended designs and clarify the activity to the proposed beneficiaries, sign MOUs and contracts.
- During implementation: Do quality monitor field visits, check the progress, participate in the inspection, update the tools.
- After implementation: Participate in the handover, use the validated tools, documentation, and contracts. Monitor within 3-4 months post-distribution; complement PDM with focused group discussion.

*Good programming always suggests that market assessments should be carried out whether in-kind or Cash Transfer Programme modalities are considered, as part of a context analysis and holistic approach to humanitarian assistance. Market accessibility and items availability are crucial to be addressed in the cash for shelter intervention.*



## Key Messages

- Cash is not an end in itself. The decision to use cash or vouchers for shelter should be based on the Syrian context and the objectives of the emergency, transitional and dignified shelter intervention.
- Whilst cash transfer can be an important component of a transitional shelter or dignified shelter projects, by supplementing or replacing in-kind assistance, such as shelter materials, tools or skilled labour; this will generally have to be supported by a broader package of in-kind and/or technical support and training.
- It is possible to use cash in NWS, although of course security will be a greater consideration. However, the more innovative means of transferring money electronically mean that beneficiaries could be potentially less at risk than through direct distributions of in-kind assistance as in some conflicts, cash can be delivered more discreetly.
- Often the use of cash has been seen as more cost effective, allowing people greater choice and dignity, creating greater multiplier effects in local economies however more rigorous evaluations are need specifically in relation to cost benefit comparisons with in-kind assistance and/or contractor modalities.
- Preparedness is essential. Capacity building of all the roles involved in implementing cash for shelter is needed.
- Adopt more complementary approach of cash and in-kind/technical assistance
- Obviously if the shelter items are available in the market, then it can give people much greater choices in building materials – this comes with caveat that technical support and training are also needed as a complement to cash based shelter responses.
- Cash for shelter enable beneficiaries to do some savings and add additional items/ works to better improve the living conditions and address their exact needs.
- Elderly, women, children and PWDs are recommended to be supported by the filed technical staff and capacity to receive the cash and improve the shelter conditions.

### **General Recommendations:**

- *Enable vulnerable group access to dignified shelter and develop/ improve their own shelter units through self-help modality.*
- *Avoid causing Harm.*
- *Consider protection mainstreaming.*
- *Enhance affected population's safety and dignity in shelter and through proper aid delivery and technical follow up and monitoring.*





## Why delivering cash for shelter is essential and worth advocating for and programming?

Using cash transfer programme in shelter can provides the following:

- Dignity
- Flexibility and choice
- Cost efficient for agencies and participants
- Multiplier effects: By stimulating local markets, cash- based interventions may benefit more than the direct recipients of cash. Local traders and service providers, transport workers and suppliers and transporters of goods may all benefit from households having money to spend
- Supports or revitalises local trade and economic recovery: Cash-based support for livelihood rehabilitation can potentially also provide a link between relief and longer- term economic recovery and may offer the opportunity for beneficiaries to increase income and create savings.
- Reduces negative coping strategies.

## Questions to ask

- Could the affected population meet their sheltering needs, if they had cash?
- Can local markets provide construction materials and services at required quantity and quality levels?
- Can people access cash safely?
- Are there implications of regulations governing flow of funds, money transfers, which impact CVA?
- Is CVA accepted by targeted households, local authorities?
- Can all selected households, including the most vulnerable, access financial service points or traders easily in the selected areas?
- What could prevent them from benefitting from the CVA?
- Do targeted households have access to markets, materials, financial services, etc.?
- Should the CVA cover the complete cost of a construction/service, or just parts of it?
- How should the payments be split into tranches, in order to increase the oversight over the construction process and the achievement of construction milestones?
- Do conditional grants in multiple tranches include the definition of construction milestones (conditions), the timeframe for each step, and the value of each transfer, as well as possible own contributions (material or labour)?



**Key Question to be asked:**

*Is consultation and coordination taking place at all levels, among shelter partners, Clusters and with all levels of local authorities on the selection of the most vulnerable areas? And how far the organization is capable to provide technical guidance and support to the most vulnerable groups (mainly, elderly women and children headed HHs)?*

*This document is authored by Mohammed Alamir on behalf of the NW Syria Shelter NFI Cluster in collaboration with the cluster SAG, CWG and ERL Cluster*

*The Cluster Coordination Team*

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| <b>Mohammed Alamir</b><br>Cluster Co-Chair<br><a href="mailto:coord.turkey@sheltercluster.org">coord.turkey@sheltercluster.org</a><br>+90 505 044 2820 | <b>Alex Reigber</b><br>Cluster Support Officer<br><a href="mailto:reigber@unhcr.org">reigber@unhcr.org</a><br>+90 530 282 7883                          | <b>Fredrika Moberg</b><br>Reporting Officer<br><a href="mailto:moberg@unhcr.org">moberg@unhcr.org</a><br>+90 534 274 27 47  |
| <b>Zeynep Beyazay</b><br>Data Management Associate<br><a href="mailto:beyazay@unhcr.org">beyazay@unhcr.org</a><br>+90 535 867 8940                     | <b>Mahmoud Abo Shaabo</b><br>Information Management Officer<br><a href="mailto:mahmoud.shaabo@care.org">mahmoud.shaabo@care.org</a><br>+90 534 584 4448 | <b>Tarik Temir</b><br>Data Management Associate<br><a href="mailto:temir@unhcr.org">temir@unhcr.org</a><br>+90 534 891 3894 |

