

Cash-Based Assistance for Individual Shelter Solutions

This document is intended to support those practitioners, donors, government and non-governmental actors considering or already delivering cash-based shelter solutions in Myanmar, as well as those involved in camp management, resettlement and return, and cluster coordination.

Cash-Based Assistance for Shelter

Cash-Based Assistance (CBA) offers flexibility and adaptability in the design and construction of homes and produces a strong sense of ownership and autonomy for beneficiaries. CBAs enable affected populations to make decisions according to their own priorities, boost local markets, and cost less than other aid options.

Key Question: How can we ensure that people rebuild well-designed structures using quality materials and safe construction techniques? How can we ensure SPHERE & DRR standards and a “do no harm” approach?

Common Shelter Realities

- People improvise.
- Shelter types, plot size, and household needs vary greatly.
- Housing affordability and secure land tenure are priorities shared by both the host community and IDPs.
- People move between places and their statuses change.
- Shelter construction will vary based on pre-existing conditions of inequality.

Cash Grant Distribution

Most cash grants for shelter are distributed in phases that correspond to compliance guidelines. In some settings, cash may be preferred to banking or mobile banking options. Traditional financial management systems may also be an appropriate option in some contexts, so long as they have been vetted for safety and security. Recommendations for successful cash-transfers in sensitive communities include:

- *Transparency* – Ensuring that the relevant public has access to information is essential. Selection criteria and processes, distribution amounts and schedules, and beneficiary lists need to be shared in a public setting.
- *Consistency* – Implementing actors must commit to a common strategy that includes selection criteria, cash amounts, and distribution schedule, and clarify which decisions are made by individual agencies.
- *Inclusion* – Reducing bias in aid delivery requires a critical approach to targeting that takes seriously the issue of exclusion and robust grievance and redress mechanisms that solicit a diversity of opinions.

CBA: A “Market-Driven” Approach

CBAs provide a “market-driven” approach that requires knowledge of local markets, efficient accounting systems, and regular monitoring. While experience shows that cash grants are used to cover immediate needs such as purchasing plots of land and rebuilding housing, some surplus may be spent on small-scale income-generating activities or other spending priorities.

<i>Local Economy</i>	<i>Local Housing Market</i>	<i>Local Practices and Histories</i>
*What is the local infrastructure for cash distribution? *What is the impact of injecting cash into the local economy? *Can the local market respond to greater demand for building materials, skilled labor, and rental markets? *How do social networks and trust affect local purchasing behavior?	*Will IDPs increase the demand for housing? *Will cash transfers cause (rental) price inflation? *Will new construction help to curb housing price inflation?	*What are the local building materials and designs? *How might they be adapted or improved for risks, safety, and environmental impact? *What type of “permanent shelters” existed in the area prior? *What types of assistance have they received in the past?

CBA: Local “Area Coordination” Approach

Geographic coordination includes mapping actors at the village or area level, building relationships with local leaders, and integrating assistance into broader community plans to ensure more coordinated infrastructure (especially water, sewage, and electricity) and comprehensive disaster-risk reduction.

Site planning and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

These processes can engage both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in incremental community improvements that may include:

- Mapping hazards and community facilities
- Reducing standing water
- Improving drainage systems for flooding
- Monitoring roof rainwater run-off
- Organizing safe electrification
- Coordinating WaSH facilities
- Repairing footpaths
- Making an evacuation plan

Common Challenges

Defining “vulnerable” and managing expectations

- Targeting continues to be controversial when perceived bias creates problems with residents and government. Since shelter solutions in particular cannot be separated from long-term development, clarifying and communicating criteria, procedures, goals and limitations to *all* stakeholders is important.

Reducing tensions between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries

- Demonstrating trustworthiness over time and thoughtful consideration of broader community benefits will improve integration. For example, providing effective, standardized training in local languages to both those receiving and not receiving direct aid or enabling cost reduction by coordinating mass purchasing for items like solar lighting for night safety can help build social networks.

Limited government capacity to allocate land or resolve land-related issues

- Unclear and transitioning legal structures, contestation over land, and urbanization all create an environment where ensuring land tenure for IDPs is challenging. Common risks include land-grabbing, intimidation tactics, lack of tenure documentation, politicized urban land, and ethnic tensions. Portability of shelter may eliminate fears of eviction and the loss of a high-value asset.

Effective monitoring and inclusive feedback mechanisms

- Monitoring systems may enable timely assistance, support adherence to safety standards, and reduce corruption in an effort to build capacity and reduce dependency. Monitoring teams may interface in confidence with minorities, women, illiterate individuals, and those excluded from other feedback mechanisms.

Clarifying roles and sharing liability and risk

- Current models may provide a mechanism for clarify the role of the international non-governmental humanitarian actors and the role of the government, the role of one sector in relation to other sectors, and the role of a single organization as part of a group of organization, to allocate resources efficiently and promote accountability.

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