

# Gender and Cash Based Assistance in Humanitarian Contexts: An Agenda for Collective Action

March 2018

In February 2018, a symposium in Nairobi on “Gender and Cash Based Assistance” brought together 100 senior managers, technical advisors, researchers and other disaster management practitioners with national, regional and global mandates. An agenda for immediate action was identified.

Existing gender inequalities mean that disasters and conflicts impact women, men, girls and boys differently. Cash based assistance is one of the most significant recent developments in humanitarian assistance in recent years. But the relationship between gender and cash based assistance in humanitarian contexts is poorly understood.

All too often, cash based assistance is designed based on assumptions rather than evidence. While learning from development contexts is helpful, the relevance of these findings to humanitarian action is often untested. As a result, many interventions fail to capitalise on opportunities to foster positive gender impacts or, worse still, have unintended negative consequences.

This six-point agenda requires action by different teams within organisations and a collective effort by all humanitarian actors - implementing partners and donors alike. Substantial improvement can only be made if all actors involved in cash based assistance:

1. **Commit to Action.** Gender specific needs and impacts must be fully considered in all cash based assistance, and these considerations must drive real changes in the way we work. This requires leadership commitment, as well as the allocation of adequate staff, time and financial resources.
2. **Fill the Evidence Gaps.** Research is needed to address the multiple evidence gaps that exist. There is need to further examine the impact of different types of cash based assistance on gender dynamics in different humanitarian contexts; examine the gender dimensions of markets and how they change during a crisis; explore how different types of cash based assistance can be used to empower women and girls in various humanitarian settings; review how short-term cash based assistance can be linked to complementary initiatives; assess whether cash based assistance can help build a foundation for longer-term recovery and transformative gender programming; consider outcomes when a gender analysis has been applied compared to when not; and determine how the protection impacts (positive and negative) of cash based assistance can be measured in humanitarian settings.
3. **Ensure Assessments Consider Gender Adequately.** Assessments, including rapid and market assessments, must consider gender. Action must be taken to mitigate against gender-based violence or wider protection risks which may result from programmatic decisions. This means intentionally assessing the potential impact of cash based assistance on women, men, girls and boys as distinct groups and recognising diversity within these groups. There is need to avoid assumptions when identifying women or men as the primary recipients of cash transfers within households. Learning needs to be systematically shared and used. These steps must be built into existing procedures, guidance and standards used at every level of humanitarian response.
4. **Design Programmes for Equality.** Simply providing cash does not necessarily result in empowerment or help achieve greater equality. Programmes should be designed to address the causes of inequality, looking for opportunities to link cash based assistance with gender programmes. Building on context-specific analysis, there is a need to intentionally use conditionality and complementary programmes to address gender inequality. Humanitarian actors need to liaise with development actors to ensure that cash

based assistance considers and builds on existing gender programmes and does not inadvertently undermine them. These steps must also be built into existing procedures, guidance and standards.

- 5. Systematically Monitor and Respond to Protection Issues.** Monitoring protection issues, including the risk of gender based violence, should be the norm in all programmes involving cash based assistance. Findings should be reported to relevant specialists and authorities and acted on with urgency. Protection monitoring must inform adaptations in design and implementation to ensure safety and inclusion. Protection monitoring should be integrated into existing procedures, guidance and standards for cash based assistance.
- 6. Build Capacity and Work Together Better.** Cash, gender and protection specialists need to work together to increase understanding of cash and gender in all sectors and ensure quality programming. This may require changing structures or ways of working to support better collaboration. Where needed, investment must be made in staff development to support the mainstreaming of gender and protection into cash based assistance. The best available evidence and guidance on the intersection between gender, cash based assistance and protection should be integrated into existing resources and training courses.

To realise the potential benefits of cash based assistance for everyone, there is need to foster dialogue between cash, gender and protection actors. Actors from different sectors need to work together, share experiences and learning, and address gaps and overlaps. This also requires improving coordination between clusters and cash working groups. We need to create opportunities to learn from government experiences with social protection systems and use evidence from development programmes, testing the learning and ensuring its applicability in different contexts.

Driving forward this Agenda for Action will contribute to delivering on Grand Bargain and other major cash based assistance commitments summarised in the [Global Framework for Action](#). Equally, these actions will contribute to promoting gender equality in line with the commitments made within Sustainable Development Goal 5. Further, the actions are aligned with commitments made in the Core Humanitarian Standards and support the application of established good practice. The need is clear, and we have already committed to action to improve the impact of cash based assistance on gender outcomes. Now is the time to act.

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The Gender and Cash Based Assistance Symposium was jointly organised by CaLP, the Women's Refugee Commission, Adeso, Norwegian Refugee Commission and Oxfam. Information and a list of attendees can be found [here](#).

For information about gender and cash based assistance:

- See CaLP's themed page on [gender, protection and CTP](#)
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