Concept note

Regional conversations: CVA and risks in West and Central Africa

Context

According to the State of the World’s Cash Report, the biggest barrier to more effective and extensive usage of CVA is the perceived risks of CVA, mainly because of concerns about misappropriation or leakage of cash.

Panellists and participants of the 2017 Grand Bargain Cash Workstream Workshop (31 May – 1 June) agreed that the existing evidence did not show cash to be riskier than other modalities and pointed out that no delivery modalities are risk free. However, specifically in conflict environments where the threats posed by armed groups are real and where access and oversight are restricted, agencies highlighted a need for more evidence on effective safeguards for CVA.

In 2018 and 2019, CaLP conducted a variety of activities on CVA and risk, with the goal to lower the barriers and constraints of systematic adoption and consideration of CVA. Building evidence and learning from specific contexts was one part of this endeavour; including the development of case studies on CVA in Northern Mali and Yemen. Together with WFP, CaLP is co-hosting a working group on CVA and risk to convene actors on CVA and risk in challenging contexts. In April 2019, CaLP together with the OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data and generous support of ICRC convened a Data Responsibility event in Geneva. The workshop brought together twenty participants representing 12 CaLP member agencies and set out to understand the gaps in the existing guidance on Data Responsibility in CVA. Although data responsibility is seen as important in the sector, the workshop participants agreed that it is still by and large considered to be somewhat theoretical and more relevant in the world of big tech - despite recent wake-up calls. In the first quarter of 2019, CaLP has commissioned a Scoping Study on CVA risks in financial management and compliance and is currently working on an executive summary which will be published in around August 2019.

Panellists and participants of the 2019 Grand Bargain Cash Workstream Workshop (16 – 17 May) acknowledged the significant progress on understanding risk, including a growing focus on data. For the second part of 2019, CaLP is focusing on increased learning in different regions through organizing and co-organizing a variety of learning events and workshop around CVA and risk, tentatively in the Middle East, in East Africa and in West Africa, while making sure to that learning from implementation of CVA in these areas feed into global discussions.

CVA and risk in West and Central Africa

The region is facing several violent crises. In Cameroon, the Chad Lake Basin, DRC and CAR conflicts have been going on for years. Tension is also increasing dramatically across the Sahel, raising in considerable protection concerns for populations in affected areas.
In all these countries, CVA is being implemented across all these countries. Despite operational challenges and limited facilities to deliver assistance, an increasing number of organizations, across sectors are embracing CVA as a tool to provide relief including in remote and insecure areas.

CVA and risks have come at the frontline of practitioners’ discussions, especially risks related to beneficiaries’ protection and risks related to working with non-humanitarian partners and private sector actors. These risks are inter-connected and – if not properly managed – can severely harm programme quality and impact, and ultimately can have very negative consequences for the people in need.

To avoid and mitigate such risks, CaLP, with generous support from USAID, is convening actors for two events, to share information about risk, to share learning, and jointly work towards mitigating these risks. The reflections and learnings from these workshops will inform global work on the topic.

**Event 1: Workshop on mitigating CVA risks in challenging contexts**

The purpose of the workshop is to convene humanitarian CVA practitioners working in conflict-affected contexts, with particular focus on CAR, Cameroon and Nigeria, but open to DRC, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso. Participation will be restricted, and discussions will remain confidential to ensure rich experience sharing even on the most challenging aspects.

**Activities:**

- Identify and share experience about CVA-related risks (e.g. related to fraud, data protection, abuse of power, protection)
- Identifying mitigation measures and assess efficiency, also based on case studies on CVA risk in challenging contexts (Yemen, Mali)
- Identify ways to coordinate and collaborate on risk analysis, among participants, but also with donors, other implementing partners, and the private sector
- Share up-to-date information about data responsibility, risks related to financial management and compliance, risks of abuse of power, etc.
- Documenting mitigation measures that worked out well for each context, assess what could be replicable / what can be set as “good practice”
- Define next steps to improve existing mitigation measures, to implement additional measures and to improve collaboration/coordination around risk

**Objectives:**

- Document good practice and possibly develop context-specific guidance to mitigate protection-related risks in CVA in conflict-affected areas.
- Raise awareness about CVA-related risks such as financial management, compliance, data responsibility

**Tentative Location and date:**

- Yaoundé, Cameroon
- Late Octobre 2019

**Participants:**
• Ideally 30 participants, from CVA implementing UN Agencies, INGOs, NGOs, and the Red Cross Movement. Participation of the World Bank to be considered.
• Profiles: CVA experts, Protection advisors, M&E advisors.

Event 2: Panels and roundtable discussions about the challenges and opportunities of increased collaboration between humanitarian organizations working in CVA and the private sector

The purpose of the workshop is to improve collaboration between humanitarian and private sector actors, while raising awareness about potential risks, challenges and opportunities. This event would ideally be co-organized by private sector actors, CaLP and major humanitarian actors actively engaged with the private sector. It would convene actors from all the region.

Activities:
• Presentation and panel discussion on data responsibility in CVA and associated risks (to affected populations, implementing organisations and FSPs)
• Presentation and panel discussion on what impact the tightening of financial management and compliance has on CVA implementation and what mitigation is possible
• Presentation and panel discussion on risk of abuse of power in humanitarian CVA of recipient population by various actors in the delivery chain
• Break-out groups on the above-mentioned topics, with participants representing different stakeholders and the respective panellists, to identify best practices, discuss gaps, agree on ways of working, and next steps
• Define agenda for collective action based on output from the break-out groups

Objective:
• Increase mutual understanding of the challenges and opportunities of increased collaboration between humanitarian organizations working in CVA and the private sector
• Identify constructive ways of working to improve efficiency of partnerships between the private sector and humanitarian actors to improve the experience of CVA for affected populations, specifically around data responsibility issues, financial management, and risks of abuse of power.
• Define the agenda for collective action for increased collaboration between private sector and humanitarian actors

Tentative Location and date:
• Dakar, Senegal
• November 2019

Participants
• Up to 90 participants from private sector, INGOs, local NGOs, UN agencies, the Red Cross movement, donors, the World Bank. Participation of governments to be considered.
• Profiles: Heads of programmes, protection advisors, CVA experts, social protection specialists.