The ERC-funded Consortium for the Uptake of Multi-purpose Grants

Learning and Ways Forward from the Final Symposium

Addis Ababa, 26-27 April 2018
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Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BNA</td>
<td>Basic Needs Assessment or Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CaLP</td>
<td>Cash Learning Partnership</td>
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<td>CBI</td>
<td>Cash Based Interventions</td>
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<td>CCD</td>
<td>Collaborative Cash Delivery</td>
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<td>CGD</td>
<td>Community Group Discussion</td>
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<td>CTP</td>
<td>Cash Transfer Programming</td>
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<td>CWG</td>
<td>Cash Working Group</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Danish Refugee Council</td>
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<td>ECHO</td>
<td>European Commission’s Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations</td>
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<td>ERC</td>
<td>Enhanced Response Capacity</td>
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<td>ES/NFI</td>
<td>Emergency Shelter / Non-food Items</td>
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<td>FSP</td>
<td>Financial Service Provider</td>
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<td>GCCCG</td>
<td>Global Cluster Coordinators Group</td>
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<td>HCT</td>
<td>Humanitarian Country Team</td>
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<td>HHI</td>
<td>Household Interview</td>
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<td>HNO</td>
<td>Humanitarian Needs Overview</td>
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<td>HPC</td>
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Executive Summary

This report documents the discussions held at the final symposium hosted by Save the Children (Addis Ababa, 26th-27th April), which closed the two-year ECHO ERC-funded Consortium for the uptake of quality, collaborative, multipurpose grants (MPGs) (hereinafter, MPG Consortium). Further learning, with a focus on collaboration as opposed to the Consortium’s tools and their future uptake, is documented in the two Lessons Learned reports that CaLP produced on the pilots in Nigeria and Ethiopia.

Key themes that emerged from the Symposium focus around the importance of:

- Ownership of the tools to ensure wider buy-in. This includes ownership both in the strategic sense (who will advocate and mobilise resources for their use in responses) and the technical sense (who will make use of the tools and produce information to inform response programming and tool revisions). These are likely to be two different sets of actors, with potential strategic ownership held by groups such as the Global Clusters Coordinators Group at global level, Inter-Cluster/Sector Coordination Groups at country level, and technical expertise situated within assessment specialist organisations (such as REACH) and or mobile cash experts like the CashCap deployees.

- However, it is important to draw a distinction between who will advocate for and technically lead on the cash-specific tools (i.e. the cash feasibility assessments, the Financial Service Provider Assessment, the Multi-Sector Market Assessment, and the Monitoring Tools for MPGs) and who will perform this role for the broader tools (i.e. the Basic Needs Assessment (BNA) Guidance and Toolkit and Response Options Analysis and Planning (ROAP) Facilitator’s Guide). Cash Working Groups are well placed to perform both a strategic and technical role for the former as they could advocate for the use of the cash-specific tools for the good of the humanitarian community in country. On the other hand, the Inter Cluster Coordination Groups are better placed to lead on advocating for and implementing the BNA and ROAP as tools that produce evidence and guide responses that not uniquely cash-based. Ownership is particularly important for the multi-sectoral tools (such as the BNA and ROAP that challenge the status quo, don’t readily fit within anyone’s mandate and will therefore require advocacy efforts).

- Piloting is required to generate evidence of the tools’ use. For the tools to be adopted within the current system where it is not possible to impose any particular way of doing things, and recognising the sensitivities around some of these tools, there is a clear need to build the evidence base on how the tools work and their
potential impact. Without such evidence, it will be very challenging to effectively advocate for their use and to eventually see a more strategic level uptake and a change in the system.

- Having the necessary people in the conversation and aware of the Consortium’s tools to ensure the tools and responses are appropriate and useful and ultimately to ensure broader buy-in. Cash experts alone cannot deliver successful MPGs because a) they are an inherently multi-sector response as the cash can be used to meet needs across sectors and b) cash alone is very rarely the most effective response as it only tackles the lack of purchasing power when generally there are a multitude of underlying issues that lead to unmet needs. It is therefore necessary to include a diversity of actors across varying levels (global, national, local), areas of expertise (sectors, cash), and roles in the system (donor, government, implementor, affected community).

- Collaboration between these groups (across levels, clusters, and roles) to ensure CTP and MPG that consider cross-sector needs and treat the person a whole. Coordination structures and processes need to be in place to facilitate collaboration (during needs and context assessments, response options analysis and planning, and monitoring), especially across sectors, but the role they play should be carefully considered. For example, Cash Working Groups are key to some elements of cash programming such as encouraging standardised / best practice and either promoting or directly producing community goods such as Minimum Expenditure Baskets (MEBs), but MPG need to have input from those outside the (usually) FSL-heavy CWGs.

- Contextualisation, modularisation, and de-cashing of the BNA and ROAP. These large tools are currently seen as cash specific (although they were designed to and can support a range of decisions around a range of non-cash programme response including in-kind and service provision). To ensure wide and flexible uptake and a smoothing of the process by which they are implemented the tools (the BNA and ROAP especially) need to be tested in wider range of contexts and presented in a way that encourages users to use them in a way that is most useful for their particular demands.

- The features of the enabling environment that make it more of less likely that cash will be considered as an response option. This covers the attitude of key stakeholders (donors, governments, coordination groups at all levels, NGOs, UN bodies) and the resources, both human and financial, available to design and deliver quality programmes. Whilst these are flexible issues (trainings on CTP can be given and resources mobilised) there is a need to consider how these

- Communication to key stakeholders (which will vary by tool) on the existence and potential of the tools so that they can make informed decision about when they might be useful to use them.

- Trainings delivered to key assessment stakeholders (both technical experts and, where appropriate, enumerators) to ensure their capacity to gather and analyse data to inform response analysis and programme design (using the BNA, the Multi-Sector Market Assessment (MSMA), and Financial Service Provider (FSP) Guidance), conduct response options analysis (using the ROAP), and monitor MPG programmes (using the Monitoring for MPG tools) in ways that ensure the delivery, where MPGs are appropriate, of efficient and effective MPGs that meet the needs of the people they aim to help.

The Consortium and the Symposium highlighted the importance of each of these issues taken both in isolation and in conjunction with one another.

An overview of the Consortium

The ECHO ERC-funded Consortium was built on the UNHCR-led ERC project that released the MPG Guidance & Toolkit in 2015. Between May 2016 and April 2018, the Consortium designed and piloted processes and tools to enhance inter-agency capacity to devise emergency responses that take MPGs to scale. It sought to address inefficiencies
related to the multitude of assessment efforts and response plans produced by multiple actors, which limit both the quality and scale of the responses.

The Consortium built on existing approaches, aiming to support situation analysis and – based on its findings - produce an analysis of humanitarian response options that is better structured, more robust, transparent, and people-centred, and that makes more effective and wider use of MPGs, if and when appropriate and feasible.

This is in line with the Grand Bargain commitments (on increased collaborative cash-based programming, improved joint needs assessments, and creating a participation revolution) and the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers.

The Consortium was led by Save the Children and consists of the Cash Learning Platform (CaLP), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Mercy Corps, and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

How the Consortium supported humanitarian responses at global and country levels

Whilst the Consortium was not conceived to provide direct assistance to crisis-affected populations, it was intended to have an indirect, positive impact on their lives, by influencing humanitarian actors to design better quality, more collaborative MPG programmes. The tools, guidance, trainings, and approaches were designed to be used across a wide range of contexts and different humanitarian actors.

To test and refine the tools and approaches, the Consortium conducted two pilots. The first of these took place in Borno State, Nigeria, between February and September 2017, and the second in the Somali Region of Ethiopia between November 2017 and March 2018. Sequential pilots in different contexts meant that the Consortium were able to test their approach in the varied contexts whilst also benefitting from the learning of the pilots to identify some key lessons.

For more information on the learning from these pilots please see the two Lessons Learned reports released by CaLP and published on their website.

Through an ‘MPG set of approaches and tools’ the Consortium...

| Created an enabling environment: Provided strategic leadership at country level to facilitate MPG feasibility and appropriateness assessments, integration of MPG programming into the humanitarian programme cycle and coordination platforms, and consideration of MPGs in strategic preparedness and response discussions. | Provided timely technical support to facilitate harmonised design of MPGs: Developed and adapted tools to benefit global development of MPG programmes. | Evaluated efficiency and effectiveness of MPGs to meet humanitarian needs: Developed an overarching framework for Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL); examined the catalysts and barriers to increasing the efficient and effective use of MPGs at scale. |
| Responsibility of OCHA and CaLP | Responsibility of DRC, Mercy Corps and Save the Children | Responsibility of CaLP and DRC |
The Symposium

At the end of April 2018 Save the Children hosted an event entitled ‘The uptake of multipurpose grants in humanitarian response plans: lessons and ways forward from the MPG Consortium pilots in Nigeria and Ethiopia’. This event was a culmination of the previous two years’ work and took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on the 26th and 27th of April. Along with representatives from the ERC MPG Consortium, the event was attended by donors, UN country and global-level Cluster and Cash Working Group representatives, and NGOs who were involved in the pilots.

The purpose of the event was to agree how the work undertaken by the ERC MPG Consortium will be taken forward, scaled up, and institutionalized in future humanitarian responses. The Consortium’s work was not only about MPGs, but also more broadly about how cash can be best situated within a wider humanitarian response that is designed to help people meet their basic needs in a crisis in a more holistic way than is the normal reality.

With the above objective in mind, the event was designed and facilitated so as to offer an opportunity for country, regional, and global-level stakeholders to take stock and discuss learning from the two pilots, and to debate how this could and should be applied to other contexts. The intention was to stimulate thinking and help improve organisational and inter-organisational practice for a more systematic consideration and incorporation of MPG within humanitarian response plans.

More specifically, the Symposium sought to discuss and if possible find answers to the following questions on process, collaboration, funding, and ownership.

- What limitations relating to processes did you observe in the Consortium, from your own experience of its work? And how could these be best addressed in future?
- If a similar process of situation and response analysis is replicated elsewhere, which features of the Consortium’s collaboration framework should be maintained and which altered? And how?
- What can / should be done to facilitate ownership and institutionalisation of the project’s tools, and their future uptake in other locations and contexts?
- What are the funding and resourcing implications of adopting a consortium-based approach for the uptake of MPGs in a humanitarian response plan?

Due to the nature of the Consortium’s work the discussions at the Symposium focused on the Consortium’s tools and approaches, and their roll-out in the two pilots, rather than examining more broadly others’ experiences and learning around MPGs and their uptake. The tools and approaches discussed at the event included: the Basic Needs Assessment (BNA) Guidance and Toolbox, the Payments Mechanism Guidance, the Response Options Analysis and Planning (ROAP) Facilitator’s Guide, and the Monitoring Tools and Guidance for MPGs. In addition, the Multi-Sector Market Assessment developed by UNHCR and piloted by the Consortium was discussed in detail.

This report looks at each tool in turn, outlining their aim, noting the relevant learning that emerged from the pilots and the Symposium as it relates to the four areas of interest outlined above and the proposed ways forward. It then looks at some overarching themes that emerged from the Symposium based on the questions above.

Basic Needs Assessment Guidance and Toolkit

People-centred response plans should be primarily informed by the priorities of affected people and the reasons why their needs remain unmet, as well as by their assistance preferences. Generally, humanitarian needs assessments do not investigate these from this perspective and, as a result, the choice of assistance modality (in-kind, direct service delivery, cash-based intervention) is driven by the experience and mandate of the cluster/sector globally and in country. In addition, there is a significant variation in clusters’/sectors’ ability to consider cash-based interventions as a possibility. The lack of coherent, collective, and comprehensive (basic) needs analysis in many contexts is a well-

recognised problem and one that the Joint Inter-sector Analysis Group (JIAG), which has been formed under the auspices of the Grand Bargain, is currently trying to address through a review of existing needs assessments and the development of an inter-sector analytical framework, which includes the Basic Needs Assessment Guidance and Toolkit (BNA).

The BNA is a multi-sector needs assessment methodology developed by Save the Children. It is viewed by many as a game changer because, unlike other assessment tools, it genuinely tries to “put people in the centre”. With its focus on beneficiaries’ preferences and perspectives on priorities for assistance the BNA makes the necessary shift to ensuring affected people are not passive recipients of aid but actors that make decisions, prioritise their needs, and routinely interact with markets or (public/semi-public) service providers.

The BNA produces a ranking of priorities for assistance from the perspective of the population. It provides information on the access, availability, and quality constraints people face in securing what they need from local service providers and markets, and the perceived severity of related humanitarian consequences. The BNA quantifies what basic needs mean for a community, why – according to members of that community – these needs are unmet, and how they would like to be assisted. This holistic, people-centred approach spans the sectors, bringing them together to consider the people holistically. The BNA uses both secondary and primary data; the latter is collected in the field using two main data collection techniques, Community Group Discussions (CGDs) and Household interviews (HHIs).

The BNA can inform response programmes in all humanitarian sectors; however, its findings are best complemented through local experts’ knowledge of the context and in-depth assessments that sectors may require. While the BNA may contribute to addressing existing analysis gaps it is not, nor was it ever intended to be, a silver bullet but rather a complementary tool.

Roll-out process

The BNA takes time to implement, a luxury not always available in emergency contexts. Sufficient lead time is necessary for: secondary data review, contextual adaptation of the questionnaires and their coded version when using tablets, translation of the questionnaires to local language as necessary, re-calculating sample sizes based on changing conditions, training enumerators, securing necessary approvals from local officials, piloting the questionnaire and making final changes prior to roll-out, data analysis, validation and interpretation of the findings with sector experts, and – finally - reporting.

However, there are several ways in which the tools and their sequencing can be streamlined to ensure that data is made available in a timely and less labour intensive fashion (see section Reviewing the BNA below). This can be achieved by modularising the questionnaires and / or creating digital instruments that generate samples, collect data (already available), process and analyse data, and produce infographics. Use of tablets also saves significant time during the data analysis phase and lowers the incidence of errors.

Interoperability with other assessments

The BNA clearly fills some critical information gaps, i.e. data points that are currently not covered by any other (needs) assessments currently in use. Other components of the BNA, instead, are somehow also covered by other assessments, albeit in different ways. This relationship of complementarity or overlap should be addressed on a cash-by-case basis by determining the interoperability of these tools, and being selective about the use of the tools’ components. For instance, in scenarios where a Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping (VAM) is planned by WFP, specific elements/modules/questions from the BNA could be added to the VAM questionnaires, according to what information is required. This can be achieved through the creation of modules that can be picked from the questionnaires on a need basis.
Data and methods

While quantitative data is useful, in practice the accuracy of the data remains questionable due to difficulties in implementing a proper probability-based sampling including: outdated population data and non-existent sampling frames; inaccessibility of areas due to conflict; missing households and inability to conduct repeat visits due to time constraints. Data accuracy can also be impacted by: questions that rely on long-term memory (e.g. requesting information on seasonal needs over a year or total expenditure over a month); incentives to over-report needs and under-report income in order to receive greater assistance; and the capacity and experience of enumerators and their understanding of the questionnaire, particularly when translating. In addition to sampling-related and accuracy shortcomings, quantitative data does not offer a comprehensive, deep understanding of the dynamics and pathways behind the figures. Qualitative data, including information from previous assessments, key informants, and experts, is useful and enriches BNA findings by interpreting and explaining them. While secondary data review and validation with experts are already part of the methodology, their importance should be emphasised.

Community group discussions provided useful verification and supplementary data to the household questionnaire and can be conducted in less time than a representative number of household assessments. However, group discussions are typically dominated by few individuals. One recommendation to improve (shorten and focus) the community group discussions is that they should focus on collecting data that households may not have but local leaders may be privy to (e.g. local government expenditure on providing public services).

Collaboration

Save the Children led the BNA in both pilots with data collection support from WFP and Plan International in Nigeria. The results were validated, and the tool reviewed by a group of interested sector representatives in Nigeria and this formed an important part for the process, particularly when led by external staff. The complexity of running a pilot within a very short timeframe, while still developing the guidance and tools, and in a coordinated assessment effort, induced the project team to refrain from adopting the same approach in Ethiopia. There, a deliberate decision was made to have the assessment run by Save the Children without the involvement of other agencies during the data collection and analysis phase although sectors were involved in the validation and interpretation of findings.

In future, it would be useful to pilot the BNA more collaboratively to assess if wider engagement across organisations could improve efficiency or deliver better results.

So that relevant actors are familiar with, understand the benefits of, and feel comfortable using the BNA, the tool needs to be widely disseminated and trainings provided to key users. Training should be provided via the Inter-Cluster / Sector Coordination Group (or similar bodies) to interested parties at the national and sub-national levels. Alternatively, a dedicated surge capacity could be developed (e.g. amongst CashCAP deployees or similar rosters of experts) with specific expertise on multi-sectoral needs assessments including the BNA – the advantages and limitations of the two approaches needs to be weighed.

REACH (an IMPACT and ACTED initiative), a potential future owner and expert in the BNA, believe that it is possible to roll-out joint inter-sectoral needs assessments across an entire humanitarian context and that the BNA should now be tested at this scale.

Funding

The BNA is a time and HR heavy approach. With further streamlining of the tool and practitioners gaining increased experience the costs will be brought down. However, the BNA will remain something that requires funding to conduct. To reduce the funding burden collaborative approaches are suggested (see section above).
Uptake and ownership

There is a need for strong continuous ownership of the BNA as it may take years to develop a community of practice around it. There is a need for both strategic and technical uptake and so ownership may be split for these different functions dependant on expertise and interests of specific organisations. For example, strategic uptake – which includes the mobilisation of resources – would need to be owned and championed by the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) at both national and global levels, while technical ownership – which includes the technical expertise - could be held by assessment experts such as REACH.

Whilst ownership should be held by a few key organisations it is important that the results of any BNA conducted are both validated by and shared with the humanitarian community more widely, and especially by the Cluster / Sector experts at local / national level. This includes relevant government stakeholders to build better links between humanitarian programmes and national public assistance and social security transfers.

As part of their joint leadership of the Grand Bargain workstream on improved joint inter-sector assessments (i.e. the JIAG), OCHA and ECHO have already used the BNA to inform wider discussions on needs analysis. Where the context is appropriate, OCHA can also raise awareness of the usefulness of the tool and approach, for potential use by the ICCG. ECHO and other donors could also support this effort by incentivising agencies to conduct quality needs assessments and holding them to account when they don’t do them well.

More concretely, ECHO will use the BNA (and the ROAP) to support discussions that are taking place within its Basic Needs Working Group around how cash and MPGs can be used and promoted and how quality will be ensured, and expertise involved. This working group has been nascent but will meet in November 2018 on which occasion the BNA and ROAP will be used as powerful tools to influence this conversation.

Dissemination and uptake will also be supported by including the BNA in CaLP’s Programme Quality Toolbox (PQT), as well as in CaLP’s Response Analysis training course (already included).

Reviewing the BNA

The BNA is one of the Consortium’s tools (along with the ROAP) that needs most revision to make it simpler, more versatile, and – to the extent that is possible – more specific to sector requirements. In addition, the links to other tools need to be clarified.

Save the Children plans to address these issues when they review the BNA:

- The language used in the guidance (as well as that used in the ROAP) will be ‘de-cashed’ so that the non-cash specific nature of the tools is emphasised.
- Clearer guidance will be given on when to use the household (HH) and community group discussion (CGD) questionnaires. It may be possible just to use the CGD in sudden onset situations when securing basic information is at a premium.
- Clarifying the relationship between and potential interoperability of the BNA and other needs assessments such as the Household Economy Approach (and the other operational assessments)
- The questions will be divided into short modules so that users are able to build their own HH questionnaires or CGDs based on what exactly they want to know and the context. This will also allow interoperability with other assessments, such as WFP’s Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping (VAM), the Multi-cluster/sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA), and the Household Economy Approach (HEA).
- Questions that do not serve a clear purpose or provide duplicate information will be removed; i.e. the question around desired expenditures.
Questions that are currently missing will be added, e.g. one to inform the development of a minimum basket of commodities and services, to be triangulated with Cluster/Sector standard kits. Such questions will allow the calculation of a Minimum Expenditure Basket, and will constitute a basis for the analysis of the demand side of markets.

The Global Clusters will be requested to review the questionnaires to improve their appropriateness for sectors.

Once these changes have been made to the BNA there will be a need to further pilot the tool in other contexts – both sudden onset and chronic. The iterative process of review and piloting the tool can be continued until users find they have a tool that best fits their needs, but it will not be led by Save the Children. Evidence from these pilots will also be useful in advocating for its further uptake.

The Payment Mechanism Guidance

The Payment Mechanism Delivery Guidance was developed and piloted by Mercy Corps with the support of Kap Tower Partners in Ethiopia. The Delivery Guide helps humanitarian workers identify appropriate delivery mechanisms for cash transfer programming, particularly MPGs. In past responses, organisations have faced challenges in understanding and assessing how regulations will affect cash programming. The Delivery Guide takes users through a two-step process: first, an initial landscaping and scoping process to understand viable cash delivery options and potential obstacles, and second, a process to compare and select a financial service provider (FSP). At the end of this process users will have a document comparing the possible FSP options from which they can make an informed decision.

Roll-out process

The Guidance can be used at both preparedness (where it is particularly useful as a baseline for future impacts) and response stages. However, as the financial provider situation is far from static there is a benefit in reviewing or updating information as needed.

As the Guidance focuses on the existing payments situation rather than the underlying causes there is the potential to complement the scoping exercise by delving deeper into what can be done to improve the situation.

When used in conjunction with the BNA there is the possibility of matching to the existing systems people’s preferences, how they most commonly receive assistance, and how they typically access and use money. And, although not extensively trialled in the pilots, gathering beneficiary perspectives is seen as a key part of the tool.

Collaboration

In both Nigeria and Ethiopia Mercy Corps and its consultants independently piloted the tool. This approach makes sense as this is a targeted assessment that relies more on quality, technical interviews with key stakeholders than wide-ranging interviews with numerous households. However, the Guidance is flexible and is intended to be used either by individual humanitarian agencies and their staff, or by coordination actors, including cash coordinators, CWGs, or consortia.

In many contexts CWGs are already conducting financial service provider reviews on behalf of the humanitarian community and this would be a way to standardise them. Regardless of how the assessments are conducted the output should ideally be shared with the humanitarian community to avoid duplication of efforts – this is particularly the case with the first part of the Guidance i.e. the mapping of the payments landscape, which is of use to all.
In some contexts, the outcomes of the Guidance may also provide useful evidence for collective advocacy to governments for a more conducive regulatory environment.

Funding

The Guidance is quick and simple to use: it was created as a layman’s tool and in Ethiopia it took two cash (but not market) experts ten days each to complete the process. As such it is relatively light on resources, particularly if conducted as a public good.

Uptake and ownership

The Guidance fits well within the existing humanitarian architecture, filling a gap without forcing out anything else and as such it is anticipated that it will be adopted without the need for significant political conversations. The Guidance fills the existing high demand for payments landscape scoping and (to a lesser extent) developing procurement criteria.

It is anticipated that Cash Working Groups (CWGs) will be able and keen to adopt this tool as an accessible, relatively easy and quick, and flexible way of providing their members (and the humanitarian community more broadly) with more standardised information about the payments landscape in their context. Ideally, the standard CWG TORs (currently under development) will mention FSP mapping as a standard CWG activity.

To ensure that key CWG and other actors are aware of the Guidance and feel able to use it OCHA will ensure information about the tool is disseminated through its focal points in the field and CalP regional offices will promote the tool to the CWGs and coordinate technical support and training as necessary. Mercy Corps in collaboration with OCHA will provide webinars to CWG members and other interested parties and may include the Guidance in ELAN’s recently revised digital payments training.

In the immediate future Mercy Corps will ensure that the humanitarian community at large is aware of the Guidance by contacting all cluster leads.

Donors such as ECHO and USAID already require humanitarian actors to conduct financial service provider mapping (in humanitarian & development and development settings respectively) so they could recommend or even make the Guidance mandatory for their partners. In the longer-term future, when the Collaborative Cash Delivery (CCD) Platform is fully operational, and in contexts where there is no functional CWG, the CCD’s Response Builder approach may act as an alternative home and champion for the Guidance (adopting the tool as the standard for FSP mapping when required by Response Builder users).

Reviewing the Guidance

The Guidance is well developed, clear, and concise and therefore ready to be shared with a wider audience immediately. Whilst there are tweaks that could be made to the tool it does not require substantial revision and Mercy Corps has no immediate plans to review the Guidance.

However, Mercy Corps agreed that the questionnaire templates could be supplemented with additional questions should there be specific areas or pieces of information assessors were looking for that are not already covered. The scope and questions can be expanded at the discretion of the entity implementing the assessment so as to meet their information requirements.

The guidance was used to assess mechanism options to process payments to individuals, and so did not consider voucher schemes in either pilot. Furthermore, as it was used to analyse the payments landscape/ecosystem in a country, voucher products that are not specific to the country but provide a service that can be deployed anywhere, were not included in these particular pilots. Future users of the tool, should they so wish, could simply add voucher...
providers to the desk reviews and KIIs that make up the delivery mechanism assessment report. In other cases, it might be applicable to also investigate the status of informal delivery methods.

Recommendations from the Guidance could also be used to guide how organisations conduct other cash-based transactions (beyond traditional CTPs) such as paying their staff or how government bodies deliver social security net systems.

To further test the Guidance, it is recommended that it is piloted in other contexts – both where CTP is and isn’t already in use. This can be done by any organisation and is not the responsibility of Mercy Corps.

**Response Options Analysis and Planning Facilitator’s Guide**

Too often response analysis is weak and inconsistently conducted with responses primarily designed based on traditional ways of doing things i.e. what organisations are used to or good at. The Response Options Analysis and Planning (ROAP) Facilitator’s Guide provides added value within and across clusters through a structured process that brings together sector, protection, and cash experts to review humanitarian analyses (people’s needs and operational environment), to feed into programmatic and (some) operational decisions. The ROAP should be used to maintain a demand-driven and people-centred response.

The first stage of the ROAP is undertaken at the sector level and results in: the identification of population groups to be prioritised; the definition of response objectives; and the selection of the most appropriate response option for the selected groups and geographic areas. The second stage of the ROAP sees sectors coming together to create an integrated inter-sector response plan, including: the sequencing and frequency of in-kind, cash, and other transfers; the type and amount of sector assistance to be provided; and the cumulative effect that this may have on recipients.

Together, the BNA and the ROAP enable Clusters/Sectors in a humanitarian response to assess the basic needs of affected communities and to make recommendations around the most appropriate and operationally feasible response options, according to beneficiaries’ preferences, and availability and access to commodities and services. The ROAP’s basic needs approach seeks to situate MPGs within the overall response and to ensure that synergies between cash and in-kind (or other) modalities are optimised and exploited.

**Roll-out process**

In Nigeria and Ethiopia, the ROAP was rolled-out as the last step of the pilots and under serious time constraints. In Nigeria the ROAP occurred during the same week of the national Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and a week prior to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) workshops (which took place during the first week of October 2017). In Ethiopia the ROAP took place over an intense two-week period at the end March 2018, preceded by a three-day training at the end of February.

Each member of the ROAP Task Team (see the Facilitator’s Guide for more information) should ideally allocate approximately five working days for the ROAP process, excluding the days required to validate findings of the multiple assessments supporting the situation analysis. The five days include: one day for single-sector working sessions; one day to revise the single sector report; two days for the inter-sector working sessions; and one day for the revision of the inter-sector report.

Part of the reasons behind the perception that the ROAP is labour-intensive and somehow intimidating, were due to the lack of prior experience in rolling it out, among both the facilitator and the members of the Task Force; furthermore, and most importantly, the process itself was designed and refined in course of action, in an iterative way. Consequently, the steps followed with the representatives of the first sector differed substantively from the steps followed with the last one.
Many participants as well as the facilitator felt that the process would be improved by being spaced-out over a longer period to allow greater reflection and to separate the training on the ROAP tool and the actual implementation of the process. To develop, teach / learn, and pilot / roll-out the tool all at once was extremely challenging and not something that will be done in future. In addition, the assessments that feed into the ROAP need to have been finalised, shared, and understood by all before the ROAP takes place. Each sector also needs to bring in their own tools and analysis to compliment and explain gaps or unexpected findings in the Consortium’s assessments.

If the roll out is condensed in a short time span (as was the case in the two pilots), the ROAP process is highly labour intensive for both facilitator and participants: each sector participates in a full one-day workshop for their sector (stage one outlined above) and then in a two-day inter-sector workshop (stage two above). There workshops are intense and require constant engagement in a very detailed process and it has even been suggested that more time is required at each phase to fully complete the process.

In addition, to best learn from and contribute to the process it was recommended that the same individuals participate throughout on behalf of their sectors, which is a significant ask from individuals. However, this was not always possible due to the time commitment or lack of engagement and this was itself a problem for the process, slowing discussions when repetition was needed to bring new participants up to speed. There would therefore be a significant advantage in simplifying the process and / or spreading it out over a longer time-frame (although the latter option comes with its own challenges).

Finally, the Facilitator’s Guide, as the title suggests, is designed as a reference for facilitators not a protocol to be applied in a dogmatic way. Users/facilitators should feel encouraged to adapt the guidance and apply it as deemed appropriate in each specific context, and according to the scope of the response, and the available human resources and time.

Collaboration

The ROAP creates a uniquely inter-sectoral working environment as, more than the Consortium’s other tools, it requires true collaboration during its’ use. Representatives of all Clusters/Sectors – both those directly the target of interventions and protection (which should be mainstreamed) - should attend and where appropriate they should be from the sub-national clusters in the prioritised geographic areas. In the pilots the inter-sector nature of the work was felt to be a strong advantage of the approach, creating a novel space for inter-sector dialogue that uncovered the shared issues and the possibility for synergistic solutions.

The inter-sectoral causal analysis was one of the ROAP elements that was most frequently cited as a beneficial novelty. Despite the general recognition of the importance of analysing the causes behind unmet needs at the sectoral level, it is rarely done within each sector (and response options are identified without it) and even more infrequently across sectors. In Ethiopia, where the inter-sectoral causal analysis process was tried for the first time, it proved very helpful in showing common issues across sectors, and the linkages that exist among causes and effects. It was observed that, in doing so, the sectors could see how eventually their programmes would contribute to shared outcomes and potentially support each other if cooperatively implemented.

However, in both cases, due to time restrictions, not all sectors were included in the ROAP and this was a limitation, in terms of both building interest, engagement, and capacity within all sectors, and developing a fully inter-sector response plan.

In both Nigeria and Ethiopia, the ROAP was conducted with national-level sector representatives. This was due to time restrictions and the fact that the approach and tools were still being piloted and the buy-in at head office level was more critical than the accuracy of the information and analysis generated through the process. It was recognised that the involvement of more sub-national experts would have been advantageous as it would have allowed greater localisation of discussion and for a more accurate validation of the other assessments.
The profile of the facilitator(s) is also vital to the success of the ROAP process. They need to be experienced workshop facilitators, and have a good understanding of multiple sectors, cash programming, and the local context. They need to be able to facilitate and to a certain extent steer the conversations so that all sectors can fully participate in the process and their sector-specific concerns are addressed. The ROAP pilots in Nigeria and Ethiopia were both facilitated by the global Save the Children cash expert and while the facilitator fulfilled most of the requirements they did not have the extensive context knowledge that would have allowed them to push debate in the necessary direction. An additional facilitator from the country would have eased the workload and intensiveness of the facilitation process, and – most importantly - would have been better placed to ensure the relevant people were invited to participate, to facilitate these conversations, to contribute to the sense of ownership felt by in-country actors and, if drawn from the Inter-Cluster Working Group, would have contributed to the institutionalisation of the approach. This should be the ideal set-up in future.

**Funding**

The only cost associated with the ROAP is everyone’s time. In itself, it is not an expensive process, but requires commitment from the concerned individuals and agencies. In fact, the cost is more one of cost opportunity than finance, for these individuals will have to prioritise the ROAP over other tasks. Further piloting, revising and capacity building of the ROAP will also take time and therefore funding.

**Uptake and ownership**

As a paradigm challenging tool that cuts across the sector-based approach it is particularly important that the ROAP should have its champions as well as those who are able to facilitate, lead, and finance the process within the humanitarian sector at a range of levels. However, the Symposium did not come to any conclusions about how this could be best achieved. It was agreed that it was important to develop an advocacy strategy to encourage further uptake and eventually create strategic ownership (who should do or be the target of this was not clarified, although government buy-in was agreed to be necessary); and deliver training – capitalising on the recently revised CaLP training course on response analysis - to build technical ownership (although, as with the BNA, whether this expertise should sit with a global roster of experts, designated experts within country ICCGs, or elsewhere was not agreed).

At the global level, one possible locus of strategic ownership is the global clusters who, under OCHA’s coordination, could play a key role in ensuring the ROAP is adopted and further piloted. In this regard, a concrete, current point of entry is the ongoing adjustment of key areas of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) process, led by OCHA in Geneva with the participation of global clusters and key UN agencies. More specifically, the relevant workstream would be the one tasked to strengthen inter-sector needs and response analysis.

Many within this group are already part of a ‘coalition of the willing’ when it comes to the importance of strengthening response analysis, including within the ongoing adjustment of the HPC. Key members of this group have been directly involved in developing or piloting the ROAP and as such will be well placed to judge the relevance of the ROAP as a potential model for the HRP. Whilst it is not possible to be prescriptive on the use of the ROAP, country teams will be informed of the existence of this approach, and will adopt it (or not) and adjust it as appropriate to the context.

Dissemination and uptake will also be supported by including the ROAP Facilitator’s Guide in CaLP’s Programme Quality Toolbox (PQT), as well as by promoting the delivery of CaLP’s Response Analysis training course in which the ROAP is already included.

Finally, one of the steps proposed in the ROAP, i.e. the estimation of the MEB, should be implemented jointly with the national or sub-national CWG. While rolling out the ROAP in Ethiopia a parallel process was being undertaken by the CWG to calculate the MEB, which was then challenging to reconcile with the relevant steps followed in the ROAP. Ideally, the guidance contained in the ROAP should be made available, adapted as necessary, and officially adopted by the country-level CWG. At present, no official and harmonised guidance exists. In cases where the MEB has already
been estimated, the guidance contained in the ROAP could be applied at revision stage, or even to triangulate and double check the accuracy of the first estimation.

**Reviewing the ROAP**

It is accepted that the ROAP in its present form can be intimidating and as such Save the Children will revise the tool in a way to make it more accessible. The Global Clusters will be asked to contribute to this process; a possible opportunity to engage them will be the workstream on inter-sector response analysis that has been set up to guide the HPC review.

However, it is important to note that the effort required from each member of a task force conducting a ROAP is of five working days, which is relatively short and may not be further shortened considering the importance of the final output (i.e. a response plan). With more practice and ready-made presentation power points and group instructions, which will be included in the Toolbox, future roll-outs of the Facilitator’s Guide should be faster.

By no means should the process and its tools be considered as mandatory in the proposed shape. Users should adapt the guidance and apply it as appropriate given the context, available resources and time.

The revisions will specifically focus on:

- Simplifying the steps and shortening the process wherever possible to make it easier to use and appropriate for a range of contexts. Both Nigeria and Ethiopia are slow-onset crisis situations and so there is yet no evidence on whether the ROAP would be a useful and appropriate approach to adopt in a sudden-onset crisis, but it is likely that the time requirement would weigh particularly heavily in such a situation.
- ‘De-cashing’ the language to make clear that this is a response options analysis approach that: facilitates the consideration of all response options – in-kind, service, cash (including MPGs) – but that does not force any one response; and that aims to facilitate multi-sector programming, not MPGs per se.
- Developing a modular or minimum standards package that can be used in diverse contexts and built out when time allows.

Tool revisions and further piloting should be conducted in an iterative manner until a tool is developed that is fully applicable in a wide range of contexts. However, it should be noted that the ROAP will always require a small amount of contextualisation wherever it is used. Specifically, the pilots:

- Will show evidence of value-add. Participation in the ROAP pilots should be open to a wide range of participants and reports and recommended revisions to the tool should be made available to all interested parties. These can be used to inform programming and, if the process has been fruitful, to advocate for greater use of the tool.
- Could be done collaboratively with clusters (at country level) with contributions from all to improve ownership. As with the clusters in Nigeria and Ethiopia who both piloted and contributed to the tool development, inter-cluster groups need to test the tool before they can recommend improvements. A theoretical revision would not be as effective.
- Will determine if the ROAP can be used on a large scale i.e. to produce a crisis-wide response plan. In Nigeria the ROAP covered three Local Government Authorities and in Ethiopia it covered four woredas.

**Remaining questions**

The following questions should be considered during the revision of the ROAP:

- How can the ROAP process be made more useful to sectors that have less predictable demands on families or do not predominantly focus their interventions at the household level? For example, health needs are both
largely unpredictable and require households to make extraordinary expenditures and significant parts of the health sectors’ work is delivered via institutions rather than directly to households.

- Can the ROAP be used to identify response options at the national and strategic level, or it is exclusively suited for guiding programmatic decisions at the regional/district level?
- How can the ROAP ensure that it does not lose sight of the higher-level needs / outcomes? For example, that when it comes to Emergency Shelter / Non-food Items (ES/NFI) needs an eye is kept on the quality of the shelter alongside quantity and accessibility.

Monitoring for MPGs

DRC partnered with graduate students from the Fletcher School at Tufts University to design three quantitative and qualitative monitoring tools that gauge the effect of MPGs at household and community levels (namely templates for household surveys, key informant interviews, and community group discussions). This is in line with the Consortium’s Basic Needs Approach and CalP’s Monitoring4CTP Guidance. The purpose of the data collection was to test the tools by monitoring existing MPGs implemented by agencies external to the Consortium (as none of the partners were implementing programmes on which the tools could be piloted).

These monitoring tools and guidance facilitate data collection and analysis which shows how beneficiaries feel about the MPG and its outcomes (mirroring some of the indicators explored through the BNA) and whether their preferences align with sector priorities. The tools are designed to be flexible and can be used to collect data for most chosen indicators.

Roll-out process

The Monitoring Tools and Guidance are not intended as a global template but rather as a good starting point that can then be adapted to the local context and the goals and objectives of the specific MPG programme. Ideally, this adaptation of the monitoring tools will be done at the same time as programme design – and specifically the baseline – so that comparable data can be collected at each stage of the project. This was not possible in Nigeria and Ethiopia as the tools were piloted on pre-existing MPG programmes, but in other contexts this would be the recommended approach.

Collaboration

More than the other tools organisations can independently use the Monitoring Tools. While the programmes assessed may be collaborative the actual monitoring of an MPG does not necessarily require the involvement of multiple organisations – one organisation can equally work on behalf of the collective or assess its own programmes independently. In Nigeria and Ethiopia, the Monitoring Tools were used by DRC on programmes being delivered by other organisations, but this was mainly as neither DRC nor the other Consortium partners were delivering MPGs or other similar cash programmes in the target areas at the relevant time. It should also be noted that in Nigeria the tools were used to assess voucher and dual voucher-cash programmes, as there were no MPG programmes being delivered within the target areas at the time. Therefore, DRC focused on partnering with programmes placing the fewest restrictions on the cash provided.

Collaboration with affected communities, as well as humanitarian agencies, is important; participatory approaches should be included in the programme design phase and not just the monitoring tools themselves; and monitoring results shared directly with beneficiaries. This would increase accountability whilst also revealing how sectors and affected communities differently conceive of and categorise needs. For example, in Ethiopia, some pastoralists thought of children’s shoes and socks as ‘education needs’ rather than NFIs (as the humanitarian system would classify...
them). By humanising the approach, sacrificing data ‘representativeness’ for data quality through a greater focus on the people interviewed than pure numbers, DRC realised that they could obtain a wider, more nuanced understanding of beneficiary perspectives.

Collaborative monitoring requires significant effort over a sustained period, particularly in contexts with little or no inter-agency multipurpose cash programming at scale. To pilot the monitoring tools within limited time and scope, the team engaged bilaterally with operational agencies. Now that the tools are available, it will be important for agencies to agree on minimum monitoring requirements across cash actors and projects in order to take quality MPG monitoring to scale. Participatory monitoring processes are generally challenging in humanitarian contexts, and particularly for MPGs as they can require time, skills, and resources beyond normal agency capacity. However, there are ways to integrate participatory approaches into MPG monitoring that will directly improve quality, better capture beneficiary preferences, and inform decision making.

Data that is directly comparable (as data collected using a standardised set of tools should be) is useful in analysing the impact of any type of intervention. The monitoring tools’ indicators could be productively used to assess non-cash interventions (with an objective to meet basic needs) so as to enable direct comparisons across modalities.

Funding

The monitoring tools are meant to be integrated into existing M&E processes (to make monitoring more effective) readily replacing or building on existing M&E work. As such they do not require significant additional funding. As with any monitoring activity, the funding for M&E should be proportional to the programme size and partner capacity.

Uptake and ownership

The monitoring tools and guidance were designed to be used by non-experts and are largely an amalgamation (now piloted and refined) of good M&E practice in cash transfer programming, so are not likely to face push-back from the humanitarian community (in the way the ROAP and BNA may do). Ownership is therefore not as important as there will be less need for a concerted advocacy drive to ensure their uptake.

On the other hand, although there will not necessarily be a political unwillingness there is still a need to ensure that the tools are widely socialised. To do this they need to be embedded in guidance around M&E and MPG programming. For example, the CWG TORs could be adapted to recommend the use of the Monitoring Tools, and organisations could adopt the tools into their own M&E guidance. CaLP has already incorporated the Monitoring Tools into its monitoring training and in its Programme Quality Toolbox. The Tool, and the learning from the pilots, will also be considered in CaLP’s review of their Monitoring4CTP guidance.

In the longer-term future, when the CCD Platform is fully established, and in contexts where there is no functional CWG, the CCD’s Response Builder approach may act as an alternative home and champion for the Monitoring Tools. Donors could require that the tools are used in cash-based programmes they fund, as they provide a condensed template of best practices for monitoring MPGs and are ready to adapt to context and programme specifics.

Reviewing the Monitoring Tools and Guidance

The Monitoring Tools and Guidance are ready to be used in their current state but as they are not intended to be a definitive or prescriptive list of questions they can be organically tweaked as they are used to make them fit for purpose and context. Having said that, there are a few minor adjustments that DRC will make to the tools:

- Identifying what the tools assess, and what sector-specific complementary monitoring may be required
- Exploring the links between composite indicators and coping strategies to capture household wellbeing
DRC also sees that there is a need to humanise how the humanitarian sector does M&E. Monitoring (and to a lesser extent, evaluation) of MPGs is about better understanding how the assistance influenced people’s situation and ability to meet needs, and as such quality M&E should provide evidence about what really influences purchasing and consumption behaviour. The sector needs to go beyond post distribution monitoring (PDM) and use the data so that qualitative aspects are not neglected in short term programmes. Behavioural insight should be a key component in M&E for MPGs, and there needs to be clarity on how the outcomes of M&E can be used to inform changes in programming that improve outcomes for people and how organisations / staff will be held accountable for this change.

Remaining questions

During their work on the Monitoring Tools and Guidance DRC noted that there were also important questions to be asked about how people adopt – and the humanitarian community understands – negative and positive coping strategies. The use of coping strategies across sectors is something that requires further investigation and specifically DRC will work on expanding and standardising existing coping strategy indicators to better include livelihoods and protection-related perspectives, in close collaboration with other agency initiatives on coping strategies – notably the USAID/IRC work on cost-efficiency and cost effectiveness under the Grand Bargain cash workstream, as well as UNHCR, WFP, and ECHO cash partners in Somalia.

Multi-Sector Market Assessment Companion Guide and Toolkit

The Multi-Sector Market Assessment Companion Guide and Toolkit (MSMA) was developed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2016 and piloted by Save the Children in Ethiopia, and by UNHCR with Save the Children support in Nigeria. The aim of the MSMA is to assess if, in the event of a cash distribution to local people in need, the markets could supply sufficient goods and services to meet the increased demand.

Process

The Nigeria and Ethiopia pilots of the MSMA used information produced by the BNAs so the MSMA had to take place after the respective BNAs were completed, although in both contexts the time between the two was relatively short. The challenge of this lack of time was compounded by the information gap that exists between the BNA and the MSMA: as the MSMA uses core goods and services to assess the health of a market (there is not time to assess all the goods) some guidance is required on what these core goods should be. However, while the BNA provides information on what sectoral needs are prioritised by target communities, it does not ask beneficiaries what specific products or services they would purchase in the event of a cash distribution, and in what quantities and quality they would require them. This question will be added in the next edition of the BNA.

The current MSMA process is quite time and labour consuming and the larger the number of markets to be assessed the longer it can take. Therefore, there are questions around how practical such a detailed assessment would be in the early days of a response.

Collaboration

In Ethiopia and Nigeria, the MSMA was led by consultants with market assessment backgrounds and in Nigeria the consultant was also supported by several sector experts. Collaboration with sector specialists – where available - eased the process and it is recommended that they should be involved in sector-specific use of the MSMA including: the contextualisation and adaptation of the tool; the identification of core goods that can be used to indicate the health and elasticity of a particular market; and in leading the data collection.
Protection expert involvement is also necessary. While the MSMA guidance provides space for gathering this type of information, e.g. safe access in insecure conditions, hearing the voices of vulnerable people, and protection issues related to quality, more guidance should be included on remote data collection when access to markets and stakeholders is compromised.

To have the necessary experts (sector (including protection) and markets) it may be necessary that multiple organisations participate in the assessment as most organisations will not have all the required capacities in-house. There is broad consensus that market expertise is required in the assessment lead, and that this should be supported by expertise from the relevant sectors (e.g. WASH, Shelter), according to the type of markets to be assessed, as well as protection and logisticians. From an institutional point of view questions remain as to which entity/organisation is best placed to lead this type of assessment – one specific humanitarian agency in coordination with others, or a specialised assessment agency who could act on behalf of the humanitarian community?

**Funding**

Developing sector or organisational capacity would require additional funding so there is a need to advocate for increased, targeted funding from donors to build capacity in and roll-out the MSMA. As part of the Consortium’s work CaLP revised their markets assessment training which helps actors determine which market assessment is the most appropriate for their needs and context. The MSMA has been included in this training. Training of this type could be usefully delivered to a far wider audience.

In addition, funding for an experienced market expert to lead an assessment also needs budgeting – as the capacity required is gained through experience and years of practice, and not just from a single training of manual.

**Uptake and ownership**

The MSMA is developed by UNHCR but if it is to be more broadly used there is a need to institutionalise it within the global and national clusters / sectors and Cash Working Groups at country level. Future updates of the Tools should use an inclusive process to consult with representatives from across sectors and agencies, to gather their learning and momentum for buy-in.

For full uptake, a generic set of guidelines that is supplemented by guidance or examples for specific sectors and different contexts will be beneficial and could be developed in a modular fashion. An open source toolbox, where new and revised and adapted tools could be deposited, would facilitate uptake and ownership among the humanitarian community.

**Reviewing the MSMA**

The recommendation is to adapt the MSMA to meet further sector-specific needs and to include clearer guidance on use of the tools in emergencies. Markets are complex and vary significantly so a MSMA needs to be either flexible enough to accurately and usefully assess a range of markets (including those as diverse and food, rental, water, and labour) or provide modules that can be used in a selective manner based on needs. Either way, representatives from sectors should be involved in the revision and development of relevant parts of the tool and funding would be required to conduct this review. A description of the sector specialists’ role in MSMA should be added in the revised guidance.

Questions were raised around how useful the MSMA would be in an emergency response (given the quickly changing nature of markets and the time required to conduct the assessment) and what scale of crisis it could be used to assess. In addition, Consortium’s pilots did not test whether the tool would be relevant to non-displaced target groups / situations (e.g. affected communities which are not displaced) and this should be considered in any revision or further piloting.
The digital data collection tools with associated analytical frameworks should be made available in the open source toolbox, including any adaptations that users may develop. Efforts should be made to develop simple, short, and modular tools that aren’t too complex to use, translate, or modify.

As this is a UNHCR tool it is for them to determine if they will further revise the tool, but users can adapt it based on their requirements. An open source toolbox would ensure the guidance and new or adapted tools are readily available for the humanitarian community in ‘real-time’.

**Overarching Issues**

Much of the work that needs to be done to improve the Consortium’s approach, and ensure the uptake and, where appropriate, the revision of the tools is not specific to one tool. This section covers those overarching issues that would need to be changed to build the envisaged future. For additional analysis readers should refer to the two Lessons Learned reports produced and published by CaLP on the lessons learned throughout the pilots in Nigeria and Ethiopia.

**Uptake of MPGs**

The barriers to MPG uptake are both political and technical or capacity-related. Some of them are found at the global level, whereas others are specific to each country or emergency response and – as such – must be identified and then tackled on a case by case basis. The second and third pillars of the Consortium’s work mainly focused on addressing the technical and capacity-related barriers to the uptake of MPGs, and this report mostly presents the lessons that have been learned around the tools and their roll-out.

By contrast the first pillar centred on promoting an enabling environment for the uptake of MPGs, tackling the ‘political’ barriers. Here the question around ownership and accountability is of relevance and will continue being so as both the discussion on cash coordination and the review of the HPC progress.

Uptake of MPGs is highly political. As a disrupter to the humanitarian landscape and sector-based way of designing and delivering assistance MPGs cannot be easily absorbed into the current structure. It is therefore necessary that actors at both strategic and field level are persuaded of the benefits of cash-based interventions – and specifically MPGs – and that key actors take ownership of the tools and promote and amend them as necessary. This will be particularly important for the ROAP and BNA which are more challenging for actors to adopt and will therefore require additional support.

The Consortium has shown the importance of engaging all Clusters/Sectors throughout the response options and analysis process informing both the design and implementation of MPGs. Clusters/Sectors (other than Food Security) are not consistently involved in designing MPGs and, generally, have reservations about their effectiveness for meeting many sectoral outcomes or quality standards. This reluctance and limited engagement in matters related to MPGs is the result of multiple factors, including limited awareness, experience or capacity, inadequate coordination structures, insufficient sectoral evidence, and a lack of guidance tailored to their programmatic areas. It is clear that for all sectors to engage meaningfully in collaborative analysis around designing and delivering MPGs significant investment is required to build capacity across all sectors whilst simultaneously raising the awareness of sectoral issues and ways of working with cash generalists.

Additionally, the coordination of cash and, more specifically of MPGs, has until recently been under discussion hindering to the uptake of MPGs within HRPs. To be effective, cash coordination must be multi-sectoral and should not sit under any single cluster. This issue has seen recent progress by the Global Cluster Coordination Group, with agreement that responsibility for the coordination of cash, including of multi-purpose cash, lies with inter-cluster
coordination groups, and that CWGs are sub-groups of the ICCG. While this is welcome progress, specific challenges relating to multi-purpose cash need to be further discussed and clarified.

The Consortium pilots have highlighted how critical it is to properly resource CWGs, while ensuring they are effectively integrated into the overall humanitarian response. This includes aligning the priorities of the CWG with the operational priorities of the ICCG, and for the ICCG to ultimately consider and endorse recommendations made by the group. CWG coordination includes both strategic and technical functions and requires dedicated resources to fill the necessary positions, including for information management. Finally, for CWGs to be effective in promoting MPGs with HRPs, they should include representatives of all operational Clusters/Sectors.

Involvement in the Consortium’s work and attendance at the Symposium has largely been led by technical staff. And while many NGO and UN organisations have been involved over the last two years, if the tools and approaches are to be sustainably adopted and built on there is a need include more senior, strategic management-level staff in the conversation while also advocating directly to field level staff who will ultimately be the ones using and reviewing the tools.

Backing for the tools must therefore come from a range of actors. Where exactly ownership will lie varies by tool and has not yet been agreed beyond what is outlined above. However, what is clear is that donors could use their unique position to sway the actions of actors across the humanitarian landscape. As the Consortium’s core donor ECHO is very positive about cash as an effective and efficient response option and currently more than 35% of their total spend is delivered as cash. ECHO is therefore well placed to support building on the Consortium’s work both at the global and Nigeria and Ethiopia levels. Other donors could fund further revision or piloting of the tools as well as encourage or require their use within programmes they fund.

Process

All the tools developed by the Consortium considered existing tools and the BNA was developed to address questions that were not addressed elsewhere. In terms of the process there is a need to strengthen and clarify links between the MSMA, BNA, and ROAP in particular and to embed considerations of existing assessments into all tools. A chapter will be added in the next version of the BNA and of the ROAP to respectively describe the linkages between the BNA and other assessments, and present how several existing assessments can feed into the ROAP.

To have the greatest possible impact on strategy and programming the Consortium’s tools should be used in collaboration with local resources. The assessments should be complemented by other assessment information and involve or at least be validated by local experts. All tools should to the extent possible be promoted through existing coordination structures and processes, including potentially the ICCG and CWG, as well as the HNO/HRP processes.

As the Consortium’s pilots did not involve any implementation of MPG (or other) programmes there were some questions raised about the ethical implications of conducting assessments within populations who were not intended to receive assistance through the Consortium project (but, potentially, through forthcoming projects relying on/using the information collected by the Consortium). Although data collectors were careful not to unnecessarily raise expectations of assistance during the assessments this may have been inadvertently done and there is a risk of overburdening communities. In future situations the assessment tools will largely be used only in contexts in which assistance is planned for at least some people. In addition, by merging the Payment Mechanism Guidance’s questions about if and how people engage with financial service providers (which are currently asked via a community group discussion) into the BNA communities will be subject to one less intervention.

As both pilots were in chronic situations there was limited pressure to act swiftly. However, if the tools are to be used in sudden-onset contexts they will need to be rolled out within a shorter timeframe. Above it has been suggested that several of the tools (most notably the MSMA and BNA) could be modularised and then only the absolutely fundamental elements conducted in the first stage of a response. This would of course require piloting.
Collaboration

Although the Consortium was designed as a collaborative project relatively little of the work was conducted collaboratively. The tools were independently developed by individual organisations (although feedback was solicited from the Consortium and external partners in many cases). Likewise, each partner independently managed piloting of their tools. It was remarked that this was a missed opportunity in terms of roll-out, particularly for large assessments like the BNA and MSMA which could have benefitted from a broader expertise base, and the ROAP which could have been more readily facilitated with the involvement of additional experts, possibly from the core group of partners.

However, given the complexity of developing and iteratively refining tools while piloting them and engaging stakeholders, and bearing in mind the limited resources and time for doing so, a different approach would not have been a realistically feasible option. This recommendation is therefore valuable for future similar endeavour.

Below are three key takeaways and recommendations around collaboration frameworks and their ideal features, should a similar process of situation and response analysis be replicated elsewhere:

- **Build ownership at the country level to enable uptake, both for the members of the consortium and across the CWG and sectors.** For the Consortium, this was a challenge in Nigeria, especially because of the limited buy-in and interest in the Consortium’s offer (which was not yet tangible), but progress was made between the two pilots. In Ethiopia, there was a strong push to engage with the different clusters and encourage inter-agency collaboration, through the creation of a task team as a sub-group of the ICCG, which supported the ROAP.

- **Support the enabling environment including ensuring and prioritising adequate funding for CWG strategic and technical functions.** A strong CWG, with clear reporting lines to the ISWG/ICWG and participation from all key clusters/sectors is needed as a basis for promoting the uptake and use of the Consortium’s tools and approaches, and for anchoring the work of a possible cash-focused technical consortium.

- **Increase focus on contextual feasibility.** The Consortium was able to pilot and revise the tools and approaches only twice, which is not sufficient to build confidence around their suitability to a diverse range of scenarios. More practice in different contexts is required to consolidate learning, as well as the resources, expertise, and time to contextualise the tools and approaches in collaboration with country-level actors.

Finally, there remain questions around how MPGs (and the various tools used to design and monitor them) can be more closely integrated with or feed into social safety net programmes, particularly in contexts where governments are delivering large-scale cash transfers as an integral part of this system. To further these discussions, it is necessary to engage with government institutions and their donors (as well as NGO and UN organisations). What this relationship looks like will likely depend on the context and the scale and purpose of the social safety net systems.

Funding

To support MPG programme design at the country level, dedicated resources will be required to coordinate and adapt the consortium approach to context, working closely with the ISWG/ICWG and the CWG to conduct inter-sectoral situation and response analysis, and then translate analysis into MPG design. This is basis for facilitating a greater sense of ownership and resourcing assessments and analysis. Support can be provided from the global level, similarly to the approach offered by the Consortium. The composition of the group providing technical guidance from the global level may differ from that of the group leading the work at the country level. At the global level, the Consortium demonstrated the value of a ‘light and informal’ structure which is efficient and non-bureaucratic, allowing for technical expertise to be maximised.

Donors should provide flexible funding for innovative models and approaches. Part of the challenge faced by the ERC Consortium was the stark division of resources and a lack of flexible resources for the in-country pilots. Innovative country-level funding models need to be supported for coordination, analysis, and delivery.
Finally, the learning from this Consortium, which mostly focused on situation analysis, may offer relevant insights for the application of ECHO’s Guidance to deliver large-scale cash transfers, and especially the so-called component A.

Information sharing and capacity building

The Consortium’s tools need to be shared broadly to ensure that all actors who might make use of them are aware of their existence. There are upcoming opportunities for information sharing at the global level. For example, the upcoming meeting of the Grand Bargain workstream on cash (which aims to ‘increase the use and coordination of cash-based programming’) in June 2018 is an opportunity to present the approaches. Consortium members and Symposium participants can also spread the word organically and communicate directly with those who they think will be interested in the information. For example, the technical lead of the two tools that are ready to be rolled-out without revision (the Payment Guidance and the Monitoring for MPGs) can send emails to all global cluster leads and relevant agencies to promote the new tools. Online global portals like CaLP’s Programme Quality Toolbox are also a good place to share information with a broader audience.

To facilitate this sharing and ease of understanding Save the Children plans to copy edit all the tools and develop them into a coherent package. Although the tools do not have to be used collectively there are certain advantages to doing so and so they will be packaged collectively.

However, for the more complex or novel tools there is also a need for in-depth training as they are likely to be more challenging to use and their rationale less immediately clear. Training (probably of different types) should be given to enumerators working on the assessments as well as cash or sector experts who will instigate or lead the assessments. Determining who and when to train is a key issue. In Nigeria and Ethiopia, the lead consultants on the BNA and MSMA provided training to their respective teams of enumerators and in Ethiopia training was offered on the ROAP a month prior its piloting, which was felt to be a useful introduction to the approach. If enumerators are to be used, they need to be properly trained not just on the tools but on the required approach. Large teams of enumerators can be particularly difficult to manage and there may be an advantage to having smaller, better trained teams, that require less supervision and to prioritise instead expert participation.

During the pilots CaLP developed training or revised their existing training to include consideration of the Consortium’s specific tools on response analysis, markets, and M&E for cash transfer programming. However, with the exception of the Response Analysis Training (which touched on the ROAP) in Ethiopia, these trainings were not delivered in the pilot countries before the relevant assessments were piloted. As such, actors participating in the assessments did not have any previous understanding of the specific assessments.

In the future, the trainings along with facilitation notes will be available on online learning portals Kaya and Disaster ready. This will enable anyone downloading the materials to both learn themselves and delivery training. CaLP also intends to run a limited number of these courses and will in future run a Training of Trainers on the Response Analysis and M&E course.

In addition to these tool-/assessment-specific trainings OCHA will continue to provide training and to raise awareness around cash coordination, including noting relevant tools to support effective cash coordination, to OCHA staff at both senior management and operational coordination levels, as well as to Humanitarian Coordinators.

Digitalisation

To ease use and make resulting data directly comparable (across assessments, agencies, and sectors) there was a suggestion that the tools should be, as far as possible, digitalised. Apps or online versions of the assessments could be developed where appropriate although this would require funding.
Conclusion

The Consortium sought to improve the uptake of quality, collaborative MPGs. Through the development of tools and trainings and learning from pilots the Consortium has contributed significantly to this goal. However, as seen above, there is still much work to do to ensure that MPGs are adopted where feasible and appropriate. One of the main obstacles, not directly addressed by the Consortium, is around coordination.

As of the end of April 2018 the Consortium has been dissolved so this work must now be taken up by other actors. Much of the work is outlined above but there are questions remaining around who exactly will do this work.

In all the work around MPGs there is a need to think strategically and communicate simply. To keep people involved in the conversation and bring them along on the journey towards system-transforming increases in cash and MPGs that will better help people meet their needs.
Links

All of these can be found on CaLP’s website: http://www.cashlearning.org/ctp-and-multi-sector-programming/multipurpose-cash-grants

Overview of the Consortium

Lessons learned from the pilot in Nigeria

Lessons learned from the pilot in Ethiopia

Basic Needs Assessment

- Guidance and Toolbox
- Nigeria Report
- Ethiopia Report

Multi-Sector Market Assessment

- Companion Guide and Toolkit
- Nigeria Report
- Ethiopia Report

Cash Feasibility: Acceptance and Safety Assessments

- Nigeria Report
- Ethiopia Report

Financial Service Provider Guidance

- Delivery Guide
- Nigeria Report
- Ethiopia Report

Response Options Analysis and Planning Guidance

- Facilitator’s Guide
- Nigeria Report
- Ethiopia Report

Monitoring for MPGs

- Guidance
- Nigeria Report
- Ethiopia Report
Symposium participants

Attendees included representatives from the Consortium Partners (Save the Children, DRC, CaLP, Mercy Corps, OCHA) from both headquarter and Nigeria and Ethiopia levels, the Consortium donor (ECHO), other donors (DFID and USAID), the Somali State Regional Government, the global clusters (Health, Shelter, and Protection), UN organisations (WFP, IOM, UNHCR, UNFPA), the International Committee of the Red Cross, NGOs (ACF, Habitat for Humanity, IRC, Oxfam, World Vision), REACH, CashCap, and a number of independent consultants who participated in the various assessments.

The event was facilitated by Something Meaningful Consultancy.

The Consortium was funded by ECHO’s Emergency Response Capacity budget.

Endnotes

i The ERC is the Enhanced Response Capacity funding stream of ECHO.


v Smart, K (2018).

vi For a full list of participating organisations please see the section titled ‘Symposium participants’

vii Links to the tools and the all reports from the pilots in Nigeria and Ethiopia can be found in the section titled ‘Links’

viii This is a commitment from Calum McLean, ECHO’s Global Food Security Thematic Coordinator and Technical Lead for the Consortium.

ix This step was added after the pilot in Nigeria.

x In Nigeria sectors involved in the ROAP were FSL, Shelter/NFI, and WASH. In Ethiopia Food Security, ES/NFI, WASH, and Health were involved.

xi In Nigeria the pilot looked at Jere, Konduga, and Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) LGAs in Borno State. In Ethiopia the pilot covered Babile, Hareshen, Kebribe, and Tuliguled woredas in Fafan Zone in the Somali Region.

xii In Nigeria DRC assessed projects being delivered by ZOA Refugee Care (e-voucher for food) and ACF (a combination of food vouchers and unrestricted cash). In Ethiopia they assessed projects by IOM (a one-off unrestricted cash grant to IDPs) and Oxfam (a monthly unrestricted cash grant to agro-pastoralist communities).
