MPG PROGRAMME QUALITY

What It Is

Establishing the key elements of MPG Programme Quality is crucial for ensuring implementation reflects the intention and design of the programme and adheres to humanitarian best practices. Programme Quality includes Response Monitoring – an essential component to review assumptions and decisions made when designing the MPG programme. Specific areas to monitor include changes in needs and vulnerabilities, assumptions that inform the MEB and MPG amounts, changes in market conditions, and impacts (positive and negative) on individuals, households, communities and the local economy.

Essential Checklist

A. Describe risks analysis and mitigation measures

As with all humanitarian programmes, it is crucial to identify the principle risks, propose mitigation measures and set “red lines”. Risks generally fall into three categories:

- Contextual – e.g. inflation of market prices, resurgence of conflict, new displacement, etc.
- Operational – e.g. failures in capacity to implement (by agencies or FSPs), risk of corruption, diversion or fraud.
- Causal (as a result of the programme) – e.g. increased tension at the household or community level.

Tools for risk analysis, mitigation and management are provided in the Resources section.

B. Describe data-protection measures

Data protection is a concern for any type of assistance, but particularly for MPG programmes that share information between agencies and with FSPs (specifically with e-transfers). Potentially sensitive information collected at individual and household level can “fall into the wrong hands” and cause a great deal of damage to vulnerable households.

CaLP’s Protecting Beneficiary Privacy sets out minimum standards for data collection (or minimisation), data management throughout the programme cycle, and data sharing between agencies and with FSPs.

Agencies increasingly have data-protection policies. Read your agency’s policy. Most agencies have a stipulation in their policies that allows for data sharing based on data minimisation and the presence of reciprocal data-sharing policies that ensure that the recipient would treat the data with the same care as the provider.

Do No Harm/Do More Good

- Distribution lists should never contain protection information or links to protection data, regardless of whether or not beneficiaries are selected on the basis of protection vulnerabilities.
- Beware of data sharing between humanitarian agencies – often done insecurely over email (and therefore potentially accessible to third parties). E-Lan has developed a tip sheet on data encryption.

C. Describe accountability, communication and beneficiary feedback mechanisms

Describe the stakeholders to whom the programme should be accountable. This will include the affected population, government, humanitarian senior management, other humanitarian actors/coordination bodies and the host community.

Develop information products that provide basic information about the MPG programme for different stakeholders. All information products should indicate the mechanisms and contacts for airing grievances and providing feedback.

Explain what additional accountability, communication and feedback mechanisms the programme has, such as:

- Trainings and awareness sessions on the programme: Including programme objectives, amounts beneficiaries are entitled to and targeting rationale, as well as practical issues on
how to withdraw cash assistance, who to call for assistance, etc. Trainings should be provided when distributing cards/vouchers/phones for the delivery of MPGs and periodically, preferably before providing banking instructions to FSPs to deliver money.

- **Hotlines:** How to implement and rationalise inter-agency complaints and feedback systems – which can potentially involve numerous hotlines. A central hotline can help collect data and manage large volumes of requests. Look at private sector FSP customer service models for guidance, e.g. registering, tracking and resolving complaints so issues are adequately addressed (preferably using some sort of database). Ensure complaints mechanisms are independent.

- **Help desks (or complaint boxes):** Help desks can guide and support beneficiaries in matters related to the use of the cards. A help desk can also be responsible for basic card maintenance, through web remote access on behalf of beneficiaries.

- **Mass communication messages:** This can be done via SMS, flyers, advertisements, radio announcements, etc., intended for beneficiaries of the programme but also other stakeholders. Engage communications specialists to develop easy-to-understand messages early on.

D. Describe response monitoring, reporting and evaluation processes

**Develop standard indicators** for process, outputs, impacts and markets monitoring.

Indicators should reflect the specific objective of the programme and context-specific risks and benefits analysis, including protection-related indicators (Box 14).

**Process:** To measure ways in which programme services and goods are provided, and to assess the appropriateness of the ongoing response to meet outputs and intended impact.  

**Output:** To measure the quantity of goods and services – in this case cash – distributed, and the efficiency of the programme (who, how much, when and where).  

**Programme impact:** To understand if/how needs and vulnerabilities of targeted beneficiaries have changed.

**Protection:** To ensure consistent monitoring and follow-up of key protection issues.

**Markets for goods and services:** To review any changes in prices, supply and demand, and beneficiary access to goods or services.

**Common process indicators might include:**

- Number of households assessed.
- Number of households eligible.
- Number of households referred to other services.
- Percentage of grants available on time.
- Percentage/number of interviewed households reporting difficulties in accessing cash.
- Number and type of complaints and complaints resolved.
- Number of reported incidents of fraud/diversion.

**Common output indicators might include:**

- Number of grants distributed, by amount and date.
- Number and amount of grants redeemed.
- Number and amount of grants not redeemed.
- Effective number of households/persons assisted.
- Performance of Common Delivery Mechanism.

**Common outcome/impact indicators include:**

- Use of negative coping strategies to increase income/reduce expenditures.
- Self-reported ability to meet basic needs.
- Perceptions of well-being or perceived protection status (see Box 15).

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34 Definition source: The Evaluation Exchange, Harvard University ([http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange](http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange)).


36 Or performance monitoring (see UNHCR CBI Guidelines, p.74).
● Changes in household or social relations.
● Changes in violence or security environment.

**Establish a market monitoring system**
- Collect basic information on access to and availability of goods and services.
- Review prices of key MEB commodities (including food items, food-related non-food items, shelter/rent, hygiene, and relevant services such as health, education, transport, etc.).
- Continuously identify areas for market support.

**Design tools to answer key questions related to programme objectives, and to measure the programme against the standard indicators** – consistently across the monitoring cycle, from assessment to evaluation.

**Identify data processes and priorities**
- Data collection and management: Which tools should be standardised? Who will manage the data? Will there be a common database that is interoperable with agency-specific databases? It is essential to sign data-sharing agreements between agencies, outline roles and responsibilities, and identify information that can be shared freely.
- Data analysis: Based on the indicators above, allocate time and resources not only to monitor but to analyse the data and disseminate the findings to key stakeholders.

**Operational reporting should be stipulated in the contract with the FSP(s) and should include real-time transaction reports from banks (e.g. amount of funds transferred, balances of each account, etc.).**

While there are many different types of evaluations that can be useful to cash programmes, the main focus should be to **establish key questions that teams want the evaluation to answer**. It is best to set these questions earlier in the design phase and to update the evaluation priorities every three months or so. Types of evaluations useful to MPGs include:

- **Real Time Evaluation (RTE):** Evaluation of the programme process. Process evaluations are encouraged to identify key lessons learned for scaling up programmes.

**BOX 14. MONITORING INDICATORS FOR MPGS IN LEBANON (CASH WORKING GROUP)**

**Process and output indicators:**
- Number of households receiving MPGs.
- Beneficiaries who withdraw less than the cash transfer value by the end of cash assistance.
- Total amount distributed as MPGs to targeted households/affected communities.
- Recipient households reporting difficulties with cash access.

**Programme outcome and impact indicators:**
- Average negative coping strategy index does not increase over the course of the programme.
- Beneficiaries’ ability to meet Survival or Basic MEB.
- Average change in expenditures-to-debt ratio.
- Average change in income-expenditure gap.

**Protection indicators:**
- Beneficiaries feeling at risk as a result of MPG, e.g. harassment, restriction, security, abuse.
- Beneficiaries reporting intra- or inter-community or household tensions resulting from MPGs.
Operational Evaluation: Finance, compliance, accountability, etc.

Impact Evaluation: Generally requires a strong baseline and at least 6–12 months of implementation to measure impact.

E. Describe exit strategies: Phasing-out, discontinuation or suspension

**Phasing-out:** Outline what factors will trigger phasing-out and how the process will take place. A few examples are provided here:

- An improvement in crisis conditions.
- Graduation of target households from below to above poverty line (without including MPG assistance).
- Improvement in target households’ access to employment and other income-generating opportunities, including significant policy changes such as provision of work permits or provision of minimum wages.
- Livelihood programmes on a large scale targeting socio-economic vulnerable households.
- Socio-economic vulnerable households included in national safety net programmes by government.

“Soft” conditions may be helpful where graduation is possible. Soft conditions impose no penalties for non-compliance. They include encouraging behavioural change by combining conditions on access and some sort of contract between recipient and provider on the use of resources (indirect conditioning or explicit conditionality).

**Discontinuation or suspension:** Have a contingency plan and identify triggers or “redlines” for possible scenarios, such as:

- A reduction or phasing-out of funding.
- An external, unavoidable event such as conflict or natural disaster.

- Dramatic decline in the humanitarian or protection situation.
- Changes in government policies on CBIs.

**BOX 15. WORLD BANK WELL-BEING SCALE: LEBANON (0–10 SCALE)**

MPGs can have unexpected benefits. The World Bank is testing the Well-being Scale in Lebanon, which asks the following questions (this can be adjusted to local context). “Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with:

- Your life as a whole?
- Your standard of living?
- Your health?
- What you are achieving in life?
- How safe you feel?
- Do you feel part of your community?
- Your future security?”

**Do No Harm/Do More Good**

Implementing agencies should review the status of assisted families regularly and discuss issues at the coordination forum prior to taking any decision to discontinue assistance. In case the funding might be reduced or stopped, agencies should ideally prioritise the most vulnerable cases assessed and assisted to date.

38 OPM (2014) Does one size fits all? The conditions for conditionality in cash transfers.
RESOURCES

DELIVERING THE MPG

Standard Operating Procedures for Inter-Agency MPGs (Annex 3)

Common Delivery Mechanisms (Annex 4)

E-transfers in emergencies: implementation support guidelines (CaLP)

Cash in Emergencies Toolkit (IFRC)

PROGRAMME QUALITY

Protection risk and benefits analysis: Protection Outcomes in Cash-Based Interventions: a literature review (ECHO, UNHCR, DRC), ERC multi-agency cash and protection research, and Guide to Protection in CBIs: Protection Risk and Benefit Analysis Tool

Data protection: Protecting Beneficiary Privacy: principles and operational standards for the secure use of personal data in cash and e-transfer programmes

E-Transfers and operationalizing beneficiary data protection – a two-hour e-learning course

Communication, feedback and other accountability mechanisms:

The Core Humanitarian Standard

Monitoring and reporting:

Lebanon NGO Consortium M&E toolkit

DRC Turkey CBI M&E Toolkit

Cash and Voucher Monitoring Group Somalia

MarkIt: Price Monitoring, Analysis and Response Toolkit

UNHCR Cash Transfer Programmes Working Group Inter-agency Market Monitoring System

Exit strategies, including graduation:

Operationalising Graduation in Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Nets Programme.