Meeting Minutes: Thursday 8th October
Venue: OCHA, Gaziantep
Coordinator: Jennifer McAteer cbr.twg@gmail.com

Attendees: Mercy Corps, CARE, MRFS, Relief International, Global Communities, CRS, REACH, ACTED, Solidarities, Masrat, GOAL, SCI, World Vision, PIN, FFP/ USAID

Attachments: September market monitoring report

Dropbox link: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t44bfyivqctdtqt/AABf4QaVRt2EzXPv2q8LTXea

Agenda points:
Welcome, introductions

1. Information sharing between partners
   - GOAL cash transfer presentation
   - Round table discussion

2. Assessments
   - Feasibility Study with Global Communities
   - Market Monitoring update

3. Capacity Building
   - Learning needs analysis update
   - Training schedule

4. AOB
   - Reviewing TOR
   - Reviewing sub groups
   - Presentation schedule

Summary of discussion

GOAL Cash Transfer Presentation
The process and experience of a one-time emergency cash distribution to IDPs from Maaret Misrin

As part of the Northern Syria Response Facility (NSRF), funded by ECHO and piloted by GOAL in partnership with Big Heart, 10,000 displaced households received support through a blended response of in kind, voucher and cash distributions.

The NSRF is:
- Used in repose to large acute crises e.g. 200 or more people, with one-time aid
- Adaptable to any kind of crisis, displacement, returnees, weather incident etc.
- Aimed at achieving quick assessments and internal approvals for a speedy response (no donor approval required)
- Hosted by GOAL in partnership with Big Heart, funded by ECHO. New donors are coming on board

Any comments or questions, please speak to Jen or Nathan
- Looking to expand sectors and geographic coverage
- Delivers food and NFI distributions plus a mix of cash and vouchers
- Reached over 10,000 HH since full facility launched in April

**Cash procedures**
- To date has reached approx. 3,700 HH with cash distribution (two waves of 2100 and 1600)
- GOAL adapted their cash distribution procedures for emergencies, to facilitate the speed of the response
- Identified beneficiaries were 100% verified to avoid mis-targeting
- IVTS agents handling distribution is best option and most flexible; GOAL staff oversee handover of cash alongside transfer agent. Programme staff approve total transactions with transfer agent; M&E staff verify and pay agent. Process takes place within 5-6 days (target) from crisis to distribution.
- Cash amount calculated on food needs for one month for HH of 6

**Lessons**
- Perception of cash is different than vouchers or in kind – cash is thought to require more verification because cash is *so desirable* = more caution was required in distribution
- Distribution was limited to 300 recipients per day – too many recipients can lead to disorganization at the distribution
- Despite agents' willingness to travel to a variety of sub districts beneficiaries still had to travel to the designated distribution points – this unfortunately increased distance for beneficiaries, for many by more than an hour. However on the whole agents can be flexible on locations and didn’t refuse to go anywhere.
- Some local councils refused to allow to distribute cash, particularly for new IDPs rather than previous IDPs or host communities. More sensitisation is required with the local councils on the objective of the rapid response facility and to be comfortable with cash distribution.
- Verification slowed down the response (this was a tradeoff to ensure correct lists)
- Responsiveness to beneficiaries should increase in future, e.g. vary transfer amount by family size

- More PDM forthcoming
- Very few challenges noted by recipients and mostly (98%) preferred cash over kits

**Questions from the floor**
1. What was the cost of the distribution and cash exchange
   - Exchange rate agreed with the trader on that day plus a small transaction fee
2. 20,000 SYP per household – any targeting on no. of people per household?
   - No, due to speed and simplicity – amounts were blanket
3. Expenditure monitoring  
   a. No data on beneficiaries expenditure yet and harder to find the same people after displacement or returning to their original location but we used enhanced distribution monitoring

4. Pre/post assessment for the markets?  
   a. No official market assessment - used joint monitoring tool for history of area and visits of staff 
   b. Now basic assessment template has been put together for NSRF so on the first visit the team will fill in the rapid assessment 
   c. In some very small towns cash not possible due to lack of market functionality

5. Targeting of IDPs  
   a. Don’t apply regular criteria – assume everyone displaced is vulnerable – blanket targeting – some complaints about mis targeting e.g. with families who are considered to be better off than others.

6. Form of ID used in targeting verification  
   a. Verification visits by GOAL staff provided registration ID for the specific programme and amount of cash, stamped and signed by GOAL staff including date and location of distribution 
   b. Beneficiary lists not shared outside of GOAL – GOAL staff verify beneficiaries against list at the point of distribution

7. Perceptions of GOAL staff that cash is more desirable – did this change during the programme?  
   a. No – did not change – cash is more desirable

8. Scaling up and lowering verification – is it possible in future?  
   a. Still too risky to lower verification thresholds 
   b. Some instances of (attempted) duplication e.g. wives and husbands on different lists in different towns

9. Option for community verification?  
   a. Maybe – a concern would be restricting beneficiaries within host or IDP communities as mentioned by the local councils 
   b. This is an interested idea and could be piloted

10. Informal settlements?  
    a. No one in camps – recipients were living without shelter or collective centres

### Round table discussion of activities plus challenges

The group discussed current programmes and main challenges experienced in delivering assistance. Three INGOs had the chance to share their experience. Where possible the group provided possible suggestions for overcoming challenges.

The main perceived challenges include:
1. Paper work – limits the INGOs ability to scale up and target more households
2. Monitoring the markets – staff, access, security

This discussion will be a standing item on the agenda
3. Return transfer of vouchers between Turkey and field offices in Turkey is often subject to rigorous controls and negotiation with the authorities.
   a. CBR-TWG coordinator will raise this with OCHA
   b. May be possible and within donor compliance regulations to scan them in the field so negotiations only need to be made on entry
   c. Raise this issue with donor so they are aware of difficulty and can try to lower compliance requirements to verification at field level

4. What is the best way to agree the exchange rate with vendors?
   a. Vendors can be provided a choice of methodology to calculate the exchange rate i.e. average over the period or set on distribution day
   b. Contract in USD so there is less fluctuation

5. One INGO has experienced pressure from the local council during a period of influx of IDPs. The local council, aware that the INGO has limited remaining funding, requested to divide the calculated payment between more households. The INGO has refused this request to avoid setting a precedent but there is a risk the local council may go ahead and ask beneficiaries to split their funding
   a. Is a problem throughout countries with CTP – not unique in Syria
   b. Further sensitisation is required with the local council on the calculation of the payment and why it is not beneficial to split the amount.

   In future, sensitisation could be aided by targeting methodology e.g.
   a. self-selecting beneficiaries whereby the community are able to apply for inclusion in a programme – followed by 100% verification
      I. This is more relevant for recovery programmes rather than emergency programmes
      II. There may be considerations with correct self-identification – i.e. beneficiaries don’t present an application within the timeframe
      III. Partner staff can/ should be present to assist with completing the application for those who are unable to illiterate
   b. Could match the self-selection and local council selection methods to triangulate
   c. Make sure not to ignore the local councils – ensure they are aware of the selection process for approval and acceptance of the programme

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<th>CBR Feasibility Assessment</th>
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<td>Introduction to the cost effectiveness study – Jen and Rola</td>
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<td>Global Communities and the CBR-TWG have launched a call for proposals for interested parties to conduct the ‘Cash Based Response Feasibility Assessment’. The study arose out of a wide interest from CBR members, donors and UN bodies around the ability to conduct cash programmes in Syria, the cost effectiveness of these alongside in-kind responses and the preferences of beneficiaries to receiving CBR or in kind. The scope of work was shared amongst</td>
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<td>No immediate action; please look out for requests for your engagement in KIs</td>
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CBR-TWG I MoM 08.10.15
CBR members for endorsement. The applications will be evaluated in w/c 12th October. The study will be completed by Dec 31st.

The methodology will include a household survey and FGDs with communities in Syria as well as key informant interviews with I/SNGOs, market actors and communities.

The CBR-TWG coordinator would like to request support from the members for engagement in the project, providing information to the consultants and acting as gatekeepers to key departments in your organisations.

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<th>Joint Market Monitoring – September report debrief</th>
<th>September report is now complete; 916 surveys in total across five governorates including in some ISIS held areas. Report and data set can be found here:</th>
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Key points
- Unusually stable month – small increases in prices due to inflation
- First month we have studied exchange rates at the local level – results show largely uniform exchange rates across areas
- Water trucking services are now included as well – wide ranging prices and has made a substantial change to the SMEB
- Al Hasakeh largely still depending on municipal water supply so isn’t included in the analysis of water trucking services

Questions
1. How are items identified
   a. In line with the methodology the enumerators are required to look for the cheapest option of the assessed item with a defined quantity. The SMEB is designed to reflect cultural choices of most commonly used commodities and reflect the minimum at which these items can be purchased for a 6 person HH for one month.
2. Mapping unavailable goods over 6 months would be interesting to see the trends and supply chain linkages
   1. This is a good suggestion and could be included in the 6 monthly trend/ meta-analysis
3. Health items e.g. pharmacy drugs on the markets are not currently included although conversations have been held with the health cluster to see how this could be reflected.
Learning Needs Analysis and Training Schedule

Following the learning needs analysis the key gaps are market assessments, programme management and monitoring. Therefore a 3 part training schedule has been devised over the next three months. Each training will be relevant to different colleagues although programme managers/ coordinators are likely to be relevant to all three.

The first training will take place on 22/23rd October in Antakya. The training will cover MAG and RAM methodologies for market assessments. The training will be two days

Day 1. Introduction to the RAM and MAG; experience sharing between partners
Day 2. Half day practical in markets in Antakya followed by half day de brief and close of training

Instructions for participants have been sent out including preparatory work and pre- questions to return to CBR- coordinator.

The training will take place in English and should be attended by bi-lingual speakers who can train field staff. Logistics colleagues are encouraged to attend as market assessments and decision making afterwards are related to procurement.

In November the plan is to hold programme management training for cash based responses, followed by monitoring training in December for M&E colleagues.

AOB

1. Introduction - Andrew Rouser, FFP/ USAID
   a. Currently engaging in voucher programming – may be open to actual cash programming with enough evidence provided.
2. The CBR-TWG will be reviewed to ensure it is still up to date with the mandate of the group and to inform newer members of the group.
3. Sub groups have been effective to varying degrees and it is time to look at revisiting the topics covered. The SMEB is due to be reviewed at the end of the year. It may also be important to look more closely at protection and gender considerations with CBR or targeting criteria. All suggestions for topics welcome.
4. At the next meeting Mercy Corps have volunteered to present on their voucher programme.

Next meeting: Antakya w/c Monday 2nd November. Agenda to follow – will include roundtable sharing of project outlines and challenges. Suggestions for agenda items welcome.