# Cash-Based Responses/Technical Working Group (Northern Syria)

**Meeting Minutes:** Thursday 14th January  
**Venue:** SCI, Antakya  
**Coordinator:** Jennifer McAteer  
**cbr.twg@gmail.com**

**Attendees:** IRC, Relief Int., Bihar Relief, CRS, REACH, PIN, GOAL, WHH, Violet  
(Skype) Solidarities, SCI

**Attachments:** Presentations from IRC and Solidarities, hawala annexes, regional meeting report, survey presentation, market monitoring timeline

**Dropbox link:** [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t44bfyivqctdtqt/AABf4QaVRt2EzXKPv2q8LTXea](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t44bfyivqctdtqt/AABf4QaVRt2EzXKPv2q8LTXea)

## Agenda points:
- Welcome, introductions – thank you to SCI for hosting
  - Welcome Hosam, CBR-TWG IMO!
- 1. Cash grants presentations from IRC and Solidarities  
- 2. Multipurpose Grants  
- 3. Regional technical meeting and hawala updates  
- 4. 2016 planning  
- 5. Markets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda points</th>
<th>Summary of discussion</th>
<th>Main take away/action points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Presentations on cash grants from IRC and Solidarities | - IRC - repeat cash distributions – vouchers  
  - Vouchers for work at the beginning – USD in Raqqa then moved to Darkoush  
  - Then unconditional value vouchers  
  - Switch to SYP and vouchers for cash  
  - Rationale for changing  
  - Didn’t need to rely on vendors to stock commodities  
  - Accountability  
  - Vouchers still made an impact on the market – small micro vendors were affected = negative economic impact on whole society  
  - Multiplier effects (how did you monitor them) very hard to quantify – focus groups and interviews with vendors  
  - Cost savings – labour intensity reduced and fewer vouchers produced and distributed, fewer vouchers sold  
  - Voucher programme based on the commodity voucher model – explanation to donors  
  - One main value voucher and then smaller top up vouchers | IRC to share targeting criteria |
- Enables flexibility with SMEB and price monitoring
- Identified private sector partners – tendering process, ensuring liquidity
- 3 main private sector actors – set up point of sale offices
- Payments made in 4-5 days – how done this?
- Exchange rate – PSV paid in USD, and received 2% commission – same as hawala
- SYP – kept the same as the typical currency in the area
- Unconditional programme doesn’t get more than CFW programme
- Monitoring feedback – food, health, debt, utilities
- 56% - no enough for basic needs
- 100% want cash not in kind
- No beneficiaries felt unsafe at distribution point
- Good feedback from LC - good for women’s entry into work

Questions
- Targeting - Economic vulnerability criteria – shelter, dependency and other indicators
- Amount = MEB + other costs on shelter etc.
- Market monitoring beforehand but would do more systematic price monitoring
- De-conflictions with 4ws

Solidarities
- Districts of Azaz and Jabal Samaan in Aleppo Governorate
- CFW (conditional) and Unconditional distribution of cash
- SI supported around 1313 both host communities and IDP households (approximately 13578 individuals).
- March – October 2015

CFW
* Number of Beneficiaries in each community
* Selection Criteria: household composition (size, condition of head of HH), HH capacity (source of income, # earners in HH, source of food), HH living condition, vulnerability (disability, pregnancy, elderly, etc.)
* Types of CFW Activities: (cleaning streets, collecting garbage, planting trees in streets, paving road with gravel, etc.)
* Number of days worked per beneficiary: 20 working days per beneficiary.
* Cash amount provided per beneficiary: 30,000 SYP

Unconditional cash grant
- Number of Beneficiaries:
- Selection Criteria: IDPs households with women (especially widows), child head disabled head of household.
- Amount Received: **30,000 SYP**.
- Distribution Methodology:
  - Money sent by Hawala to Syria
  - Our team is one who was present to supervise the distribution and check the identities, amount received, signature of beneficiaries.
  - Communication with local council and organized of the distribution in groups to avoid any high number of gathering for security reason.
  - Sign the Inventory form.
  - Replacements if any was done after two days of the distribution.
  - Considering that the Survival Minimum Basket (SMB is around SYP 19800, it means that HHs who depend on humanitarian assistance or charity can cover respectively only 36% and 67%, of their food need

**Usage**
- 100 % of HH spend around 10000 SYP on food which represents 34% of their total cash grant.
- When compared to the next two prioritized needs; gas for cooking represent only 14% of the expenditure and water 7%.

**Satisfaction**
- All respondents were satisfied with the distribution process carried out during the project.
- 27% complained about the relevancy of the CfW activities. They preferred to change the type of activity implemented. But no one report they were unsafe or undignified.
- 29% of beneficiaries reported that they have some other needs not covered

**Questions**
- SMEB is 19,800; how did you calculate the distribution amount of 30,000?
- Where do NFIs fall in the list of expenditures?

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2. **Multipurpose cash grants**

Following the discussion on unconditional grants the group considered the possibility of harmonising a multipurpose cash grant (MPG) amount. The group agreed the MPG should remain flexible and adaptable to the context which differs geographically and between communities. Suggestions were put forward around ‘modules’ of payments, potentially different for IDPs and host communities as the needs vary.

‘Modules’ could include:
1. IDPs newly displaced amount including NFI kits, mattresses and a ‘resilience’ top up amount for other costs (debts)
2. Host group including rent, ‘early recovery/ savings’ top up amount
3. Winterisation
4. Health? Mostly spent on emergency operations and is not for regular health issues – health cluster to advise

The SMEB consists of consumables that would continue to be distributed each month following an initial instalment of the above ‘modules’

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(Jen to collate rent assessments from Shelter/ NFI cluster)

(Discuss with health cluster the costs and requirements for health expenditures)

(Sub group to form to further discuss and agree the formulation of MPG)
The group discussed how ‘newly displaced’ would be identified – potentially within 1 month, max 3 months. The point was raised about people who have been repeatedly displaced.

There is a possibility of CBR actors applying for funding under the HPF in the second call (summer 2016) to roll out MPGs at scale and/or pilot a system/process. HPF is a ‘safe’ environment to test out hypotheses and pilot innovative programmes, improving advocacy messages to the donor community.

The CBR should put together a concept note for OCHA. Discussion included:

1. Could be used as a fund for rapid emergency grants in emergency displacements, accessible by CBR-TWG members
2. Will require harmonisation of mechanism and processes across NGOs – what should come first? What is most feasible?
3. Could be used to replicate a successful methodology from elsewhere e.g. the Lebanon cash consortium
4. Could be used to pilot a new innovative joint mechanism

3. CTP Regional Technical meeting and hawala legal update

The regional technical meeting was held in Istanbul in December, hosted by Chatham House and facilitated by Beechwood International, the consultants of the IVTS study. Donors, NGOs, UN agencies, political analysts were all present and had a frank discussion under Chatham House Rules about the feasibility of cash through different mechanisms in the region.

Key take aways are:

1. The need for NGOs to use the recommended annexes of the report to improve working with the hawala system (attached docs)
2. Donors, NGOs and local partners to be transparent about the risks involved, not cascading the risk on to each other.

The legal side of the discussion on IVTS is being led by the NGO forum. It was proposed to have a finance committee working alongside the NGO forum at director level. The NGO forum are in favour of the committee and further discussions will take place to activate the group.
4. 2016 planning, survey

As mentioned in previous meetings there will be a planning workshop to be held in Gaziantep in February. This may be preceded by a conversation with donors about their expectations since the last donor workshop.

The group agreed to keep attendance at the work planning meeting to the CBR-TWG actors only.

The draft agenda would be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00 – 09.45</td>
<td>Welcome and introductions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2015 wrap up</td>
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<td>09.45-10.45</td>
<td>SWOT Analysis</td>
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<td>10.45-11.00</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
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<td>11.00-12.00</td>
<td>Strategy development</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.10-13.10</td>
<td>Work plan development</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.10-13.30</td>
<td>Wrap up and close</td>
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<td>13.30-14.30</td>
<td>Lunch and end</td>
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The survey results have shown CBR-TWG participants were ‘mostly’ happy with the group in 2015; 66% success rating for the 5 key indicators in the workplan.

Key Achievements are:
- Price monitoring
- Donor workshop
- Regular meetings
- "Technical support list (although needs better dissemination)"

Key challenges and improvements are:
- Require support from technical experts
- Learning from Syria specifically/ information sharing
- Cluster architecture
Lack of field level coordination

Priorities for 2016 are:
1. Community of Practice
2. Information gathering, analysis and sharing
3. Accountability to Syrian communities and Harmonising Approaches
4. Advocacy and funding identification

5. Markets

REACH are working on the analysis of 6 months’ price monitoring data from 2015 – June – November. Key points are:

1. Hard to analyse across the 6 months due to increase in coverage, changes in availability of baskets, unclear causality e.g. air strikes only sometimes having an apparent effect on markets/ prices
2. Price trend analysis is for the median price of complete baskets only
3. Fall in prices in October partially due to expanding coverage into Kurdish areas
4. Fuel is the most uncertain commodity to compare due to low prices from Kurdish councils and fewer data points in other areas e.g. North west.

The NFI cluster have asked to add plastic sheeting to the price monitoring list. The group raised some concerns over the source of plastic sheeting currently on the market – low stock hints to them being sold from in kind distributions. Group agreed to look into the matter further and postpone data collection of plastic sheets until Feb/ more info is available.

Joint price monitoring will begin again next week.

6. AOB

Market assessment training certificates handed out/ Hosam will post to NGOs not present

Coordinator will link NGO with assessments to the shelter/ NFI cluster TWG lead for more consideration of this matter.

Next meeting: February work planning workshop, Gaziantep