



**DIGNIFYING, DIVERSE AND DESIRED:
CASH AND VOUCHERS AS
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
FOR MIGRANTS**

JANUARY 2022

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Cover photo: A Syrian girl walks among the tents in the refugee camp of Domiz, in the South-West of Dohuk province, Kurdistan, in Northern Iraq. Credit: IFRC.

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We should have vouchers ready or cash ready at the humanitarian service point to be given off-the-shelf to migrants. If we see this as a ten-step process, we should have steps 1 to 5 already done, and then just focus on the field implementation.

– Team leader, humanitarian organization.

Covid-19 vaccinations being administered to migrants in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. October 2021. Credit: Malaysian Red Crescent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past decade, cash and voucher assistance (CVA) has been increasingly recognized as a dignifying modality of assistance when seeking to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable, offering choices to affected communities and being more cost effective and time efficient in many scenarios. Yet, the modality still faces acceptance challenges when its use is explored to attend to migrants. As the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) looks to scale up its CVA to be used in at least 50 per cent of all its humanitarian assistance, it is seeking to identify and address those challenges, as well as promote enablers for the use of CVA.

This report includes a baseline review of the use of CVA in the IFRC's past and current operations assisting migrants, finding that in a 42-month period between 2018 and 2021, CVA was used in 25 per cent of the IFRC's emergency responses assisting migrants. This report then highlights over 35 diverse examples of CVA by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to attend to migrants, exemplifying the scope of the modality in different migratory responses. Following key informant interviews with sectoral experts on CVA and on migration, as well as engagement with affected communities through user-centric consultations, this report also sets out some key findings on the use of CVA in migratory contexts, along with opportunities, barriers and risks, illustrated by some good practices or experiences shared by National Societies.

Given the above, this report proposes the following key recommendations to the IFRC and its National Societies to increase their use of CVA with a focus on migrants:

1. Leverage their global presence and diversity for targeted advocacy on CVA for vulnerable migrants
2. Develop skeleton models for the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies supporting migrants with CVA at various points along migratory routes and for various migrant profiles
3. Build visibility and expertise through national cash working groups in migration operational contexts
4. Develop and implement community engagement and accountability (CEA) tools specifically focusing on host communities and CVA when attending to migrants
5. Determine Red Cross and Red Crescent "red lines" to ensure a principled approach to CVA for migrants
6. Create simplified tools that consider CVA as part of a migration intervention, rather than a stand-alone cash transfer programme (CTP)
7. Where appropriate, follow an approach of CVA to assist migrants in certain sectors, rather than CVA for migrants
8. Work with pilot projects to test conditions and appetite
9. Invest in legal preparedness measures, pre-establishing framework agreements with FSPs and exploring national laws and regulations to identify ways to address vulnerable migrants
10. Identify where the Red Cross and Red Crescent can complement social protection systems to attend to migrants who cannot access them.

1

Introduction



*Venezuelan migrants crossing the border between Colombia and Ecuador. 2018.
Credit: Ecuadorian Red Cross*

a. Background

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the international coordinator and support provider for its 192 member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), together forming the world's largest humanitarian network. The IFRC's key missions are to save lives, protect livelihoods and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises around the world. The IFRC and its members have an important responsibility as one of the world's most important actors in local and international humanitarian response to disasters.

The IFRC's *Agenda for Renewal and Strategy 2030*¹ more effectively position the IFRC secretariat for global coordination and leadership to ensure the IFRC's network addresses five global challenges, which include "Migration and Identity", and seven areas for transformation. The "Migration and Identity" challenge seeks to ensure that all people who migrate and are displaced are safe, are treated humanely and with dignity and have the support they need to thrive in inclusive societies. This will include expanding humanitarian support provided to migrants along their routes to ensure their needs are addressed through essential services and protection, irrespective of their legal status, in both emergency and non-emergency contexts. The IFRC's Plan and Budget 2021--2025 also highlights the importance of global cash leadership for the IFRC and its National Societies and includes a target of 50 per cent of all humanitarian assistance to be provided using cash and/or vouchers by 2025.² In supporting communities and local economies in this way, the IFRC seeks to improve its accountability, effectiveness and efficiency in reaching the most vulnerable.

Considering the scaling up of its assistance through these modalities, the IFRC is seeking to explore the barriers to and opportunities for the use of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) in humanitarian responses to migration. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimated that at the end of 2020, some 82.4 million people globally were forcibly displaced, equivalent to 1 in every 100 people in the world, with approximately 42 per cent of those being minors of age.³

As an example of the potential scale of opportunities, the IFRC, in partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent Society, is currently delivering the world's largest humanitarian cash assistance under the Emergency Social Safety Net programme, reaching over 1.8 million refugees living in Turkey. However, identity has been pinpointed as one of the principal barriers to receiving cash and voucher assistance and other humanitarian services. The Dignified Identities for Cash Assistance project (DIGID) was launched in January 2019 under the governance of a consortium comprised of Norwegian Red Cross, Norwegian Refugee Council, Norwegian Church Aid, and Save the Children Norway.⁴ The IFRC, in partnership with the Norwegian Red Cross, has been leading the technical implementation of the project, which seeks to address the challenges of providing cash assistance to people who do not possess official identity documents (ID). DIGID is currently developing a solution to address the needs of vulnerable people with no official ID to receive cash assistance, which was piloted in Kenya in 2021.⁵ The IFRC also recently commissioned a report⁶ to explore the risks and opportunities of digital ID in migration as part of the Dignified Identities project (DIGID 2), some elements of which are further developed in this report.

1 IFRC. [Strategy 2030](#).

2 IFRC. [Plan and Budget 2021-2025](#).

3 UNHCR. [Refugee Data Finder](#).

4 Humanitarian Innovation Platform. [DIGID](#).

5 DIGID. 2021. [Dignified identities in cash assistance: lessons learnt from Kenya](#).

6 IFRC. 2021. [Digital identity: enabling dignified access to humanitarian services in migration](#).

b. Objectives of this report

This document is the final report of a global consultation commissioned by the IFRC on the barriers and opportunities to scaling up the use of CVA to support migrants in various contexts. It provides highlights from discussions with migration experts and stakeholders within the IFRC, including the regional focal points for CVA, as well as the Global Migration Task Force, National Societies, ICRC, and external organizations, mapping the current use of CVA in various migration contexts and identifying the enablers and obstacles for its use. This report also provides insights from a user centric consultation, to ensure feedback from affected communities complement the perspectives of the CVA and migration experts. Finally, this report draws out key recommendations for the IFRC and its member National Societies to scale up CVA in the migration context.

It is expected that this report will be used by the IFRC's cash team and migration and displacement team to collaborate on a shared strategy to scale up CVA in the migration context. It will also be shared with National Societies looking to increase their use of CVA in their migration response.

c. Methodology

The methods used to complete this report were:

- (i) Literature review (Appendix II): Desk-based document review and non-exhaustive analysis of existing literature on the use of cash and voucher assistance (CVA), particularly when providing support to vulnerable migrants.
- (ii) A baseline review of the IFRC's past and current emergency operations with migration elements (emergency appeals and operations under the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, or DREFs), and analysis of their use of CVA.
- (iii) Development of user journeys and user personas (Appendices III and IV, respectively), to highlight the challenges and opportunities when cash and voucher assistance is provided to migrants. This also supports analysis of the pain points from a migrant's standpoint and potential adjustments in the use of the CVA modality to be better tailored to migrants' needs, vulnerabilities and circumstances.
- (iv) Key informant interviews carried out through virtual meetings with a wide range of stakeholders. Eight key questions (listed in Appendix I) were used to prepare for the interviews, tailored to the profile of the key informants.
- (v) Focus group discussions with targeted individuals specializing in CVA and migration issues in the humanitarian context.
- (vi) User centric consultation to ensure feedback from affected communities, incorporating best practice in community engagement through the involvement of IFRC community engagement and accountability colleagues. Migrant interviews and focus group discussions with migrants were carried out by four National Red Cross Societies in four different migratory scenarios, seeking perspectives from affected communities to complement the discussions with experts.

The consultation was carried out remotely, with most interviews taking place between 29 June and 27 August 2021 and a few final interviews in September 2021. In total, 88 individuals from 31 organizations, including 17 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the IFRC's five administrative regions, were involved in key informant interviews or focus group discussions. Stakeholders interviewed included research institutions, donors, components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (including the Global Migration Task Force) and United Nations agencies. A broad range of informants were sought to cover the spectrum of global migration scenarios and variety of CVA options used, while efforts were made to seek views from headquarters advisors and field implementers. The consultation was also carried out in close collaboration with the Cash Hub⁷, reflecting a shared interest in the issues and the development of complementary products.

Interviews were conducted in English, French or Spanish, depending on the working language of the interviewees, using Microsoft Teams as the communications platform. Key questions were shared in advance of the interviews, along with context about the research, and detailed written notes were taken as the interviews progressed. Participants were informed that the interviews would be treated as confidential and that all personally identifiable information would be anonymized. As such, the research findings do not identify individuals, nor link views to specific organizations or locations, other than where those relate to the review of published literature. In the case of consultations with affected communities, the respective National Societies and the location of the consultations are identified.

d. Terminology

To ensure a common understanding with stakeholders, the following definitions were used and communicated in advance during the consultation:

- **Cash and voucher assistance (CVA):**

“CVA refers to all programs where cash transfers or vouchers for goods or services are directly provided to recipients. In the context of humanitarian assistance, the term is used to refer to the provision of cash transfers or vouchers given to individuals, household or community recipients; not to governments or other state actors. This excludes remittances and microfinance in humanitarian interventions (although microfinance and money transfer institutions may be used for the actual delivery of cash).”⁸

- **Gender:**

“Gender refers to the social differences among persons of various gender identities throughout their life cycles. Although deeply rooted in every culture, these social differences are changeable over time and are different both within and between cultures. Gender determines the roles, power and resources for females, males and other identities in any culture.”⁹

- **Inclusion:**

“Inclusion in emergency programming focuses on using the analysis of how people are excluded to actively reduce that exclusion by creating an environment where differences are embraced and promoted as strengths. Providing inclusive services means giving equitable access to resources for all. In the longer term, inclusion also focuses on facilitating access to opportunities and rights for all by addressing, reducing and ending exclusion, stigma and discrimination.”¹⁰

- **Migrant:**

“Migrants are persons who leave or flee their habitual residence to go to new places – usually abroad – to seek opportunities or safer and better prospects. Migration can be voluntary or involuntary, but most of the time a combination of choices and constraints are involved.” This therefore includes, among others, labour migrants, stateless migrants, migrants deemed irregular by public authorities, as well as refugees and asylum seekers, notwithstanding the fact that they constitute a special category under international law.¹¹

- **Protection:**

“Protection in humanitarian action is fundamentally about keeping people safe from harm. It aims to ensure the rights of individuals are respected and to preserve the safety, physical integrity and dignity of those affected by natural disasters or other emergencies and armed conflict or other situations of violence.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s definition of protection is the most commonly accepted by humanitarian actors (including the Movement): “all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law)”¹²

8 IFRC Livelihoods Centre. [Glossary](#).

9 IFRC. 2018. [Minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies](#).

10 Ibid.

11 IFRC Policy on Migration, 2009: <https://www.ifrc.org/Global/Governance/Policies/migration-policy-en.pdf>

12 See note 2.

2

Baseline of IFRC Emergency Operations Addressing Migration Needs



*Interview with Malian refugees. Niamey,
Niger. August 2021.
Credit: Niger Red Cross Society.*

A baseline review of the IFRC's emergency operations was conducted to assess the IFRC's use of the CVA modality when attending to migrants. Searching the IFRC's database of emergency appeal and DREF documents published between January 2018 and June 2021, a set of keywords¹³ was used to identify the operations in which the CVA modality was used to assist migrants.

Two data sets were produced: one which identified documents that included migration keywords only, and the other which identified documents including both migration and CVA keywords. Documents were scored using the BM25¹⁴ similarity weighing method, which takes into account the frequency of the search terms in the document (BM being the abbreviation for "best match"). It also takes into account how frequently keywords are mentioned in a document, as well as the relative length of each document. Documents were then ordered in decreasing order, displaying first the highest scoring, or most relevant, documents for the given keywords. Documents with a score of seven or above were considered most statistically relevant. All documents with a score of six or above were manually reviewed for this baseline review, to determine the CVA modality used, the profile of the target population, and whether CVA was complemented with other forms of assistance.

A first review considered only the IFRC's operations launched to attend to population movement or migration scenarios globally. There were 32 such operations between January 2018 and June 2021, made up of 20 DREFs and 12 emergency appeals. The key results are set out below:

- (i) 25 per cent of those operations included the CVA modality to attend to migrants. All of those were emergency appeals and the review did not identify any DREF which included CVA for migrants. All those operations included a component of unconditional CVA, and 19 per cent of the total operations (alternatively, 75 per cent of the operations that did include CVA for migrants) included a component of conditional CVA. All the operations that included a conditional component of CVA were conditioned to the shelter sector, and half of those were also conditioned to the livelihoods sector.
- (ii) 16 per cent of those population movement operations included CVA for host communities (equivalent to 62 per cent of the operations that did include CVA for migrants). The review identified one case in which multi-purpose cash was provided to host communities and not to migrant communities.
- (iii) Of the eight operations that included the CVA modality to attend to migrants:
 - a. 100 per cent of those operations included other forms of assistance for migrants.
 - b. 87 per cent of those operations included CVA for settled migrants, while 37 per cent also targeted migrants in transit.

This demonstrates that there have been greater challenges in integrating the CVA modality in short term DREF responses to population movement which usually last three to six months, as opposed to emergency appeals, which could last for a year or more. When the CVA modality was included, a component of unconditional cash was always included, and usually targeted settled migrants as well as host communities. It should also be noted that where integrated, the CVA modality covered relatively smaller portions of the target population.

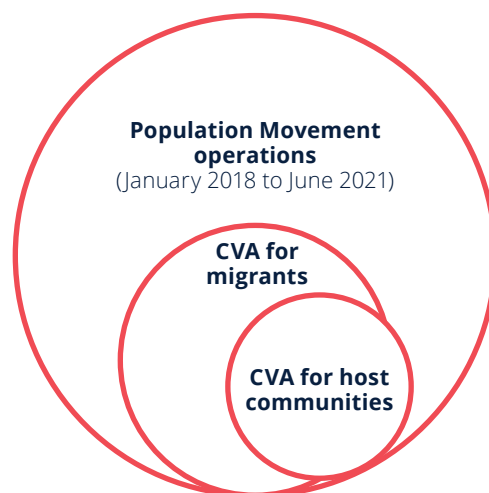


Figure 1: Overview of baseline review of the IFRC's population movement operations between January 2018 and June 2021 and their use of the CVA modality.

13 Keywords used for filtering included, in the migration category: "migrant", "refugee", "displace", "IDP", "people on the move", "asylum seeker"; keywords used for filtering the CVA category included: "cash", "voucher", "ticket", "grant", "CTP", "CVA".

14 For further details, see: [The Probabilistic Relevance Framework: BM25 and Beyond](#), Stephen Robertson and Hugo Zaragoza, Foundations and Trends in Information Retrieval Vol. 3, No. 4 (2009) 333–389.

The second part of the review considered other IFRC-supported operations that included a component of assistance to displaced people but were not identified as population movement operations (again considering only documents that scored more than six points). These operations included floods, hurricanes, fires and civil unrest operations, as well as the global COVID-19 pandemic response. The results of the review are set out below¹⁵:

- (i) 55 per cent of the operations assisting displaced persons included CVA for migrants. Half of those operations were emergency appeals and half were DREFs.
- (ii) All the operations that included CVA for migrants included a component of unconditional CVA, and 66 per cent included a component of conditional CVA, all of which were conditioned to the shelter sector.
- (iii) All the operations that included CVA for displaced persons included CVA for internally displaced persons (IDPs), whether settled or still on the move, and all also included CVA for host communities.

In a natural disaster scenario, as opposed to a population movement scenario, there seems to be a greater inclination towards supporting migrants with CVA, noting that they tend to be IDPs. In these scenarios, there is a preference for unconditional CVA where possible.

Regarding some of the DREF operations launched in 2021, the documents provide some explanation as to the non-use of CVA as part of the response, following an institutional desire for CVA to be explicitly addressed and any non-use justified. Such explanations include the urgency of the response; the lack of market analysis in the migrant camps; limited access to markets for migrants (for example, when arriving to an empty site without facilities or to a reception centre); or a greater need for specific services, such as shelter, health, water and hygiene, where CVA would not allow migrants to access those services (due to lack of supply).

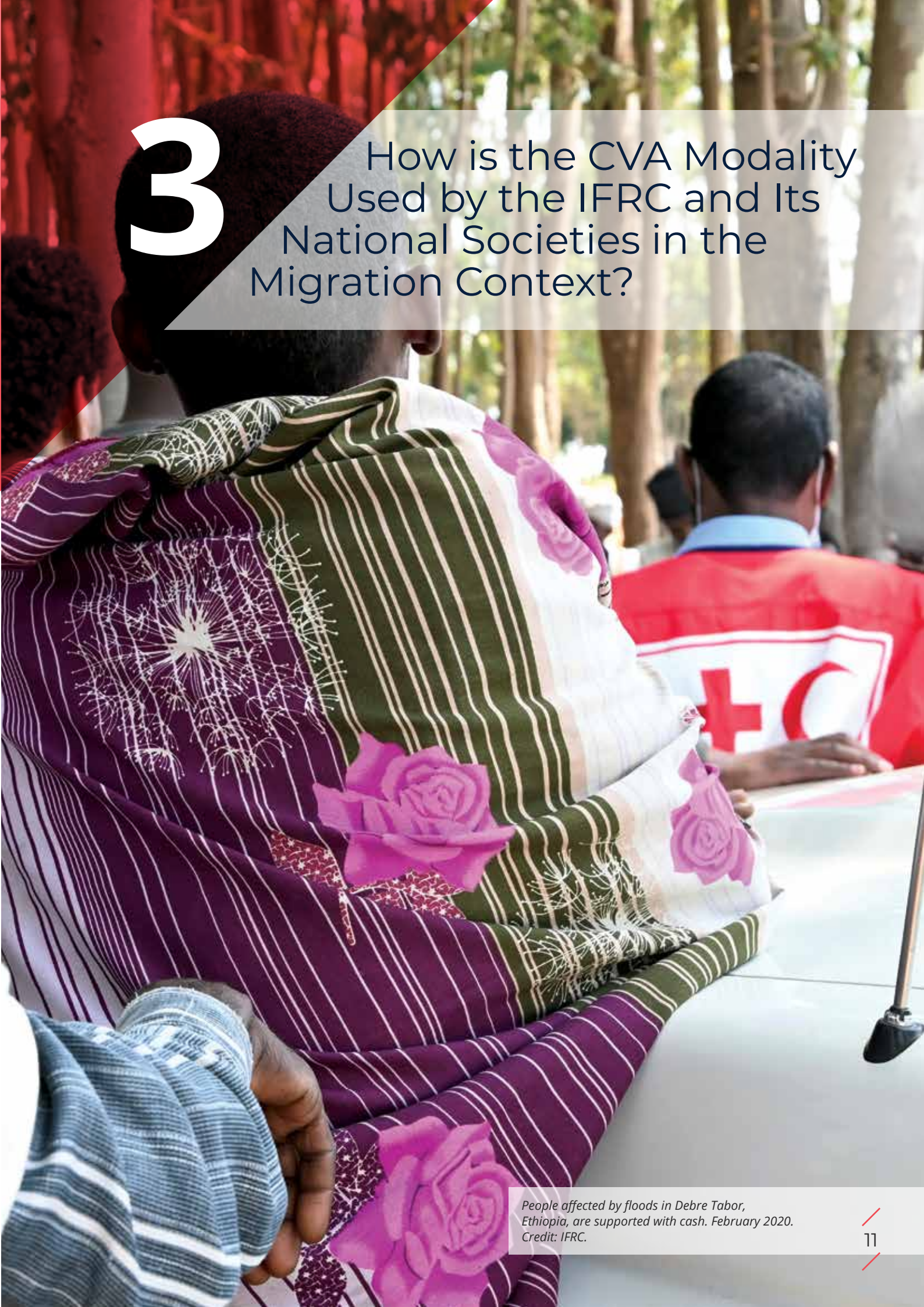
In some cases, the reasons for not including the CVA modality are not clear, especially where the operations reported that other agencies had been providing CVA, or where migrants were crossing entire countries and would normally have had access to markets along the way. It is expected that in some cases, it would have been perceived as more difficult to assist migrants through CVA due to their irregular status.

The IFRC's operations are developed in line with the targeting and response options assessed with the National Society concerned. This baseline review therefore reveals that additional efforts could be made by the IFRC and National Societies to evaluate the potential integration of the CVA modality when assisting displaced persons through emergency operations, in line with the recommendations set out in this report.

15 It should be noted that the data are skewed, since the global COVID-19 pandemic appeal covers most of the countries in the world, yet is counted as one operation for the purposes of this review. While the operation reports included the activities of 177 National Societies, the review identified nine cases of migrants being assisted with CVA.

3

How is the CVA Modality Used by the IFRC and Its National Societies in the Migration Context?



People affected by floods in Debre Tabor, Ethiopia, are supported with cash. February 2020. Credit: IFRC.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), often with the support of the IFRC, have made use of the CVA modality to attend to various needs in a variety of migration and displacement scenarios. Some illustrative examples¹⁶ are provided below, divided broadly according to the key steps of people's migratory journeys. Overwhelmingly, migrants have been assisted with CVA when they are in a settled situation, and very rarely at their point of departure. Nonetheless, this is a powerful demonstration National Societies' ability to use the CVA modality in a versatile and appropriate manner when assisting migrants, in line with the principles of the Global Compact on Migration¹⁷ outlining migrants' rights to access basic services and humanitarian assistance at various stages of their migration.



- Cash in hand provided in foreign currency to migrants who wish to voluntarily return to their countries of origin (provided at the airport of departure)



- Pre-paid cash cards for settled and transit migrants to access specialist health services, with accompaniment from volunteers and transport support
- Migrants provided with rechargeable cards to purchase medicines for their health needs.
- Cash to support rental needs of migrants who lost their livelihoods or were unable to continue their journeys during the COVID-19 pandemic
- In border departments with binational indigenous nomadic communities, providing conditional cash through prepaid cards to strengthen housing units on both sides of the border
- Providing pre-paid cards to families with children travelling across the border daily to attend school in another country, along with psychosocial support and top-up telephone credit to obtain mobile internet to support continued studies during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Vouchers provided to IDPs to obtain primary healthcare services in a National Society's health centres in three regions of the country, in particular for pregnant women, women-headed households, child-headed households and children up to 16 years of age.

¹⁶ In contrast to the baseline of IFRC-supported operations, this list includes examples of National Society actions to assist migrants that were supported by IFRC, as well as other members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement or other agencies and donors.

¹⁷ [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#), adopted by the UN General Assembly on 19 December 2018, A/RES/73/195.



- Bus tickets provided (as vouchers) to transit migrants to support them in safely travelling to their next destination
- Cash in hand provided to transit migrants who are also receiving first aid, orientation, restoring family links or food packs
- Cash for migrants transiting through an island
- Vouchers for transit migrants to purchase goods from shops, including soap and disinfectant products
- Volunteers giving transit migrants some small sums of cash to buy food for a few days
- Transit migrants receiving vouchers to obtain hot meals from a local restaurant over two days
- Bank transfers provided to migrants whose temporary visas have expired and were unable to return to their countries due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.



- Multiple transfers over the long term, through monthly top-ups of cash cards, to registered refugees
- Electronic transfers to support people internally displaced due to conflict who have applied online to a government support scheme implemented by the National Society
- Electronic transfers to support communities hosting people internally displaced due to conflict, where those host communities have applied online to a government support scheme implemented by the National Society
- Monthly cash payments to support people displaced by floods
- Vouchers for people displaced by floods, to purchase reconstruction and housing materials
- One-off, multi-purpose cash grants provided to people displaced by floods, with the cash withdrawn from a financial service provider branch closest to them.
- Bank cheques provided as unconditional cash for people displaced by an earthquake
- Cash provided to refugees to attend to basic needs
- Pre-paid cash cards provided to settled migrants to pay for leases or to carry out housing improvements
- Pre-paid cash cards provided to irregular settled migrants living with HIV, with a partner NGO providing free anti-retrovirals
- Migrant families and host communities receive support for productive initiatives, including training, guidance and stabilization funds, which allow them to maintain a minimum income during their months of training
- To complement the provision of health services, providing supermarket vouchers for two months to cross-border migrants who fled their country following an incident of armed conflict
- Automatic transaction machine (ATM) cards provided to refugees living with host communities
- CVA sent by mobile phone to people who had lost their homes in floods and who had been temporarily displaced, in addition to hygiene kits
- CVA provided as part of medium-term case management for internally displaced persons who are persecuted by authorities or armed groups, in addition to providing psychosocial support, medical assistance and some hygiene or food kits
- Vouchers provided to refugees for winter clothes
- One-off bank transfers for refugees to meet basic needs
- Supermarket cards provided to refugees excluded from safety net programmes, in addition to hygiene parcels and new-born kits.



- Cash conditioned to livelihoods provided to returning migrants
- Returning migrants provided with unrestricted cash for food security and conditional cash for livelihoods recovery
- Through a payment agency or bank, providing cash conditioned to livelihoods for vulnerable returning dual-nationality migrants, to enable them to connect with local networks
- Cash provided to young students repatriated to their countries of origin by their national authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Debit cards provided to returnees over three months in addition to psychosocial support, hygiene kits, food vouchers and vouchers for school supplies.

4

Focus on Migrant Voices

ESTE ES UN ESPACIO
SEGURO PARA SOÑAR
CIAD.



*Focus group discussions with Venezuelan migrants.
Soacha, Cundinamarca, Colombia. August 2021.
Credit: National Society of the Colombian Red Cross.*

As part of the consultation process, interviews and focus group discussions were also held with migrants in four country contexts, to ensure that migrant voices could be adequately considered and integrated into findings and recommendations.

In Colombia, Kenya and Niger, the respective National Societies engaged with migrants to obtain their views on CVA in line with a structured survey. Those National Societies and country contexts were selected in large part due to their availability and capacity to carry out the interviews, as well as their particular interest in their respective migration scenarios. Focus group discussions on digital identities were also held in Colombia and Kenya. Two unstructured interviews were held with a refugee and an asylum seeker in the United Kingdom, and the views expressed then have been integrated elsewhere in this report. Separate reports have been produced to highlight the results of the migrant consultations in each of Colombia¹⁸, Kenya¹⁹ and Niger²⁹, which each included over 20 closed and open questions. A snapshot of the findings on migrants' views on CVA is set out below.

a) Interview data

The key data for the migrant interviews in each country are presented in Figure 2.

Country	Colombia	Kenya	Niger
No. of migrants consulted	• 208 interviewees	• 43 interviewees	• 35 interviewees
Location of consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cundinamarca • Nariño (South-Western border with Ecuador) • Guajira (North-Eastern border with Venezuela) • Norte de Santander (North-Eastern border with Venezuela) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei integrated settlement (North-West Kenya, border with Uganda and South Sudan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niamey (capital city)
Migrant profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venezuelan (pendular, transit, settled) • IDPs (due to conflict or other reason) • Host communities • Colombian returnees • Transcontinental migrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees • Asylum seekers • Host communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees • IDPs • Transit migrants • Returnees

Figure 2: Summary table of migrant interview data.

b) Migrant profiles

In the case of Colombia, most of the migrants interviewed were of Venezuelan nationality (77.5 per cent), and most of these were settled migrants. The sample also included a large minority of migrants in transit (14 per cent) and 13 per cent of respondents were from the host community. In Kenya, 84 per cent of interviewees were migrants (refugees and asylum-seekers) and 16 per cent were from the host community. In Niger, all were migrants (either refugees, IDPs, migrants in transit or returnees), with none of the respondents being from the host community.

c) Knowledge and prior receipt of CVA

In Colombia, 66 per cent of respondents had previously received CVA; 97 per cent of respondents understood that CVA is meant as assistance delivered to vulnerable people; 55 per cent of respondents had previously received CVA. Nonetheless, only 18 per cent of respondents confirmed

18 National Society of the Colombian Red Cross. 2022. Cash and voucher assistance in migration context: voices of migrants in Colombia. <https://cash-hub.org/resource/cva-in-migration-context-voices-of-migrants-in-colombia/>

19 Kenya Red Cross Society. 2022. Cash and voucher assistance in migration context: voices of migrants in Kenya. <https://cash-hub.org/resource/cva-in-migration-context-voices-of-migrants-in-kenya/>

20 IFRC. 2022. Cash and voucher assistance in migration context: voices of migrants in Niger. <https://cash-hub.org/resource/cva-in-migration-context-voices-of-migrants-in-niger/>

that they had been told the reasons for which a person receives CVA or not, with the main reasons being vulnerability and covering basic needs. In Kenya, 88 per cent of respondents had previously received CVA, with 35 per cent having received this through mobile money and 26 per cent through a pre-paid card. In Niger, 60 per cent of respondents clearly understood that CVA is assistance provided to vulnerable people, and 62 per cent of respondents had previously received CVA, mainly through cash in hand (47 per cent of respondents who had previously received CVA) and voucher (39 per cent of respondents who had previously received CVA). In Colombia, those migrants who had previously received CVA had mostly received it through ATM cards (41 per cent), followed by electronic transfers (20 per cent) and vouchers (18 per cent), while 15 per cent of respondents had received cash in hand.

These results demonstrate that migrant populations largely understand the concept of CVA, and that most respondents had previously received CVA. The results of these interviews should therefore be interpreted considering the knowledge of interviewees and past experiences, both positive and negative, of receiving CVA.

d) Preferences

An overwhelming majority of migrants interviewed in Colombia (84 per cent) confirmed that CVA is the type of assistance they prefer. This result was consistent when filtering through the different migrant profiles, whether the respondents had previously received CVA in the past or not. In both Kenya and Niger, respondents also confirmed that CVA was their preferred modality of assistance.²¹ In all three scenarios, migrants were able to express their preference for CVA over receipt of goods in kind or services, many reiterating that CVA allows them to exercise their autonomy and ability to choose how to direct the support received.

i. Where is CVA preferred along the journey?

Another large majority of migrants interviewed in Colombia considered that the settlement phase is the best part of the journey for them to receive CVA (84 per cent), while only 7 per cent mentioned that they would prefer to receive CVA while in transit. When results were filtered to only include responses of transit and pendular migrants, a similarly large majority of 79 per cent of respondents confirmed their preference to receive CVA at the points of settlement. Therefore, for the migrant population in Colombia, regardless of the migratory profile of the respondent, there remains a preference for CVA allowing for greater dignity and stability in the sites where migrants settle.

This preference was also expressed in Kenya, where 75 per cent of respondents confirmed that they preferred to receive CVA once they are settled or in a camp, while 17.5 per cent preferred to receive CVA at their point of departure, and five per cent while in transit or on the move. In Niger, a smaller majority of respondents, equivalent to 52 per cent, also confirmed that they preferred to receive CVA while they are settled or in camp, while 29 per cent preferred to receive CVA in transit or on the move.

Migrants' overall preference to receive CVA while settled or in camps is of particular interest, given the various migratory stages that migrants move through. The variation in the results also reflects the different migratory scenarios in each interview context, noting for example that all the respondents in Kenya were settled migrants. A greater preference for CVA to be provided in transit had been expected, yet even transit migrants in Colombia overwhelmingly preferred to receive CVA once settled. This may be a reflection of the risks they feel they may face while in transit or may be a result of the greater ease of access to in-kind support or services along the transit route, while those are harder to access once migrants settle in urban centres or camps.

²¹ This is consistent with the data collected by the Mixed Migration Centre from over 19,000 migrant interviews and displayed on its [4Mi interactive database](#) (see information under "Assistance") which indicates that over 70 per cent of migrants prefer CVA over other forms of assistance.

ii. Conditional or unconditional CVA?

In Colombia, 54 per cent of respondents preferred unconditional CVA, while 23 per cent preferred conditional CVA, and a final 23 per cent of respondents stated that either option would be suitable. When filtering the results to only include respondents who had not previously received CVA assistance from the National Society, a greater proportion preferred unconditional CVA (73 per cent).

In Kenya, a similarly small majority of 58 per cent of respondents confirmed that they prefer unconditional CVA. Interestingly, some interviewees who expressed their preference for conditional CVA stated that the conditionality came with greater accountability, which they were more comfortable with since it led to a better use of the funds.

Conversely, in Niger, a small majority of 55 per cent of respondents preferred conditional CVA as opposed to unconditional CVA. As in Kenya, respondents expressed their comfort with the conditioning to support expenditure in line with the objectives of funding and enable better decision making. While an unexpected result, this also speaks to the importance of reconfirming local preferences through a rapid survey prior to implementing CVA, to ensure that cultural and contextual preferences are adequately factored into the final modalities.

iii. Preferred CVA delivery mechanism

In Colombia, the three most preferred mechanisms for receiving CVA were cash (38 per cent), electronic money transfers through digital platforms (25 per cent) and ATM cards (20 per cent). When filtering the results to only include respondents who had not previously received CVA assistance from the National Society, 57 per cent preferred cash as a delivery mechanism, with 25 per cent also preferring electronic money transfers. This may be demonstrative of the relative ease of access and immediacy of use provided by cash in hand, and potential barriers to other mechanisms such as technology or identification.

In Kenya, 30 per cent of respondents preferred receiving CVA through pre-paid card and another 30 per cent preferred direct transfers to their bank accounts. In third place was the preference for mobile money, with 22.5 per cent of respondents preferring it, and a relatively small proportion of 12.5 per cent expressed a preference for cash in hand, despite the security risks of receiving CVA in this way.

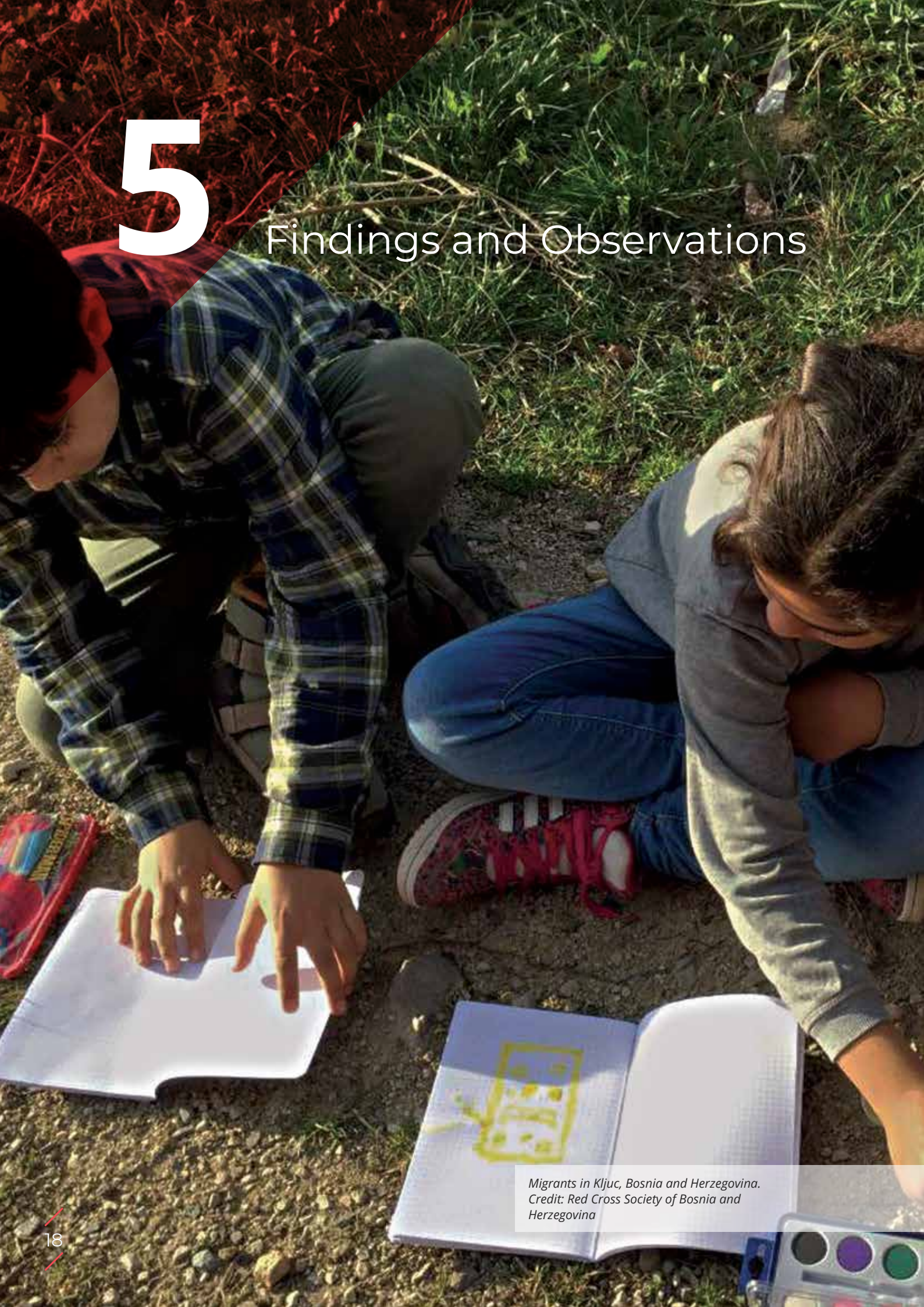
In Niger, most respondents, equivalent to 76 per cent, stated that they preferred receiving CVA as cash in hand. The next preference was for vouchers, with 12 per cent of respondents preferring them. As in the case of Colombia, this could also be indicative of the ease of access and use of cash in hand. The comparative results also illustrate access to technology, or lack thereof, as well as the extent of financial inclusion.

e) Conclusions

Overall, the migrant consultations provided the opportunity to reconfirm certain general viewpoints, such as affected persons' preference for CVA over other forms of assistance, and which CVA modalities may be preferred in various contexts. It also tested views on preferences for unconditional CVA as opposed to conditional CVA and allowed for results to be filtered based on migrant profiles. Finally, it was an important reminder of the crucial need to seek views from members of affected populations, particularly those in flux like migrant populations, and engage them in response planning and implementation.

5

Findings and Observations



*Migrants in Ključ, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Credit: Red Cross Society of Bosnia and
Herzegovina*

This section outlines the key findings and observations gathered from the consultation with migration experts and key stakeholders, including migrants. This section also includes an outline of the key opportunities and barriers, as well as risks, that have been identified. Finally, it touches on how to ensure inclusion when using the CVA modality to assist vulnerable migrants.

Throughout the consultation, it was clear that National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies address a wide range of migration scenarios and needs and, in various cases, assist migrants through CVA. National Societies overall tend towards a relatively small-scale use of CVA for migrants. CVA is usually used to target low numbers of affected persons as part of a response or project, and often through pilot actions, suggesting hesitation or concerns about implementation. This is further explored below in subsection 5.b on risks and challenges.

Certain migration scenarios are more conducive to CVA than others and, depending on context as well as on migrant profile, CVA may not always be the most appropriate modality and its use to assist migrants should be evaluated in line with response option analyses.



They say that migrant returnees have nothing to eat for the first two weeks of their return, that is why we prefer to give them food kits.

– Project manager, National Red Cross Society.



Importantly, differences between migrants do impact opportunities to assist them with CVA in terms of their migratory status, their access to tools, as well as acceptance and inclusion. Certain CVA mechanisms may not be viable options to attend to irregular or undocumented migrants in highly regulated contexts. Internally displaced migrants may be able to receive CVA more easily; in the examples provided by certain key informants, internally displaced people (IDPs) could receive vouchers of up to ten times the value of vouchers given to international transit migrants. From a legal and administrative point of view, providing CVA to returning migrants or IDPs may be simpler, as agencies would be dealing with nationals from their own countries. An IDP may also have more straightforward access to social protection schemes, as these tend to focus on migrants who have a regular status and are settled, albeit temporarily. Yet, IDPs may still face rejection from members of host communities, even though they are citizens of the same country.

There is also a growing use of CVA as part of migration interventions more broadly, rather than as a central piece of an action, as the term “cash transfer programme” may imply. Often, CVA is not considered as a modality that can be combined with other interventions, so there is a need for a mindset change internally, along with a consideration of when and how an element of CVA can be adapted to improve an intervention. Various key informants highlighted the importance of supporting migrants with activities in parallel to CVA, focusing on assistance to obtain identification documents, or how to support negotiations with landlords so migrants can secure stronger rental rights.²² National authorities also recognise this, in one case proposing that humanitarian agencies promote elements of health and education to support migrant integration and inclusion when providing CVA to migrants.



For returnees, we will need to have meetings with community members to assess whether there is even a chance that they will be accepted back. Returnees will be involved in community rehabilitation works, showing their willingness to contribute and be a useful part of the community, resuming their economic life. In such cases, complementary programming is essential to include something more structural, visible, tangible; giving cash alone is not the solution.

– Migrant protection and assistance advisor, international organization.



22 The Cash Learning Partnership (CALP) and the Global Protection Cluster have also highlighted that CVA can achieve meaningful protection outcomes when embedded in case management and referral systems and accompanied by complementary, cross-sectoral services. For further details: CALP. [Protection and Cash and Voucher Assistance](#).

Finally, in the context of migration, which is often cast in a political light, some consideration is required as to how National Societies can maintain a principled approach when using the CVA modality. Certain scenarios may arise which will require reflection and determination of institutional limits or red lines, as well as alternative options or mechanisms to address gaps. These may include:

- When providing CVA to migrants included within social protection systems, how to support migrants excluded from those same systems?
- When providing CVA to migrants who are identified by a partner as voluntary returnees, to what extent can their desire to return to their countries of origin be properly assessed as being voluntary?
- When using CVA mechanisms that require identification from migrants, how to ensure that undocumented migrants are not being discriminated against?
- When advocating with national authorities on the use of CVA to assist migrants, how best to approach topics that may be considered to be politically sensitive?

A National Red Cross Society maintains a separate fundraising bank account especially to deal with cases such as undocumented migrants who need medical assistance or rental support and who cannot be supported with projects financed by other agencies that require migrants to have a regular status or identification. There is an internal procedure for the use of this bank account, and the permission of the Director General is required to access its funds and provide cash to the affected person. While the bank account contains very little funding, it provides the National Society with a small pool of funds to assist vulnerable migrants in need, in line with its principles.

a) Opportunities and barriers

i. Opportunities

All key informants from implementing humanitarian organizations expressed the desire to increase their use of CVA as a modality when attending to migrants, which by itself is an important opportunity.

- **Greater inclusion of CVA in Red Cross Red Crescent migration response models**

As part of its migration strategy, the IFRC and its member National Societies have developed models to respond to migration scenarios, such as humanitarian service points (HSPs).²³ HSPs typically provide services such as health, psychosocial support, immediate humanitarian assistance, connectivity, hygiene, protection, referrals to specialist services, and any of these services could incorporate a CVA element, if integrated into the HSP's planning and implementation. For example, CVA could support a migrant in obtaining access to a specialist service which they could not otherwise reach. Alternatively, migrants often have a strong desire to access communications; CVA can facilitate this, especially while people are on the move. There is, therefore, a powerful opportunity in further developing tools that can orient and guide the use of CVA in the context of existing migration response structures.

“

Displaced people or people on the move should have equal access to the full range of support mechanisms on offer, especially where more accepted to be effective and efficient.

– Team leader, donor.

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“

We should give National Society branches a petty cash allowance of 5,000 US Dollars and they can just give this cash in hand if needed.

– Team leader, humanitarian organization.

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23 For further details, see: Global Disaster Preparedness Center. [Humanitarian Service Point toolkit](#).

This could similarly be examined for the IFRC's longer term migration programming. For example, the IFRC's Global Strategy on Migration 2018 – 2022²⁴ highlights the IFRC's programming strengths in its support to migrants, outlining several activities, such as in-kind donations and service provision. Yet, it makes only a single mention of CVA with regard to longer-term livelihoods and resilience work, rather than including it as a modality that could achieve cross-sectoral goals. Similarly, the IFRC's three-year programme for humanitarian assistance and protection for people on the move²⁵, launched in August 2021, includes cash programming alongside livelihoods support, and as an activity unto itself, rather than as a modality to meet sectoral objectives.

- **Red Cross Red Crescent ability to support at various migrant journey points**

Through their presence in every country, and often seen as trustworthy humanitarian actors on either side of a national border, National Societies are uniquely placed to provide CVA support to migrants throughout their journeys: whether at entry points, in transit, upon settlement, on return, supporting families that were left behind, and ensuring coordination across borders. Their volunteer base will sometimes include migrants from certain communities, allowing a better understanding of vulnerabilities and greater trusted engagement with the vulnerable community.



The refugees knew the National Society in their country and knew that the [National Society in our country] would have the same values and humanitarian principles. They preferred to come to seek support from us.

– Head of Operations, National Red Crescent Society



Particularly in the context of people on the move, the localized presence of National Societies along the migratory route is a powerful asset to effectively and efficiently implement CVA.

- **CVA as a transportable and discreet solution**

Migrants highlighted that CVA was a dignifying modality, as their need for support was not apparent to members of their own communities or host communities. As opposed to in-kind assistance, CVA does not generally reveal that someone has received assistance, so it is a more discreet and confidential form of support. For people who remain on the move, CVA is also a more transportable option (except where conditioned to use in a highly localized market), accordingly not burdening the migrant as they seek to continue their journey.

- **Growing involvement in national Cash Working Groups and other coordination forums**

The IFRC and its National Societies are increasingly involved in national cash working groups (CWGs) and other coordination forums with agencies supporting migrants through CVA, and additional emphasis should be placed on this. Several National Societies have served or currently serve as co-leads of their countries' CWGs, which affords them important visibility within the humanitarian community as well as increased capacity strengthening, while providing the opportunity for increased advocacy on CVA in migration contexts. National Societies can confidently lead on community engagement, as well as on negotiations with national authorities. They are also able to refocus discussions on local as well as national emergencies, which may not otherwise gather as much attention from international agencies. Closer coordination helps to ensure humanitarian strategies are broadly aligned on the issues of CVA and migration, which could otherwise be divisive.

24 IFRC. 2017. [IFRC Global Strategy on Migration 2018–2022: Reducing Vulnerability, Enhancing Resilience.](#)

25 IFRC. 2021. [Humanitarian assistance and protection for people on the move: A route-based approach spanning Africa, Middle East and Europe.](#)

In one country context, the national authorities had imposed restrictions on all implementers, INGOs and NGOs alike, in the use of CVA for displaced persons, since mid-2020. The National Society leveraged its auxiliary role, advocated with the national authorities and obtained special consideration to allow them to use the CVA modality in camps.

As the National Society was preparing to implement a few months later, it received a letter from the national authorities reiterating the decision that there could be no direct cash distribution to displaced people, including by the National Society, and requesting them to comply with the restriction. It later emerged that there had been confusion and potentially complaints by humanitarian agencies as the National Society had received an exemption from the restriction – despite other agencies having the option to implement their activities through the National Society and reach a greater number of people.

Increased coordination in relevant forums could have helped to ensure humanitarian agencies could align and collectively support the National Society's privileged access to provide CVA to migrants.

• COVID-19 as an accelerator

Despite the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the scale of humanitarian needs and the response helped to promote greater innovation, flexibility and acceptance for the use of CVA to support migrants.



COVID-19 provided an excuse to bend the rules
– Team leader, donor



In certain cases, migrants were assisted with CVA as part of a broader group of persons considered to be vulnerable; the vulnerability criteria were not linked to being a migrant, although migrants were able to receive CVA. In addition, CVA may not have been the planned modality for many organizations seeking to support migrants, though many ended up opting for that modality given confinements and restrictions on movement and attempts to reduce physical contact, as well as the lack of alternatives. Yet, this provided the opportunity to further explore the use of CVA when attending to migrants, seeking innovation in a complex external environment.

• Promotion of social cohesion through local economy multipliers

CVA can help to promote the inclusion of migrants in host communities by providing them with purchasing power and being seen as consumers or contributors to the local economy (though this is less so where migrants purchase from businesses run by other migrants).



A cash transfer totally transformed a returnee woman's life. She had been shunned by her village. After one year, we saw that the cash transfer had supported her integration into her community, restoring her dignity.

– Project manager, National Red Cross Society.



We gave cash for education. When migrants were able to pay the teachers, that had a big impact on their integration with the community.

– Cash transfer advisor, international organization.



ii. Barriers

Given some of the barriers around the use of CVA to support migrants, National Societies have faced challenges, sometimes preferring not to extend beyond their comfort zones. Concerns were shared about reporting, donors, spending on unintended objectives, how funds could be controlled, the understanding of their mandate and their auxiliary role, how to manage host communities and the desire to avoid additional tensions within the community, and finally about perceptions of promoting cross-border migration by giving migrants money to support them on their journeys. Few of these concerns arise when humanitarian actors support migrants through physical support such as food or hygiene items. Yet, some agencies overcame such barriers in favour of providing the preferred modality of assistance to migrants.

“

The organization did not have the full structure to distribute funds in cash, but that was still the best option for the people we were attending.

- Manager for social activities, humanitarian organization.

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• Perceived complexity of integrating CVA

The CVA modality can sometimes be perceived as overly complex, needing specialist knowledge, and requiring the completion of dozens of formats with several internal approvals. As a result, there is some hesitancy to contemplate its use and there needs to be a better understanding of the modality for its potential as a versatile tool to be realized.

“

Cash is effective but requires a higher level of technical understanding than in-kind assistance; there are various possible mechanisms, monitoring tools are more complex, it needs to be aligned with the local market. All of this requires a more complex analysis.

- Migration manager, humanitarian organization.

”

In addition, there is a perception that in-kind assistance can more easily be pre-positioned as part of preparedness actions, whereas pre-positioning CVA in a particular country context raises several barriers in terms of transfers, reporting and safety of funds.

• Migrants on the move are generally harder to reach and monitor

Migrants on the move may be difficult to identify, unless there is a clear, condensed flow of people, or trends established over a long time. Migrants may be scattered and dispersed, and therefore harder to reach, especially when compared to migrants living in a camp. As a result, agencies may not be able to complete their targeted implementation, as they may be unable to ensure a second or multiple transfer is made, given the risk of losing sight of migrants.

“

At the time that we were to effect the funds transfer, it was sometimes impossible to find the people who had been selected for support, as they had been displaced in the meantime, without leaving any contact details.

- Manager, humanitarian organization.

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Barriers have also emerged for monitoring mechanisms for CVA received by people on the move, as the migrants are likely to no longer be at the same site as the distribution. For example, in the Americas context, a humanitarian agency could include remote monitoring by phone, depending on how many transfers are made. However, this will create a non-representative selection of migrants who do have access to telecommunications (mobile telephone, WhatsApp, or social media) and

who can be monitored for their use of CVA and will likely exclude more vulnerable profiles who cannot access or use such telecommunications. In the case of a single instance of CVA, monitoring will likely be more difficult. An exit interview might be useful as a minimum, though this may make certain donors or partners more nervous. It should be noted that such a barrier would not arise with in-kind support.

• **Lack of migratory status or identification**

A lack of a regular migratory status or identification was commonly raised as a barrier to supporting migrants with CVA, though some National Societies have found ways to address this. Some would ask for some other form of documentation, such as transport tickets, confirmation of participation in language classes, or school attendance records. Other National Societies would support undocumented migrants to declare the loss of their identity documents online, to register the loss and obtain a reference number which, along with the declaration, can serve to document the CVA.

To some extent, this was identified as an issue about internal processes and justifications, rather than external requirements. To address this, one interviewee recommended that a two-pronged approach be adopted, developed to support migrants who may not have identification. As such, a different, more tailored process would be followed for people considered to be at higher risk²⁶, to facilitate processes and ensure flexibility to fulfil the humanitarian imperative.



Not being documented is a double exclusion: not only do they not have a migratory status, but they do not have any identification documents.
– Migration advisor, international organization.



There was also concern about increasing criminalization of irregular international migration, which can extend to providing migrants with a means of transport. In some countries, bus drivers could be penalized for (even unknowingly) transporting irregular migrants, with legal provisions requiring them to check travellers' identity documents and permits prior to transporting them. As a result, some implementing organizations have chosen not to support irregular migrants, due to their status.



We have a responsibility to serve them and our systems should follow that.
– Team leader, humanitarian organization.



• **Limitations from financial service providers (FSPs)**

Linked to the lack of identification documentation are requirements from FSPs, which are exclusionary regarding certain migrant profiles (for example, around identification, residence and personal data in general). There are usually solutions to such barriers, often related to adapting the delivery mechanism. Some implementing agencies have negotiated special terms with FSPs for them to accept identification cards issued by that organization, provided following community confirmation, as a form of identity verification.

Further, displaced persons may be in geographical areas where banking institutions are not present, due to the remoteness or the insecurity of the areas. In such cases, humanitarian organizations may again need to seek alternative mechanisms, such as vouchers to be used in local shops.

• **Resistance from national authorities**

Some national authorities are resistant to the CVA modality to assist migrants, as this have could be seen as a pull factor or an enabling factor for refugees and migrants. Some authorities have therefore sought to regulate the use of the CVA modality to assist migrants through publishing national guidelines and addressing the cash working groups, as well as the coordination mechanisms to attend to migrants. There can be reluctance to be seen to be supporting migrants with any

²⁶ An example is the concept of “persons at heightened risk” adopted by UNHCR, who include: “persons commonly known as ‘persons with specific needs’ who face specific barriers due to discrimination, their identity, or other factors that prevent them from fully enjoying their rights or accessing services they need.” UNHCR. [Emergency Handbook](#).

assistance that could, in turn, be seen to promote a loose concept of integration, where the government policy is to encourage migrants to return to their place of origin.

“

Cash does not make it worse, it will be the same for non-food items. They will just sell it in the market. Assistance in general will always be a pull factor.

– Cash intervention advisor, international organization.

”

One National Red Cross Society had managed to secure funds from a donor to provide cash to transit migrants, to complement the National Society activities focused on mental health and protection. The CVA modality was intended to provide a dignified solution to shelter and transport needs for migrants in the middle of their journeys.

“

The proposed CVA intervention was presented to the national authorities, and they jumped up in fright, concerned that this would generate a pull factor. – Migration Manager, National Red Cross Society.

”

Some barriers from national authorities relate to the maximum amount that may be distributed per migrant family unit, depending on size, or to the frequency of distributions. Often, this is linked to amounts provided under national social protection schemes, though those schemes tend to have a long-term implementation period, as opposed to CVA to support migrants, who may receive support for just a few months. Also, host communities covered under a social protection scheme also benefit from other services (such as health and education), to which the migrant population may not have access. Depending on the context, therefore, there may be some effective advocacy points to support more generous upper value limits for CVA for migrants.

“

Governments want to peg any CVA for migrants to their own social protection amounts. They cannot feed a narrative which shows that the government allows cash assistance to migrants which is three or four times higher than what the government gives to its own people.

– Humanitarian advisor, donor.

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Such resistance is context-dependent. One key informant stated they did not meet with any resistance from local authorities when using CVA and, rather, worked closely with the social affairs departments. They ensured that the authorities were closely involved in control mechanisms, monitoring the quality of items and goods which were being provided by merchants in exchange for vouchers.

• Resistance from host communities

Almost all key informants noted that providing CVA to migrants can raise tensions with host communities. There may be fewer tensions when the migrants are returnees, though this may depend on the time spent away from their communities, with the latter being less accepting the longer the time has been.

“

Some communities are very cash-deprived, so giving something as precious as cash to a migrant (who might be perceived as an outsider) might create some misunderstandings at best and tensions at worst.

– Migration advisor, international organization

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National authorities and implementers have developed various ways of addressing this barrier:

- National authorities will require that a certain percentage of CVA be given to vulnerable members of host communities.
- Implementers themselves will choose to give a certain percentage of support to members of host communities to ease tensions. Many mentioned providing 15 to 20 per cent of assistance to vulnerable members of host communities and 80 to 85 per cent of the assistance to vulnerable migrants. Members of one national CWG informally agreed to give 30 per cent of their support to members of host communities and 70 per cent to migrants when attending to migrant communities. They stated that when it is perceived that there is not enough support for host communities, local authorities will raise concerns. One National Society split their CVA support to provide half to migrants and half to members of host communities, to demonstrate equal treatment of people in need.
- Certain National Societies will decide to avoid the tensions and not use the CVA modality when assisting migrants.
- Other implementers highlighted that the cash would flow into local economies, generating multiplier effects for the whole community.

The strong concerns expressed on this matter illustrate the need for clear and practical guidance to humanitarian agencies on engaging with host communities in the context of CVA for migrants. Within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, no such guidance seems to currently exist.

One National Society explained that it generally carries out advocacy with host communities to explain how much more vulnerable migrants are and seeking to address what they consider to be prejudiced perceptions. When it provides support to migrants through CVA, the National Society does not provide CVA to host communities, but when it assists migrants through services, these are also offered to host communities.



We provide cash to the migrants in a personalized way and do not involve the community in the decision. We cover the missed communities who do not benefit from government support systems. We want to ensure that they are treated in a dignified manner. Perhaps the migrant does not want to show their family or their neighbourhood that they are in need, it is a matter of pride, so a discreet visit is organized. Sometimes it is at night, when the neighbourhood activities are at a minimum and the National Society visit will not be noticed. Head of Operations, National Red Crescent Society.



Aside from arranging discreet visits to migrants, the National Society also plan the activities so that CVA can be distributed from the National Society activity centres within communities where many services are provided (such as health screenings, livelihoods, counselling). As such, an outside observer will not know what form of assistance was obtained by the migrant. Alternatively, the National Society will notify a migrant of CVA by SMS, allowing them to use the CVA in a supermarket to attend to certain needs. In this way, an observer will not necessarily know that they received CVA support.

- **Resistance from donors**

Certain donors may be concerned about the visibility of the use of CVA to support people on the move, due to the political perceptions that this may cause. Accordingly, they may be less supportive of the modality in migration programming. This is despite their knowing that the amounts provided through CVA are far too small to finance a cross-border or transcontinental trip.

“

When talking about mixed migration flows where the potential status of those on the move is not clear, we have had to be quite wary of the use of cash, especially unconditional, due to a big concern that this would be seen as facilitating the movement of people, aiding and abetting ‘illegal migrants’.

– Team leader, donor.

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“

This was not an evidence-based decision... the optics outweighed the evidence, or lack thereof.

– Team leader, donor.

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Nonetheless, the consultation did not identify any donor rules stating that CVA may not be used to assist undocumented migrants.

b. Risks and challenges

i. Risks and challenges for end users

When seeking to implement a CVA modality, specific risks to the target migrant population should be identified through an appropriate context and response analysis. As a minimum, humanitarian agencies should not increase the risks to migrants when using CVA as a modality.

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Particularly from the protection perspective, there needs to be a really comprehensive risk analysis on the threats and vulnerabilities, and also capacities – not all the people on the move have the same capacities or support network. There should also be an analysis of the routes that people will be taking.

– Protection expert, donor.

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- **Negative community perception**

As noted above, the receipt of CVA by migrant communities could create increased tensions with host communities, and actions could be politicized by external actors. This may be a barrier for humanitarian organizations and could put migrants at risk.

- **Safety while on the move and theft**

There is an increased risk to end users and their families if information about a cash distribution is known externally and especially if vulnerable people are being given support. One group of interviewees stated that after their organization carried out a CVA intervention in a village, criminals kidnapped the village leader’s son, and each villager had to contribute to the ransom for the child to be released.

While CVA may also be provided to ensure migrants in transit are not exposed to negative coping strategies, there is also a risk, however small, that migrants use to cash to facilitate border crossings, which sometimes are monitored by armed groups requiring payment for passage.

- **Lack of access to banking tools**

Certain organizations require migrants to receive funds through a bank transfer or mobile money, though many will not have access to a bank account nor a mobile wallet. Migrants will therefore often rely on members of the host community to support them in receiving money. This creates risks, because a commission or fee is usually requested to provide this support, recipients may be manipulated by intermediaries who are more technology-savvy, they may never be able to access the funds, or their access to the funds could be blocked when too many mobile wallets are created on a single account.

“

We wish to see technology as a transformative aspect, however it can lead to challenges related to bureaucracy, accessibility and regulations, putting at risk the practicality of the CVA modality.

– Regional migration coordinator, humanitarian organization.

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- **Data protection**

Data protection risks and potential considerations in the use of CVA have been well documented elsewhere.²⁷ Those risks, including profiling, surveillance, tracking and consent, are increased in the case of people on the move who may have an irregular status.

“

For some, just the collection of this data is a deterrent and exposes migrants to surveillance mechanisms that lead to profiling and exclusion; there is metadata when documents are transferred. From an ethical perspective, there are some questions to which we do not yet have answers.

– Migration advisor, international organization.

”

National Societies also have an important role to play in advocating to their national authorities for appropriate data protection measures. Their expertise on data protection in the context of humanitarian assistance is valuable in protecting at-risk migrant populations.

A National Society partnered with their national authorities in providing CVA to internally displaced persons fleeing conflict, as well as host families welcoming them. Affected persons applied for support on a website created by the government. At first, the government collected the information without asking for consent and transferred the information to the National Society. When the National Society expressed their concern, the government edited the online application form to request that the applicants provide their consent to transfer their data for the purposes of providing them with assistance.

²⁷ See: IFRC. 2021. [Practical Guidance for Data Protection in Cash and Voucher Assistance: A supplement to the Cash in Emergencies Toolkit.](#)

- **Visibility to authorities**

As noted above, for people on the move, there are greater challenges linked to tracking and monitoring, noting that the degree to which this is a risk depends very much upon the migrant's profile. Migrants may not want to risk accessing CVA because its reception or use could highlight their presence to national authorities.



In contexts where mobility is an issue, migrants do not want to move or cannot move – it would be unsafe for them to gather in specific places or frequent a specific shop. They are in hiding.

– Migration advisor, international organization.



ii. Risks and challenges for humanitarian organizations

- **Compliance with national and potentially cross-border regulations**

Humanitarian organizations should carefully consider their obligations under local regulations. They will need to ensure that proposed modalities will not be in breach of anti-money laundering regulations, and in some cases, regulations on criminalising financial support to certain individuals or organizations. For example, they could explore the appropriate forms of tiered know your client procedures or documentation which could be used and seek flexibility or margins in the relevant regulatory provisions. In some cases, the creation of mobile wallets may mean more restrictive transactions for the individual, to ensure they can be supported through a tailored CVA modality, which provides more choice and options than an in-kind donation.

In the context of a protection activity for IDPs displaced due to conflict, a National Red Cross Society used a combined strategy of advocacy and risk acceptance to ensure they could provide some CVA while helping to protect the identity of people in need and ensuring that they could maintain a low profile.

Given applicable laws on money laundering, the National Society engaged with relevant ministries as well as with legal advisors to seek an appropriate solution. It was felt that the violent situation in-country warranted a flexible approach from all parties concerned. Having received advice and guidance on different ways in which compliance could be ensured, the National Society leadership swore an affidavit to confirm that real persons were represented by individual case codes.

The people to be assisted were each given a case code. The codes were transmitted to the FSP, indicating that the latter should provide a certain quantity of funds to the person represented by that case code. The people to be assisted could go to any of 300 FSP branches based in supermarkets or pharmacies. Upon providing their case code, they would receive the funds from the branch. Staff in the FSP branches had also been trained to ensure that they do not seek to verify the identification of the person to be assisted, or ask any uncomfortable questions, and a hotline was established to deal with any challenges. Using an FSP that worked through supermarkets and pharmacies meant the activity was a lot more discreet than when using a normal payment agent.



There is a risk that someone may intercept the code and take the money. We accept this risk because the protection of that person is much more important than the risk of someone taking the money.

– Project leader, National Red Cross Society.



• Perception of encouraging or discouraging migration

As mentioned above, providing CVA for migrants may lead to negative perceptions. As well as being barriers, these can also become a risk to the implementing organization with respect to its reputation and access. The perception risk should be carefully measured and addressed, especially in terms of having clear objectives and selection criteria and consultations should be carried out prior to implementation to draw out sensitivities. In the case of a National Society, these perceptions may prejudice their community access and their role as an auxiliary (as well as access to funding) if their national authorities do not welcome the use of CVA.



Giving cash can be easily instrumentalized as encouragement to people to move.

– Migration advisor, humanitarian organization.



• Lack of continuity of intervention/sustainability

As migration is often a protracted crisis situation and as time goes on, increasing numbers of vulnerable people are affected. Organizations may be exposed to the risk of lack of continuity or sustainability. Given the optics of CVA support, this can be perceived more acutely than with in-kind distributions. The risk can be addressed through careful planning and communications, clear establishing of criteria and the duration of support, though there will be some residual risk.



In a migration situation, different to an immediate disaster response to a natural disaster, the crisis is one of slow progression, and external factors keep on changing. An exit strategy is never enough.

– Regional migration coordinator, humanitarian organization.



• Funds not used in accordance with donor sectoral targets

Donors may have certain expectations about the use of CVA to attend to migrants, especially since a migration response could cover all sectors. Humanitarian organizations should ensure that their donors are familiarized with the differences and comparative advantages and disadvantages between unconditional and conditional CVA to avoid later concerns about the end use of the funds. In the case of migrants, and given the abovementioned challenges related to post distribution monitoring, donors may obtain less information about how funds were ultimately used, noting that the migrant's ability to make choices about their needs is the key dignifying advantage of the CVA modality.

One National Society from a Central African country had provided unconditional cash to migrants, though the back-donors wished to direct the intervention to rental assistance, livelihoods and health. The back-donor agreed to unconditional cash and guidance was provided to end users on how they may optimize the funds, with suggestions on dividing the funds among different household expenditure.

In the post-distribution monitoring, end users did not speak much of the use of funds for rental needs, but rather thanked the organization for the opportunity to develop their livelihoods or businesses. The feedback drew the attention of the donor. As the donor's key interest was focused on shelter, they requested that activities be modified to cash for work and construction of a welcome shelter, rather than continue with unconditional cash.

c. Ensuring inclusion for the most vulnerable migrants

“

My advice is not to include criteria that exclude migrants e.g., not putting a criterion of citizenship, or requiring documentation.

– Migration advisor, international organization

”

“

We would want to avoid further exclusionary practices which make the last mile even harder to reach

– Team leader, donor.

”

Given the particular vulnerabilities that different migrant profiles present, ensuring engagement and adaptation when providing CVA is a central theme. Selection criteria should preferably not be based on identification or migratory status. Solutions should be adapted to migrants' needs and be suitable in terms of migrants' literacy levels (including digital literacy), their access to digital means and their familiarity with certain mechanisms. Such challenges were raised both with the Colombian Red Cross and the Kenya Red Cross Society in their consultations with migrant communities, with 21 per cent of respondents in Colombia identifying security risks, such as loss, fraud and impersonation as key challenges to using CVA. Mapping could be carried out to identify the make-up of the migrant community (including the mix of nationalities, statuses, vulnerabilities) and understand the differences within those migrant communities themselves, as well as the extent to which they are vulnerable or exposed when compared to the host communities. This, in turn, will guide the feasibility of potential CVA solutions.

“

Often, there are several reference points of contact – there will be some formal and some informal references – and we need to do a bit of homework to understand those differences.

– Migration advisor, humanitarian organization.

”

Humanitarian organizations would ideally need to ensure more than one delivery mechanism to address risks of exclusion and, when working with FSPs, to ensure the latter are trained in working with vulnerable migrants, are able to interact with migrants without discrimination and mitigating the risk of abuse of power relating to CVA.²⁸ Importantly, they should also ensure host communities are appropriately engaged and included in CVA solutions for migrants who meet the vulnerability criteria.

A National Red Cross Society had provided migrants with CVA through vouchers and through cash cards, with some vulnerable profiles receiving both mechanisms. Migrants receiving cash cards were provided with a written guide, guidance from staff and telephone support as needed.

Some migrants provided feedback in the post-distribution monitoring, stating they preferred receiving a paper voucher rather than a pre-paid cash card, due to their digital illiteracy and their fear of blocking or losing the cards. This, despite the more restrictive nature of the vouchers.

28 See CALP. [Mitigating the risks of abuse of power in CVA.](#)

In terms of ensuring appropriate consideration of gender and age, implementing agencies would need to carefully analyse decision-making dynamics at household level within migrant communities, as these may differ from local host community dynamics. Appropriate cultural considerations will be required when migrants are not from the agency's own country.



Look at how economic decisions are made at the household level: in some contexts, men tend to call all of the shots in the households. Where that happens, we will not get around this by giving cash to women – they may not be in a position to decide on its use. We need to assess household decision making and find ways to encourage a more equal role for women and men in the decision making.

– Migration advisor, international organization.



Agencies may also seek to attend to vulnerable teenage or child migrants with CVA, which may pose challenges in terms of access to certain CVA mechanisms, depending on the national regulatory regime. Such assistance scenarios will need to be treated with heightened caution to ensure protection of the child at all times, not exposing them to risk of abuse, and ensuring that they are appropriately included in any CVA activities for migrants.

One National Red Cross Society took several steps to seek to protect unaccompanied migrant children being assisted by CVA. The child would be represented by a member of their community, often a teenager or young adult, as the child would need to be accompanied by someone older than them to withdraw the cash. The community would assert that the child was indeed being cared for by that teenager or adult. The National Society would give a telephone and SIM card to the child and provide them with detailed explanations and a phone number to call in case they need support, specific information or to make a complaint. The National Society would then monitor the child and regularly contact them. Depending on the use of funds, the National Society would also follow up with shops to check the register and verify that purchases had indeed been made to meet the needs of children.

Stronger inclusion is an important advocacy point for humanitarian agencies to seek change or support, either from the relevant authorities, the host communities or the FSP. The desire to ensure that vulnerable target populations are not excluded can also support the identification of solutions to challenges that may be faced by the humanitarian organization.

6

Recommendations



Food vouchers provided to undocumented migrants. April 2021.
Credit: The Netherlands Red Cross.

Given the findings above and noting the IFRC's target for 50 per cent of all its humanitarian assistance to be through CVA by 2025, this report proposes the following key recommendations to the IFRC and its National Societies to increase their use of CVA with a focus on migrants.

1 Leverage global presence and diversity for targeted advocacy on CVA for vulnerable migrants

While it remains important to effect internal advocacy within the leadership of National Societies to ensure alignment on the advantages and opportunities provided by CVA when attending to migrants, the IFRC and its member National Societies also have an important role to play in external advocacy on the matter, leveraging their global presence and auxiliary roles.

First, National Societies should advocate to their national authorities on the use of CVA when attending to migrants. National Society leadership could engage with national authorities at a high level well before there is a need to start using CVA as a modality, as part of their preparedness actions, providing evidence of migrant needs and the benefits of CVA. Depending on the context, an appropriate strategy could involve a phased approach for dialogue rather than a strong advocacy campaign, and local engagement could be necessary to ensure relevant levels of government are involved.

Second, advocacy to donors should be promoted. Donors seem not to have firm rules on the use (or non-use) of the CVA modality when attending to migrants, and rather require humanitarian partners to ensure the assistance modality is adapted to the contextual risks. As such, there remains ample opportunity to advocate to donors on appropriate risk levels to ensure the most vulnerable can be reached in a dignified and suitable way. This should include promoting the use of CVA beyond stable and regular migrant communities, and encompass irregular or undocumented migrants, based on vulnerability criteria. Donors could also support in advocating to host governments in countries that are supported by humanitarian assistance, to seek to explain the end benefits of using the CVA modality when assisting migrants.

2 Develop skeleton models for the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies supporting migrants with CVA at various points along migratory routes and for various migrant profiles

Although there is a desire to assist all migrants equally based on their needs and regardless of status, the different profiles of migrants and where they are on their journey (whether in transit, arriving, returning, for their families left behind) mean that certain options or CVA mechanisms may not be feasible in some contexts. It is therefore recommended that the IFRC and its member National Societies map out different options to practically attend to migrants with different profiles, depending on where they are on their migratory journey and all along the migratory route, also incorporating opinions from migrants in this study, where relevant. This could serve as a practical tool to guide National Societies in their implementation. For advocacy purposes, it could also illustrate the versatility of the CVA modality for migrants. These skeleton models should recognize the varying levels of risk to individuals, or the specific risks to which they may be exposed, depending on their migratory status, as well as to the organization.

In developing these models, the IFRC could also support its member National Societies to work in a more aligned manner across borders, and structure a framework for delivering cash cross-border through a network of National Society branches, while tracking rapidly changing migratory flows and trends. Finally, these models could also be incorporated into the IFRC's key migration framework documents, such as the IFRC's Migration Strategy, from 2023 onwards.

3 Build visibility and expertise through national cash working groups in migration operational contexts

National Societies and the IFRC, where present in-country, should ensure frequent and regular engagement with the national cash working groups where there are migration operational contexts. This would be a valuable investment, both in terms of financial and human resources, to strengthen the visibility of the National Society as a credible actor in the given context, as well as building expertise and operational networks with other actors. Where necessary, National Society focal points could be funded to ensure full engagement in the coordination mechanism and active participation in any initiatives, including co-leadership of the cash working group where such capacity exists.

4 Develop and implement community engagement and accountability (CEA) tools specifically focusing on host communities and CVA when attending to migrants

To address the concerns on potential tensions that may arise between migrants and members of host communities when using the CVA modality, the IFRC and its National Societies should develop clear, practical guidance on how National Societies may engage with host communities, adding to existing CEA tools and working with the Community Engagement Hub²⁹. This should especially provide orientation on how National Societies might address pressure for a percentage split of assistance between migrants and members of host communities, while ensuring impartiality and that they are really attending to the most vulnerable. Ideally, the engagement with host communities should also focus on supporting those who meet key vulnerability criteria and not on showing host communities that the humanitarian assistance has been adequately split between migrants and non-migrants.

5 Determine Red Cross and Red Crescent “red lines” to ensure a principled approach to CVA for migrants

The IFRC and its member National Societies should determine which CVA activities for migrants may be more sensitive or appear less aligned with the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and how such situations should be addressed, identifying red lines that should not be crossed. For example, supporting returnee migrants with CVA may not be acceptable in a context where the cash is seen as an incentive for migrants to return to their place of origin, or as a discouragement to migrate. Similarly, where it may appear that a donor seeking to support migrants with CVA is in fact seeking to curb migration, partnering on the action may not be aligned with a National Society's position on migration. The discussion on a principled approach should also be balanced with the National Society's auxiliary role and its mandate to assist vulnerable people in need, while considering whether any action would have an impact on the perception and ability of the National Society to act in an impartial, independent and neutral manner.

6

Create simplified tools that consider CVA as part of a migration intervention rather than a stand-alone cash transfer programme (CTP)

Recognising that CVA tools are considered by some migration and operational staff as detailed and complex, the IFRC and its National Societies could create simplified tools to integrate CVA within migration response activities (for example, within the HSP toolkit). This could also be incorporated in trainings for multidisciplinary teams, as opposed to requiring them to participate in CVA-specific training, thereby strengthening the capacities of staff and Red Cross or Red Crescent branches along the migratory route. These should also integrate the views drawn from migrant consultations, with guidance on CEA with the affected populations. Finally, CVA could be included in planning and implementation processes and templates, with mechanisms adapted according to context.

7

Where appropriate, follow an approach of CVA to assist migrants in certain sectors, rather than CVA for migrants

While there is general acceptance of the use of CVA in certain sectors like shelter or livelihoods, the concept of CVA in the migration context may be sensitive. When assisting migrants, the IFRC and National Societies could therefore promote the use of CVA for shelter, CVA for health, or CVA for protection, as well as any other sector, rather than focusing on the migratory profile of the vulnerable persons to be assisted.

8

Work with pilot projects to test appetite and conditions

Where the IFRC and National Societies face internal or external hesitancy towards CVA activities, they could work with smaller-scale or pilot projects to test acceptance of the solution and risk appetite. This would also allow them to explore enabling factors or blocking conditions, which they could seek to resolve prior to progressing to a larger-scale response. They could also seek to use more vouchers or conditional CVA to increase the level of comfort with the modality, before exploring alternative modalities and conditionality.

9

Invest in legal preparedness measures, pre-establishing framework agreements with FSPs and exploring national laws and regulations to identify ways to address vulnerable migrants

It is recommended that the IFRC and its National Societies invest in two key aspects of legal preparedness regarding CVA and migrants:

- (i) Establishing different regional or national framework agreements with FSPs for different modalities or migrant conditions, well in advance of any migratory flows; and
- (ii) Exploring national laws and regulations to identify opportunities to assist vulnerable migrants, especially those who are undocumented.

“

The process of doing preparedness may raise obstacles in the local legislation, but without starting that process, we will not know.

- Head of Delegation, humanitarian organization.

”

The first aspect would equip National Societies with pre-established frameworks with providers of different solutions, enabling them to rapidly activate a relevant contract to ensure migrants can be reached with the most appropriate mechanism.

In respect of the second aspect, guidance could be provided on how the IFRC and National Societies may analyse the legal and financial regulations, assess available tools and engage with FSPs such as telephone companies and banks, seeking to address regulatory barriers, exploring opportunities where legislation is silent or imprecise, and ensuring regulatory compliance. This also requires upfront investment of time, money and human resources, noting that the preparedness approach would vary in line with the capacity of each National Society and their tolerance to risk.

10

Identify where the Red Cross and Red Crescent can complement social protection systems to attend to migrants who cannot access them

It is recommended that the IFRC and its National Societies invest in two key aspects of legal preparedness regarding CVA and migrants:

“

We had advocated really early on with the government about migrants and groups that were of particular concern and falling through the gaps in the social safety net. So, the national and regional authorities provided funding for that.

- Safety Net Programme manager, National Red Cross Society.

”

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are uniquely placed to complement public authorities in providing assistance to migrants who would not otherwise be eligible to access social protection schemes run by national authorities, particularly in light of their capacity to provide emergency relief through established mechanisms and in view of their impartiality, especially in attending to undocumented migrants. National Societies could therefore be guided on engagement with their national authorities to attend to migrants who could fall through social protection gaps, such as migrants who are not settled or registered, irregular or undocumented migrants. Where appropriate, National Societies could also engage with national authorities to seek to increase the upper limits of CVA to be provided to migrants, highlighting differences of duration, purpose and access to other services for people supported through social protection systems.

7

Conclusion



Migrants in the Centre for Integral Attention in Maicao, Riohacha, Colombia. August 2019. Credit: IFRC.

Providing CVA to migrants should be posited as a fundamental protection action, in terms both of ensuring people are safe from violence and of reducing risks to vulnerable people on the migratory journey, protecting their health and basic needs.

The IFRC and its member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are uniquely positioned, trusted by migrant communities, host communities and national authorities, to deliver crucial humanitarian assistance to vulnerable migrants. Migrants consulted through this review have confirmed that CVA is their preferred modality to receive humanitarian assistance and have also provided valuable views on their other preferences, such as CVA mechanisms. All consulted National Societies have reiterated their desire to scale up their use of CVA when attending to migrants and have provided some innovative and diverse examples of the modality in the migratory context.

Accordingly, several elements are aligned for the IFRC and its member National Societies to increase their reach in supporting vulnerable migrants with CVA in a variety of migratory scenarios. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations in this report will assist the IFRC in progressing towards its goal of providing 50 per cent of all its humanitarian assistance through CVA, while ensuring the most vulnerable migrants can be assisted in a dignifying and empowering way.

7

Appendices



*Migrants in Guatemala, January 2020.
Credit: Guatemala Red Cross.*

APPENDIX I: EIGHT KEY QUESTIONS USED IN THE CONSULTATION

The eight questions guiding the consultation with migration experts and key stakeholders were the following:

1. To what extent is CVA considered and prioritized in migration-related operations and for which contexts (provide examples)?
2. At what points along a migration route(s) is CVA provided? What specific objectives were planned vs. met with cash assistance?
3. What are common issues/challenges in providing cash and vouchers to migrants? At what points along the migration route do humanitarian agencies experience more issues with the use of cash and vouchers? Is cash or voucher more difficult to provide in the migration context as a modality and why? For contexts where NS have experience of CVA in other programmes, and are assisting migrants, generally why do some NS think of CVA for migrants as being “too difficult”?
4. What is the general preference of vulnerable migrants in terms of assistance (and at what point in their routes)? Is cash and voucher one of them? How does cash and voucher compare with other modalities or forms of assistance? Is cash or voucher favoured more in certain contexts?
5. What is the intended effect vs. actual effect of cash in protection, gender, and inclusion in migrant population?
6. What are the common mechanisms to receive cash (payment mechanism)? How often are digital payment mechanisms used (e.g. mobile money, prepaid cards, ATM cards, direct bank transfers)? Are there preferences by migrants in terms of mechanisms to receive cash?
7. What are the key risks to vulnerable migrants when digital technology is employed (in registration, identity provision, payments, and monitoring)?
8. Do National Societies have to persuade reluctant back-donors to let them assist migrants with CVA (rather than in-kind)? If so, what are the main advocacy messages they use to support them in engagement with donors on this issue?

APPENDIX II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The non-exhaustive literature review below, limited by time constraints, outlines some existing resources on the use of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) in migration contexts, along with associated risks and opportunities. The literature reviewed originates primarily from the humanitarian and policy sector, outlining elements of practical implementation and lessons learned regarding CVA for migrants. Despite the variety of publications found below, the literature on CVA and migrants is not ample, indicating that it is still a recent area of implementation, other than when attending to refugees in camps. Some key themes are set out below.

Best practices, evaluations and case studies

The literature includes various reports on projects or programmes targeting migrants (refugees in particular) with CVA³⁰, assessing the immediate (and long-term, if any) effects of the assistance and considering the merits of different modalities of CVA. These are conducted by either external evaluators or the organizations implementing the activities of those specific projects or programmes. There is also some literature evaluating the progress of migrant-focused organizations in their implementation of CVA.³¹

Geographic focus on specific migrant crises

Recently, there has been considerable focus on Venezuelan migration flows, given the regional impact of the displacement, generous amounts of funding and the support of donors for the CVA modality.³² These studies have also sought to capture good practice and analyse different thematic areas of CVA assistance in those contexts, capturing lessons learnt and recommendations for this population flow.

CVA for specific objectives

Some case studies or lessons learnt focus on CVA for migrant communities within specific sectors or for specific objectives, for example, sexual and reproductive health and rights for target populations which include migrants³³, malnutrition support for displaced families³⁴, water, sanitation and health programmes³⁵ or livelihoods³⁶.

Focus on certain migrant profiles

With the notable exception of a Save the Children study on CVA for migrants in transit in Peru published in 2021, most resources focus on specific migrant profiles: IDPs, refugees or settled migrants.

30 For example: Overseas Development Institute. 2017. [Cash transfers for refugees: the economic and social effects of a programme in Jordan](#); Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. 2020. [Cash transfer models and debt in the Kalobeyei Settlement](#); Australian Red Cross. 2020. [COVID-19 impacts us all: Ensuring the safety and well-being of people on temporary visas during COVID-19](#).

31 UNHCR. 2019. [Implementation of the policy on cash-based interventions 2016-2020: Progress and next steps](#).

32 For example: CALP. 2020. [The provision of cash and voucher assistance in the response to the Venezuela refugee and migrant crisis: Findings and lessons learned](#); Save the Children. 2020. [Cash on the move: adapting multi-purpose cash 'plus' assistance to support people on the move](#).

33 CARE. 2021. [Cash and voucher assistance for sexual reproductive health and rights: Learnings from Ecuador, Colombia, Lebanon, and Somalia](#).

34 CALP. 2021. [Case Study: cash transfers in the health and nutrition sector: Cash transfer for transport towards health centres and malnutrition treatment centres](#) (Burkina Faso).

35 UNHCR. 2016. [Cash based interventions for WASH programmes in refugee settings](#); Lebanese Red Cross. 2018. [After Action Review – WASH E-voucher Pilot Saida, Lebanon](#).

36 IFRC Livelihoods Centre. 2020. Evaluating the results of income-generating activities under the AMIRA project, Guinea-Conakry. (document not available online at time of writing).

Financial inclusion

Some agencies have recently focused on exploring financial inclusion for migrants in the context of CVA³⁷, as programmes or advocacy approaches and recommendations to promote greater access to financial services for vulnerable migrant communities, including through an examination of “Know Your Client” (KYC) approaches. This is also linked to the importance of connectivity for displaced people³⁸ to access services.

The brief literature review did not identify any resources that focus on cross-border CVA for migrants on the move or that address comparative opportunities or risks of the use of CVA for different migrant profiles.

37 UNHCR and UNCDF. 2018. [Financial inclusion of forcibly displaced persons and host communities: a UNHCR and UNCDF joint initiative](#); Vassas and Laida. 2018. [Addressing customer due diligence obligations to promote Rohingya financial inclusion](#).

38 UNHCR. 2019. [Displaced and Disconnected](#).

APPENDIX III: USER JOURNEY

A user journey has been designed to map how a migrant may access CVA, as well as the related perspectives and risks in doing so. This journey, developed from discussions with stakeholders, outlines the key steps often taken by a migrant in accessing CVA at a humanitarian service point (HSP) against a general timeline, setting out the key steps of the humanitarian service provision, the actions taken by the migrant, particular touchpoints and pain points when the migrant receives the service, and the parallel actions taken by the humanitarian organization in providing the service. It is intended to inform considerations on scaling up the use of CVA for migrants and enabling a more user centric approach.

Challenges with CVA for migrants



Persona: Alpha

Scenario: Provision of CVA to migrant at a humanitarian service point.

Timeline	Week 1		Week 2	Week 5		
Steps	Evaluation and selection process at HSP		Registration at HSP and provision of CVA	Monitoring call	Attends other HSP along migration route	
Migrant's Actions	Go to HSP - Provide profile information to RC and consent	Return to HSP once selected	Receives CVA and explanation on mechanism	Provides feedback	Migrants continued journey. May not be possible to make contact and monitor. If so, migrant asked for personal details again, may put them at risk	Shares name and personal information again. Not able to access history with past CVA. May receive CVA through different mechanism
Touchpoints	Referrals from other services, community meetings (local admin, comm leaders, affected community)	Explanation on process, CVA mechanism, use of data and storage			Reporting to donor on numbers of migrants attended	
Organization's Actions	Community mobilization (through local leaders, host communities)	Needs Assessment/Targeting	Migrant registration	Handles feedback/complaints	Seeks to communicate with migrant for monitoring/ evaluation	
	Feasibility, access, modality, negotiations with FSP or local markets	Training of staff & volunteers				

APPENDIX IV: USER PERSONAS

Four user personas have also been developed to illustrate the perspectives of migrants who may receive CVA, based on migrant profiles and experiences shared during the consultation process. The user personas incorporate migrants' contexts, their personal profiles, their vulnerabilities and complaints, their current motivations and core needs, and their pain points related to CVA.

The four user personas are spread across four continents and represent people at different stages in their migration journey, based on similar migrant profiles developed for an earlier study on migrants and digital identities³⁹:

1. An asylum seeker waiting for the outcome of their application in a European country, who cannot receive CVA
2. A migrant transiting through a Latin American country, crossing through informal border points, who can receive CVA
3. A migrant returning to their country of origin in East Asia following a period of conflict, currently in a transit country, who cannot receive CVA
4. An internally displaced person following a natural disaster, within a Central African country, who can receive CVA

This also allows for a reflection on the evolution of their pain points and needs along their journey depending on where they are along their migration route.

Persona migrant example 1



Alpha: From Middle East

Context: Asylum-seeker waiting for outcome of application in European country, unable to receive CVA

General Profile		Additional Information		Motivations	Pain Points
Age	32	Vulnerabilities	Woman travelling without her husband exposed to security/ SGBV threats; no regular source of income; unable to contact her husband regularly; caring for two young children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking refugee status in order to be able to access the work market in her profession and earn livelihood • Wish to travel to third country to reunite with husband 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost official ID during journey • Difficulty in receiving certain aid types, including CVA, because she is undocumented • Local authorities do not allow humanitarian organisations to provide CVA to asylum-seekers
Has official ID	No				
Able to receive CVA?	No	Past Assistance received and from whom	Clothing (received from private individuals), housing assistance (from community shelter), Restoring Family Links (from the National Society), medical assistance (NGO)	Core Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay for basic needs & healthcare • Need to save money to pay debt owed to family member • Save funds to travel and access better work opportunities • Wishes to receive cash in hands 	Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No access to hardware as had to sell mobile phone during journey • Connectivity issues in temporary camp • Lack of security to possess mobile phone
Gender	Female				
Marital Status	Married	Feedback/ Complaints	Lack of access to information, not aware of availability of regular support from humanitarian NGOs, does not often receive aid		
Family Size	3				
Education	Tertiary education	Level of technological ability	Medium		
Location	Capital city				
Host government	Stretched administrative capacity, tight financial and migratory regulations	Mobility	Independent		

Persona migrant example 2



Beta: From Latin America

Context: Migrant transiting through Latin American country, crossing through informal border points, able to receive CVA

General Profile

Age	17
Has official ID	Yes – national ID card
Able to receive CVA?	Yes
Gender	Male
Marital Status	Single
Family Size	1
Education	Secondary
Location	Small border town
Host government	Administrative capacity is high and attending migrant administrative needs;

Additional Information

Vulnerabilities	Unaccompanied minor exposed to dangers on the road; often joins groups of migrants for security; walking to destination; uncertain as to route; does not want his age to be known so he is not sent to national protection authorities.
Past Assistance received and by whom	Food aid, hygiene kit and first aid (National Society), shelter (NGO), protective space (NGO), phone charge and internet access (National Society)
Feedback/Complaints	Not comfortable sharing his identity with NGOs; does not understand why they register so much personal information.
Level of technological ability	Owms a second—hand smartphone. Comfortable with technology.
Mobility	Independent

Motivations

- Insecurity in home country
- Desire to finalize secondary education and access tertiary education, to be able to work
- Join his eldest sister in destination country

Core Needs

- Basic needs: Money, food, access to hygiene, travel, clothes and shoes
- Contact his sister through social media or telephone

Pain Points

- Receives mostly in-kind and not able to access cash assistance due to age.
- Would appreciate CVA so that he could pay for shelter and transport.
- Does not trust that humanitarian agencies will not share data with national authorities
- Does not have access to a bank account
- Does not wish to draw attention to himself and is reluctant to be seen in supermarkets or other formal commercial structures

Technology:

- Mobile: No connectivity on the road, phone battery getting poor, limited access to electricity/difficulty charging.

Persona migrant example 3



Gamma: From East Asian country

Context: Migrant returning to their country of origin following a period of conflict, currently in transit country, and unable to receive CVA

General Profile

Age	35
Has official ID	No
Able to receive CVA?	No
Gender	Male
Marital Status	Married
Family Size	6
Education	None
Location	Urban
Host government	Little administrative capacity

Additional Information

Vulnerabilities	His ID has been stolen during his journey, so he is not able to return to his country of origin in a regular manner; as an irregular migrant, he is at risk of sanctions by the host authorities, including deportation. He has not been paid his earnings from his informal work (labour exploitation); has no savings nor contact with his family.
Past Assistance received and from whom	Food aid, shelter, water (provided by NGO).
Feedback/Complaints	Not able to identify an org to provide humanitarian assistance; no access to information on potential support.
Level of technological ability	Can use a basic feature phone
Mobility	Independent

Motivations

- Be safely back in his home
- Return to his family in country of origin.
- Seeking financial and social integration following a long period out of his country

Core Needs

- Basic needs: Food, access to hygiene, clothes and shoes
- Cash to facilitate return
- Contact with his family

Pain Points

- Has no clear view on how to access voluntary repatriation without ID
- Humanitarian agencies are unwilling to support him with CVA to return to his country.
- The host community has not supportive, he has had to beg for money.

Technology

- Illiterate and able to use a basic feature phone

Persona migrant example 4



Sigma: From Central African country

Context: Internally displaced person following a natural disaster, within a Central African country, who is able to receive CVA

General Profile		Additional Information		Motivations	Pain Points
Age	23	Vulnerabilities	Living in an IDP camp with his family. The camp is in a rural border area, no clear access to humanitarian support; speaks local dialect and has a poor knowledge of official country language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return home and repair his house Tend to his household and his flock Enrol children in primary school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to communicate easily with national NGOs due to language barrier; does not understand when they ask him to sign documents Unable to access or use hardware or internet Originates from a border area and as a pastoralist, he regularly moves across traditional lands; has no documental proof to show he is a national of that country, rather than the neighbouring one, in order to claim ID
Has official ID	No				
Able to receive CVA?	Yes	Past Assistance received and from whom	Anti malarial medicines, basic food aid on a very intermittent basis (NGO).	<p>Core Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic survival needs in short term Need to access healthcare for unwell father Money to be able to take an infrequent bus back to his village 	
Gender	Male				
Marital Status	Married	Feedback/ Complaints	Not able to identify an NGO or national authority to provide consistent humanitarian assistance.		
Family Size	4				
Education	Primary	Level of technology ability	None		
Location	Rural				
Host government	Overwhelmed by the response to the natural disaster and seeking to attend to several thousand IDPs in rural areas	Mobility	Independent		



Migrants at the Vucjak temporary camp in Bosnia and Herzegovina, near the Croatian border, August 2019. Credit: IFRC.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 14 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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