Report on

Rapid Assessment Report

Stocktaking of Humanitarian Food and Cash Assistance in Afghanistan

Dec, 2022

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ACRONYMS

ACHRO	Afghan Community and Health Rehabilitation Organization
ADEO	Afghanistan Development and Education Organization
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AIRO	Afghan Independent Rehabilitation Organization
AMRAN	Afghan Mobile Reconstruction Association
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CBI	Cash Based Intervention
CVWG	Cash Voucher Working Group
DCA	Dutch Committee for Afghanistan
FSAC	Food Security and Agriculture Cluster
HFA	Humanitarian Food Assistance
HH	Household
HoH	Head of the Household
HPRO	Health Protection and Research Organization
JPF	The Japan Platform
KII	Key Informant Interview
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NFI	Non-Food Items
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ORCD	Organization for Research and Community Development
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
PI	Principal Investigator
RAADA	Rehabilitation Association and Agriculture Development for Afghanistan
RHDO	Relief Humanitarian Development Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SFL	Shelter For Life International
SIM	Subscriber Identity Module
SRP	Shah Rokhi Reconstruction Organization
SWRO	Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Organization
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
YVO	Your Voice Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The main objective of the assessment is to better inform the formulation of prospective JPF projects planned by the member NGOs for Afghan internally displaced persons, returnees and cross-border population. As assistances in the country driven by its member NGOs took a stride in refocusing to life-saving activities and support for services that address basic human needs in the face of steepening humanitarian crisis, there is a need for quickly understand ground practices in food security and cash assistance that has not been major areas of JPF interventions and learn from their innovations and challenges. More specifically, the assessment planned threefold:

i. To stocktaking and analysing pros and cons of service transfer modalities among foods, shelter/NFI, cash/voucher depending on varying operational environments and their operational mechanism.
ii. Extracting a few good initiatives with particular attentions to effective monitoring, controlling intermediately costs without compromising quality and using digital solutions by JPF member NGOs and other partners operating in the country;
iii. Within the cash/voucher transfer, stocktaking and analysing pros and cons of transfer (pay out) mechanism among Hawala, cash in envelop, direct cash token system.

As insights derived for this rapid assessment primarily based on interviews with key stakeholders and in-depth literature review, this assessment focuses on identifying emerging eminent challenges and provoking a discussion around them to move forward.

Method

A qualitative study design was adopted. Firstly, the study built on a systematic literature review. WFP at both regional and country levels were approached and also a lead for foods and in-kind distribution sector were approached to gauge the areas of challenges, standard practices and good initiatives. From a long list of NGOs active in the sector, 13 local NGOs who were willing to undertake Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and their scale of interventions are similar to that of JPF member NGOs were shortlisted.

Findings

Beneficiary identification, verification and final listing process by NGOs

KIIs found that all the organizations consider the vulnerable people as beneficiary for their services. KII analysis showed that all NGOs in fact use the WFP Targeting and Vulnerability Criteria for vulnerability. Varied sources are used by NGO's for generating list of vulnerable households such as local Government lists while some NGOs adopt either physical visit to the households or hiring independent agency for the same. 7 out of 13 interviewed NGOs follow the physical assessment of household to identify the beneficiaries. KIIs founds that all the NGOs make efforts one way or another to promote local participation in the process of beneficiary identification.

Beneficiary verification & final listing

The KIIs with NGOs found various practices adopted in verifying identities those on long lists and bringing them to final listing. Beneficiary verification presents challenges for NGOs due to premature government infrastructure and highly mobility of populations due to recurring natural disasters and conflicts. 3 of the 13 NGOs were found to be dependent upon the community leaders for the verification of the beneficiaries once a long list is created, while others take help from independent agency for beneficiary final listing, also use SCOPE registrations, a WFP's digital beneficiary and transfer management platform.

Post distribution monitoring

Almost all the NGOs (11/13) have a monitoring team/section and the Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) is generally performed after one week of distribution. The monitoring team performs house checks, enquires about the assistance and details on the assistance spent, followed by feedback on overall distribution process.

Approach adopted by NGO's for providing food assistance to female beneficiaries

All the NGOs interviewed have female staff members in the program team to facilitate the identification of the female beneficiaries. Female staff members travel to the field distribution sites and facilitate distribution to females in receiving the aid.

Complaint management system

The KIIs found majority NGOs have a system to collect and manage complaints from their beneficiaries. Designating mobile phone to receive feedbacks is the most commonly adopted means. NGOs distribute the posters and cards with their contact numbers and ask the people to call on these numbers to register any complaint.

Risk management and strategies adopted by NGOs

NGOs have monitoring teams/divisions to ensure transparency in the implementation of the program and prevent any involvement of extortion money. 2 out of 13 NGOs depend on the complaint mechanism and request the beneficiary to make a complaint in case of any inappropriate experiences. AMRAN has an anti-corruption policy for its employees. 5 of the 13 organizations utilise the services of the third party such as money exchanger/money service provider and telephone company for the distribution of cash. One NGO depends upon the telecommunication service providing cash transfers to beneficiary SIM cards; hence this avoids the need for physical movement of cash. Another NGO uses the hawala system to distribute the money. The KIIs found a number of NGOs uses community dialogues to mitigate tensions generated by mismatches of project coverage and needs for assistances

NGO's Evaluation Framework

The KIIs with NGOs found benchmarks for the success and failures of the projects were defined diversely across respondents. NGOs employ one or more of these definitions and measure them by either quantifying changes between before and after interventions or simply collecting positive feedback via survey.

Cash Assistance

In regard to modalities of cash assistance, out of total respondents, 6 of the NGOs were convinced with the use of electronic payment transfer as they found it secure, followed by direct distribution of cash and the involvement of money exchanger. RAADA was concerned about the security issues when transporting the cash from one place to another considering the chances of theft and robbery. ORCD concerns were about the delays in cash from the donors, which disappoints the beneficiaries.

SFL highlighted the restrictions and sanctions imposed on the banking systems in Afghanistan which make the use of hawala system the only way to send money to Afghanistan. Hawala on the other hand has its own challenges such as the high charges and availability of the very few licensed Hawala providers.

Points to Ponder

Coverage: Adequate coverage being the significant aspect of Humanitarian Food Assistance (HFA), it has been under constant debate in literature and also among FSAC meetings. The gravity of coverage issue can also be assessed through significant number of complaints on beneficiary enrolment, which was also emerged from KII findings. Although WFP targeting guidance note stressed on either WFP or independent agency to conduct the beneficiary verification process which only handful of NGO's were found using it in among the KII study participants. KIIs alone conducted for this assessment do not substantiate sufficiently existence of exclusion errors. Similarly, the NGOs lacked the body of evidence to rule out such errors. Community dialogue was found a commonly used strategy to mitigate tensions generated from slight differences between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, however, it is not a solution itself for the exclusion errors.

Performance Measurement and unintended consequences: WFP guidance note emphasize capturing unintended consequences as impacts on community/households due to prioritisation and targeting exercise of beneficiaries. Most of the HFA projects failed to capture the same. It is thus debatable; how much value and importance food security actors lay on incorporating 'do no harm' within the HFA programs M&E framework.

Technology: In order to address the issues of transparency, reducing beneficiary apprehensions and distress around enrolment, it is necessary to optimally utilize technology within the program implementation.

Coordination: There is pressing need to address the coordination issues across government hierarchy with implementing partners, and the present vehicles such as NGO's and FSAC playing also the role of advocacy and communication might not be most effective as envisaged. It is also necessary to look at the coordination within the organisation and among cluster members, in terms of how effectively such mechanisms are contributing to program efficiency. The evidence on exchange of information and resources across the NGO's is limited.

Gender: The involvement of gender especially women was limited to gender analysis at beneficiary selection stage and PDM, the linkages with outcome indicators or impact was missing. There is a compelling need to envision food assistance priorities in light of women needs and establish linkages with women priorities so as to bring humanitarian assistance closer to Afghanistan development goals.

Cash or food: The extrinsic and contextual factors in humanitarian settings which are unique in every country makes it difficult to generalise the evidences. In spite of absence of any right answers, it is apparent that cash based assistance functions best in established food supply markets apart from its apparent advantage on HFA efficiency in parallel of promoting larger choices for beneficiaries hence impact pathways.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This Rapid Assessment of JPF Assistance for Afghanistan is a part of collaborating efforts of JPF and its member NGOs in continuously learning and improving assistance to communities and people affected in Afghanistan. JPF's recent monitoring and evaluation reform has initiated to institutionalize systematic learning from experiences, recording knowledge and making them available under the JPF umbrella. Over the course of a tumultuous and unpredictable year of 2021, JPF witnessed its member NGOs' commitments to stay and deliver assistance to the people of Afghanistan. In parallel, JPF's interventions in the country driven by its member NGOs took a stride in refocusing to life-saving activities and support for services that address basic human needs in the face of recurrent natural disasters, escalating conflict, the withdrawal of international forces and the shift in the governance structure. Numerous challenges and overall increase of needs created by new de-facto regime, insecurity and uncertainty, member NGOs strives to adjust their operation and strategy. Magnitude of increase in overall needs is steep, however, there is already ongoing initiative in humanitarian community to provide sectorial and needs gap analysis[1] in the country therefore this rapid needs assessment stays focused to underpin JPF's member NGOs's efforts thereby providing real-time learning and innovation along with emerging thematic focus of JPF interventions in foods security as well as cash transfers.

1.2 Country context

Natural disasters like floods, droughts, and earthquakes have had a devastating impact on the lives of many Afghans, especially children and women, compounding already existing vulnerabilities. These include the ongoing economic crisis, disruptions in basic services, and high levels of food insecurity triggered by Covid-19 pandemic and drastic political change in August 2021. Afghanistan continues to experience severe acute food insecurity as a result of a deteriorating economy and a severe drought that is depriving over 20 million Afghans of food. Over 90% of the population has experienced food insecurity for nearly nine months[2]. Afghanistan still has the greatest rate of inadequate food consumption worldwide, notwithstanding slight improvements that coincide with increased humanitarian food assistance and the end of winter.

1. Research Terms of Reference: Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation Monitoring (February 2022, Version 1)
https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/research-terms-reference-afghanistan-humanitarian-situation-monitoring-hsm

2 WFP. (2022, July 23). *WFP Afghanistan: Situation report 19 July 2022 - Afghanistan*. ReliefWeb. Retrieved August 16, 2022, from https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/wfp-afghanistan-situation-report-19-july-2022

1.3 Study Objectives

The main objective of the assessment is to better inform the formulation of prospective JPF projects planned by the member NGOs for Afghan internally displaced persons, returnees and cross-border population. To meet the objective, this rapid assessment is design to take a snapshot of both operational and thematic issues of foods security assistance in ongoing Afghan's humanitarian emergency contexts and take a global view of strengths and gaps exhibited from ground practices. More specifically, the assessment planned twofold:

1. To stocktaking and analysing pros and cons of service transfer modalities among foods, shelter/NFI, cash/voucher depending on varying operational environments and their operational mechanism.
2. Extracting a few good initiatives with particular attentions to effective monitoring, controlling intermediately costs without compromising quality and using digital solutions by JPF member NGOs and other partners operating in the country;

Additionally, this assessment intends to shed some light on cash transfer mechanism that increasingly preferred and used by JPF member NGOs in delivering assistances in Afghanistan. Therefore, third activity planned:

3. within the cash/voucher transfer, stocktaking and analysing pros and cons of transfer (pay out) mechanism among Hawala, cash in envelop, direct cash token system.

2. METHODS

2.1 Study Design

In line with the above-mentioned objectives, qualitative study design was adopted for the study. As a method, this research design focused on collecting, analyzing of qualitative data with a central premise so that it can provide a better understanding of study objectives. Firstly, the study built on a systematic literature review on global emerging discussion on increased use of social protection such as cash and in-kind transfer in humanitarian setting. Also there has been emerging efforts in finding operational strategy for common challenges in delivering assistances to people in need, particularly cash transfer modalities (cash in envelop, mobile money, bank transfer etc.). WFP at both regional and country levels were approached and also a lead for foods and in-kind distribution sector were approached to gauge the areas of challenges, standard practices and good initiatives. From a long list of NGOs active in the sector, 13 local NGOs that is willing to receive Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) for study objective, that their scale of interventions are similar to that of JPF member NGOs are shortlisted. The qualitative data was collected sequentially from the KIIs using explanatory sequential design. Qualitative data was analyzed by categorizing into themes and sub-themes. The findings from these KIIs are explored to understand ground practices and challenges in service transfer and analyzed against global discourse to identify opportunities for quality and accountability improvement.

2.2 Preparation and Execution of study

13 KIIs with representatives of the organizations were conducted in June 2022 (annex 1). KIIs were conducted with the selected NGOs identified through the Food Security Cluster using an open-ended interview guide (annex 4). The interview guide was based on five sections and contained questions related to functionality of the organization and different sectors in which it works. The interviews were conducted telephonically and were translated and transcripted. The data was analyzed under themes and sub-themes. The major themes were: 1. Functionality of NGOs, 2. Food assistance 3. Cash assistance, 4. Non-food Items assistance, 5. Joint Intervention.

HPRO permanent staff who normally coordinates and monitors quantitative and qualitative research were engaged in the data collection. These staff were provided orientation training on the interview guide who were shortly brought up to speed. The trained three staff of HPRO produced a long list of NGOs who were registered with Food Security Cluster, followed by websites research and through snowballing method organizations were identified, who were later approached and asked to participate in the interview.

For translation and Transcription, two research assistants worked independent of each other to transcribe field notes. To get an accurate account of data from the interviews, the research assistants and field supervisors had to review notes against tape recorded interviews and make additions to the field notes. They had to listen to the tape-recorded interviews multiple times so to ensure they do not lose any information from the interviews.

2.3 Development of Tool

An interview guide was developed in line with the objectives of the assessment. The interview guide was based on five sections and contained questions related to functionality of the organization general questions and specific questions related to food security intervention packages. General questions focused on approaches for beneficiary selection, verification, complaint redressal, aid distribution and monitoring of the process. The tool was shared with JPF for input and was finalized as a result.

Data coding for qualitative data was guided by the research objectives and research questions. The key seven themes were developed based on the seven objectives of the study. Then sub- themes were generated using the relevant research questions. These were priori codes that guided the categorization of the data. As new sub-themes emerged those were also coded as new codes. Principal Investigator (PI), Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) and Study coordinator provided support to the team during transcription of field notes. Subsequent to the transcription of field notes, the PI and Co-PI worked on the organization of field notes. They organized the field notes and transcribed. To this end, they organized data by main folder and sub folders and then initiated coding of data. For the coding process, first priori codes were developed based on the existing themes under guided by research questions. Priori codes provide a general framework for major themes and sub themes that were generated later through an iterative process. Then, the research team had to review transcribed notes multiple times so they could label or group certain areas in the dataset. The research team looked for similar views and opinions and group them together to support a particular theme.

2.4 Data Entry

This involved multiple steps including transcription, organization, coding and interpretation of data. Transcription of field notes started in the field in some provinces. The field supervisors reviewed field notes for completeness and made additions to the notes after listening to the tape-recorded interviews.

2.5 Data Analysis

In order to ensure a link is established between major and sub themes, several analytic themes were grouped under one major theme. Grouping of sub themes took place by reviewing their meaning in relation to the major themes. The subthemes and related tools are presented in the Table.1 below. The purpose was to start grouping themes in a hierarchical structure. Sub themes were placed under each major theme in a way that supports the major theme. It is worth noting that the PI and Co-PI reviewed and coded data independent of each other. To this end, two code books were generated from the field notes. Co-PI reviewed both code books to account for similarities and differences.

Table 1. Major Themes and Sub-themes for Qualitative Data Analysis

S.no.	Themes	Sub-themes
1.	Functionality of NGOs and general procedures for aid distribution	Services provided
		Beneficiary selection and verification
		Records and receipt management
		Monitoring process
		Complaint management system
		Risk management
		Measurement Framework
2.	Food Assistance	Types of Services
		Distribution process
		Preference of services
		Challenges faced
		Satisfaction of beneficiary
3.	Cash Assistance	Types of cash assistance
		Methods of cash transfers
		Preferable method
		Challenges faced
		Risk Management
4.	Non-Food Items	Items given
		Challenges faced
5.	Joint Intervention	

2.6 Limitations of the study

The study was conducted with a small number of NGOs and as such while the in-depth interviews provided rich information on the individual organizations' operations of the humanitarian assistance, its findings however cannot be generalized to all the humanitarian aid community in the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster

NGOs were reluctant to share detailed information on their current programs such as on budget, number of beneficiaries under each program and duration of assistance.

3. FINDINGS

Sections 3.1.1 to 3.1.8 present the findings of analysis against the key thematic areas related to food assistance program. Section 3.2 to 3.6 present findings on different sectors under food security domain. The findings are structured under large themes followed by sub thematic areas. Headline findings are presented as bold (and numbered) statements and the supporting findings are presented as sub sections with additional paragraphed text.

3.1 Findings on Food Assistance Program

3.1.1 Participating NGOs' characteristics
3.1.2 Beneficiary identification, verification and final listing process by NGOs
3.1.3 Records and Receipt Management
3.1.4 Monitoring process
3.1.5 Complaint Management system
3.1.6 Risk Management and strategies adopted by NGOs
3.1.7 NGOs Evaluation framework
3.1.8 Service Transfer Modalities (Cash/voucher, foods, shelter/NFI)

3.2 Cash Assistance

3.3 NGO approach to Combination of types of assistance as a package

3.4 Literature Review of the Humanitarian Aid Processes

3.1 Findings on Food Assistance Program

3.1.1 Participating NGOs' characteristics

Given typical scale of JPF's interventions, 13 NGOs that are similar in operational size and actively operating in FSAC sector are identified for the review (Annex 1). 9 out of 13 NGOs started working in Afghanistan after 2000. Rest of the NGOs started their operations from 1988-2000. The most recent organization, which established here, is SWRO (2017) and the oldest for all the organizations interviewed was Dutch Committee for Afghanistan whose assistance work dates back to 1988.

Considering the Food security assistance provided by these NGOs, 6 of them started their functions in food security in the last decade from 2011-2020. ARDA and RAADA started working in food security around 2002 (Detailed in Annex 2).

Out of 13 KII's conducted, 69% (9 out of 13) providing food assistance, 92% (12 out 13) providing cash assistance while rest providing non-food interventions (table 2)

Table 2 : Type of assistance provided by study NGO's

Type of Assistance	Number of NGO reported providing assistance during study period	%
Food items Distribution	9	69%
Cash Distribution	12	92%
Voucher distribution	5	38%
Agriculture (Seeds Distribution)	11	85%
Agriculture (Equipment)	8	62%
None Food Item (Kitchen Kits)	9	69%
Shelter House repair	7	54%

In terms of type of conditional or unconditional assistance, 7 out of 12 NGO's implementing programs on cash assistance provided information on unconditional or conditional assistance. Out of 7, five were providing conditional cash assistance while two were providing both types of assistance and mostly it was for cash for work (table 3)

Table 3: Type of cash assistance as reported during KII's

	NGO	Type of cash distribution	Details	Quotes
1	RAADA	Conditional	Cash for work	*"Well, if we had conditional cash assistance so for conditional cash assistance, we had a norm and the beneficiaries needed to do work during the day and then they were receiving the cash assistance. For example, our cash for work program was in this way."*
2	YVO	Conditional	Cash for food	*"It is conditional. Just for getting food stuff."*

3	ORCD	Conditional	Cash for work, cash for food	*"For cash assistance, we mostly give cash for work, we give cash for work. And also, cash for food."*
4	AMRAN	Both	Conditional: Cash for work	*"…it is pretty much depending on the donor choice sometime sometimes it was unconditional but some time the donor wanted such as cash for work."* *In conditional assistant we had some condition and after the completion of that condition they were receive the money……"*
5	SFL	Conditional	Cash for food	*"..we do not really have any cash distribution right now…* *"…they take the money and they cannot take cash physically. They go to the specified stores and for the same 5,500 or 5700 Afghanis that we distributed through accounts they buy food and they do not take cash to homes…."*
6	SRP	Both Unconditional for vulnerable people (old age, widows, children) Conditional: for healthy people	Conditonal: Cash for work	*"For the sake of those who are widows, for example, old ages, who are not able to work, we distributed money to them without work unconditional, except above mentioned people, money was in exchange for cash for work."*
7	ACHRO	Conditional	Cash for work	*"In Kandahar and Helmand the people are working in the stream and against that work we are giving money to them."*

3.1.2 Beneficiary identification, verification and final listing process by NGOs

Table below presents typical operational steps for food assistance programs irrespective to countries. KIIs with 13 NGOs presented conformity with listed operation steps (Table 4) ; however, contextual variations and innovations adopted by NGO's during implementation on the ground. According to the findings local NGO's in Afghanistan generally perform the three common steps namely: participatory assessment, monitoring and post distribution monitoring.

Table 4: Globally practiced operational steps under Food Assistance Programs[3]

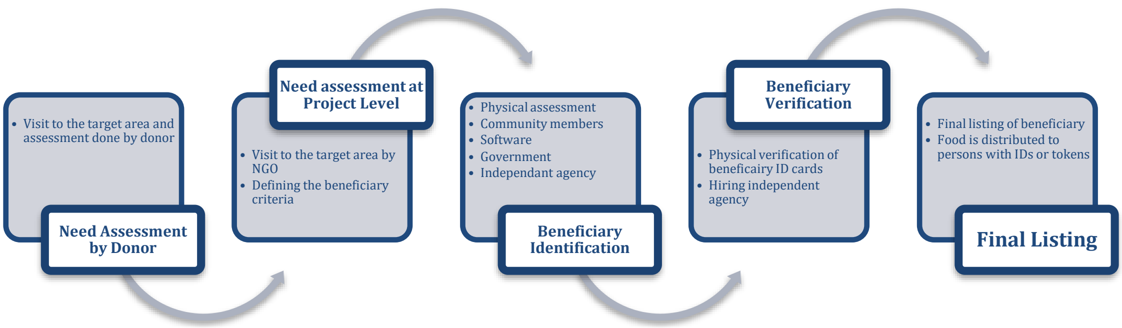
1. Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping	VAM on food security is usually led by the WFP and undertaken in collaboration with the governments of the recipient countries and related clusters, including analysis of the geographical

[3] JPF compiled document "A series of procedures for food distribution"

(VAM)	distribution of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).
2. Feasibility Study (F/S)	Based on the results of VAM, local food security clusters implement F/S to analyze support modalities. In the United Nations and other guidelines, cash is often the most preferred modality; it is recommended that food be distributed only when the local financial system is fragile, market access is limited, and cash transfers may distort the local market (if the beneficiaries exceed 5% of the market catch-up area).
3. Participatory Assessment (P/A)	Selection of target areas is prioritized for areas where vulnerable groups are located (e.g., high IPC) as specified in VAM. After the selection of the area, implementing agencies analyze the specific needs of the beneficiary group, such as the contents of the food package, sanitary goods, preferences, and other in-kind needs and this P/A often conducted together with the government, the beneficiary community, and other stakeholders. In addition, the government otherwise implementing agencies will establish distribution methods based on the analysis of cultural, social, and economic conditions. The list of beneficiaries shall be prepared in a participatory manner by the beneficiary community and shall be included in the P/A.
4. On Site Monitoring	At the locations where food is distributed, confirming distributions is undertaken according to the prescribed procedures (identification documents, COVID19 protocols, etc.), and whether or not there is any illegal acts (solicitation of bribes, demand for unreasonable fees, harassment against women, distribution to non-beneficiaries, etc.). It is desirable that this monitoring be conducted by third parties such as MEAL team housed within implementing NGOs but independent from activity implementation, local authorities and community representatives.
5. Reconciliation	In order to conduct financial reconciliation (combining receipts and lists of recipients), it is to confirm whether the beneficiaries received food or not as well as if any misconduct thereby face-to-face or telephone confirmation, from 5% to 10% of beneficiaries immediately after distribution.
6. Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM)	PDM is performed to access the emerging impact that will appear 3 to 4 weeks after the implementation of distribution. Confirm increases and decreases in negative coping mechanisms and changes in nutrition and livelihoods via face-to-face or telephone. In the United Nations and other organizations, the beneficiaries with a normal confidence interval of 95% are selected at random for PDM. In the absence of urgent reconciliation, reconciliation can be performed at the same time as PDM, in which case a confidence interval of 95% is recommended.

During analysis of KIIs, it was found that the NGOs first perform the need assessment, an equivalent to P/A of the table 2, and this assessment includes visiting the area and using set criteria for beneficiary selection. This step in most of the cases is performed by the donor itself (like UNHCR, GIZ as mentioned by NGO's ACHRO and SWRO). The next step involves identification of the beneficiaries by NGO. NGOs adopt different methods for identification, some NGOs conduct the physical assessment and some take help from the community members in identifying the beneficiaries. Using government database and hiring independent organisations are some of alternative approaches which are adopted by some of the NGO's. At the finalisation step the beneficiaries are verified either through physical verification process or through the independent agency such as Afghan Wireless Company and Roshan or Etisalat Company that verify through looking at the beneficiary card and National ID. In this overall process of beneficiary listing some NGO's mentioned using software to generate the beneficiary database.

Figure 1: Process of beneficiary identification and verification by NGOs subjected to KIIs



3.1.2.1 Beneficiary identification (criteria)

KIIs found that all the organizations consider the vulnerable people as beneficiary for their services. These include poor people, orphans, women, and women headed families, disabled people, elders, displaced people, refuges, families with large number of dependent people (more than 9 dependents/physically able adult male or working woman; this is called the dependency ratio) and families with ill members. Some NGOs rely on their assessment as well as their predetermined criteria/questionnaire to identify the beneficiaries. For instance, SFL (Shelter for Life International) uses the criteria by World Food program (WFP Targeting and Vulnerability Criteria)[2] for identifying/selecting beneficiaries. It has 12 criteria for beneficiary identification/selection based on the project and also endorsed by the FSAC. YVO (Your Voice Organisation) uses the standard criteria of FSAC cluster (Guidelines on Food Security and Agriculture Cluster Response Packages) for assessment of vulnerability. Assessment is done based on the criteria and scored according to predefined guide.

> *"We use the standards criteria of FSAC for assessment and for vulnerability. That has a scoring system." (YVO)*

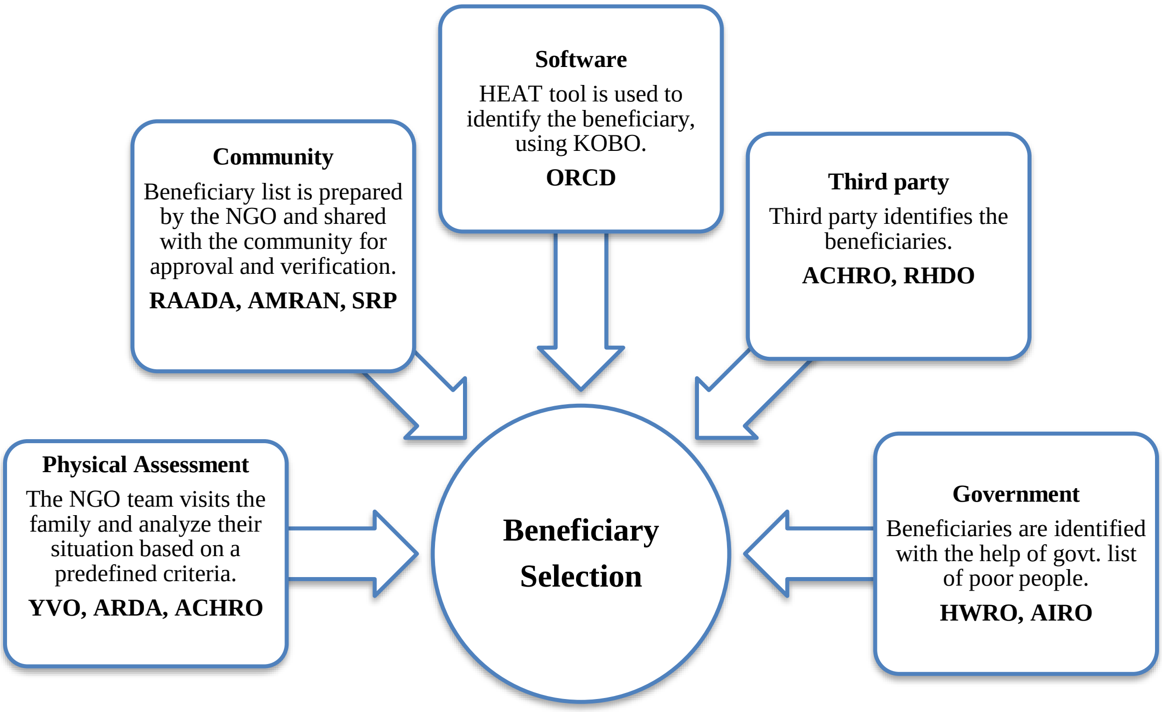
Some NGOs (2/13) have their own manuals/questionnaires (NGO SRP) that have been inspired from the WFP criteria and they use for the identification of the beneficiary. ADEO informed that it chooses beneficiaries based on predefined criteria. It initiates the beneficiary identification by determining their living conditions. People affected by natural disasters or human disasters like war, families with more than 8-9 members, families headed by women, elders, children, and people with disabilities, families with more children, and families having a permanent ill member are categorized as vulnerable populations. Further probing of the assessment criteria, KII analysis showed that all NGOs in fact use the WFP Targeting and Vulnerability Criteria for vulnerability.

> *"The beneficiaries that we choose has distinct categories. The first stage is by determining their live conditions…" (ADEO)*

ORCD uses beneficiary identification through collection of data using KOBO online platform in combination with the HEAT tool and mobile phones for assessing the vulnerability index of the household and the list is created.

> "*We interviewed each of them individually to the security department. Sometimes through telephone calls their IDs, their phone number all their information is with us in hard and soft. We do verify them through random selection; we contact them, through council."*

Figure 2: Information source for beneficiary identification (listing) by NGOs



Varied sources are used by NGO's for generating list of vulnerable households such as local Government lists while some NGOs adopt either physical visit to the households or hiring independent agency for the same. Some NGOs, like SFL and SRP, take the help of elders of the community and mullah imam for preparing the list of the beneficiaries. 7 out of 13 interviewed NGOs follow the physical assessment of household to identify the beneficiaries.

> Good Initiative 1: ARDA
>
> **Involvement of provincial/ district government for identification of target area**.
>
> At the early stage of program implementation NGO such as ARDA seek government support in the identification of the program target area where the program should be implemented.

> *"No, we do not hire a third party for beneficiaries' selection. Our own organization and especially the appointed team is doing the beneficiaries selection task" (RAADA)*

ORCD uses the Microsoft forms and get them filled by the targeted beneficiaries from areas where there are food and shelter problems. KIIs founds that majority NGOs (7 out of 13 interviewed NGOs) make efforts one way or another to promote local participation in the process of beneficiary identification; SRP involves the local leaders, influential people for the identification of beneficiaries. It takes help from established elderly Council, youth Council and the Mullah Imams Council.

"For the eligibility of the beneficiaries we meet the local councils first, together with the district in charge or head of the village, elders of the village, influential people in the area, and in the project plan we worked before, we included different councils…" (SRP)

Good Initiative 2: ORCD

Appropriate resource allocation using HEAT

ORCD uses the UNOCHA (United Nations Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) HEAT (Household Emergency Assessment tool) through KOBO and telephone call for the identification of the beneficiaries. If this method is explored properly, it may lead to cost reduction of conducting need assessment as visiting the area on foot for the assessment incurs costs in the form of, human resource and transportation.

RAADA also informed that it relies on the list of beneficiaries prepared by the head of the village, Shura and Mullah Imam of the mosque after the orientation is conducted within the village. After this beneficiary list is received, the project team visits the village ad verify the beneficiaries.

"Well, usually the list of needy people is available in the village. Every village has its own leaders, the head of the village, Shura, and Mullah Imam of the mosque so they help with preparing the beneficiaries list. When we receive the beneficiaries list, we do not accept it 100 percent after that our project team is going to the village and do the beneficiaries verification. " RAADA

Indeed, KIIs found preparing the long list of the beneficiaries with the help of some influential people like local leaders, head of the village, shura, Mullah Imam of the mosque etc. is most conventional and widely adopted method of beneficiary identification. Once, the list is received, the team again visits the houses of the potential beneficiaries using a set of questions based on predetermined criteria of the project. One who meets the criteria is finalized for the assistance. KIIs could not explore fully how much female and other socially marginalised groups' representations are secured in producing long lists of beneficiaries using this method.

In the case of the physical assessment as the general procedure, NGOs firstly utilises a need assessment of the target area such as VAM and F/S, prepared by UN FSAC cluster and other national level players, which identify areas of priority and vulnerability for assistance. NGOs proceeds with defining the type of beneficiary for projects. After the approval of the project, the NGO team starts visiting the implementation area and select the beneficiaries as per the predefined criteria. Firstly, the team gives an orientation to people about the purpose of the project and type of beneficiaries.

YVO takes the help of volunteers placed in different districts in listing beneficiaries. This is a new approach as compared to the conventional approach followed by many NGOs. After identification, the beneficiaries are verified and final listing is conducted.

Six of the NGOs do not use any third party to identify/select the beneficiaries and 3 said their donor used third party for selection.

> *"No, we never employ a third party because we think that would be less efficient." (ARDA)*

Good Initiative 3: YVO
Positioning of volunteers in each district for better facilitation of the project
YVO follows this specific system of placing volunteers and has 2-4 volunteers in each district . These volunteers are from the local community and facilitate in locating vulnerable people and assist in overall implementation of the project.

3.1.2.2 Beneficiary verification & final listing

The KIIs with NGOs found various practices adopted by them in verifying identities those on long lists and bringing them to final listing. Beneficiary verification presents particular challenges for NGOs operating in Afghanistan where government infrastructure identifying its citizens is still premature and the population is highly mobile due to recurring natural disasters and conflicts[4]. Afghanistan's Ministry of Finance oversees contributory schemes covering old-age benefits, disability and survivor benefits, and sickness and maternity benefits for employed persons in the private sector; cooperatives; social organizations; joint enterprises; and government. In instance of lists incompletely authenticated, poor people have to resort on family ties and informal social welfare to avail benefits. An NGO like AIRO (Afghan Independent Rehabilitation Organization) verifies the beneficiary through National Identification Card (tazkira).

3 of the 13 NGOs were found to be dependent upon the community leaders for the verification of the beneficiaries once a long list is created.

> *"When we confirm a beneficiary who is really eligible, we ask about the head or the councils of the same village, collect information from the Elders and Mullah of the mosque" (SRP)*

The KIIs found NGOs involve community representatives at different stages of beneficiary identification, verification preceding the selection process. Various benefits justify the practice as it can generate community ownership on the projects to the extent that local people guide safe access to and ensure security of distribution points.

[4] *The e-Tazkira was launched in 2018 to enable more reliable identity verification and gradually replace the paper Tazkira.*

The practice can enhance accountability of NGOs providing assistances thereby having community members witness integrity and fairness of the assistance projects.

> *"One important thing that I want to tell you is that we always have a member from the community and these people are very useful and they give us very good advices in the field." (AMRAN)*

Good Initiative 4: AMRAN, RAADA

Bringing community ownership through involvement of community at listing stages

Involving community members at the initial stage of identification of beneficiaries proves to be beneficial approach adopted by NGOs such as AMRAN. In similar context, many NGO's such as RAADA share final beneficiary lists with the community to ensure authenticity. NGO such as YVO mobilize volunteers from community for identification and verification of beneficiaries.

ACHRO highlighted that they conduct the assessment of households either themselves or take help from some third party for beneficiary final listing. It states that there is a database called SCOPE in which the potential beneficiaries can fill in the details and register themselves as potential recipients of the aid. SCOPE is WFP's digital beneficiary and transfer management platform that supports the delivery of assistance (discussed further in 3.5 Literature Review). The platform is a web-based application used for beneficiary registration, programme activity configuration, distribution planning, execution of transfers to beneficiaries and distribution reporting. The SCOPE system does the selection of the beneficiaries automatically and produce a long list therefore manual selection is not required. Any NGO which intends to use this database for beneficiary identification can enter its predefined criteria and the software will prepare list of the potential beneficiaries of given interventions. Based on the longlist produced by the system, NGOs can verify as per their method. When the NGO uses the system to identify the beneficiaries, the predefined criteria filled in the software generates the list of potential beneficiaries (long list). ACHRO then send the information to the donor and the list is approved online. RHDO mentioned that it has different points of verification like monitors, third party, community's representative and stakeholders as well as SCOPE registrations.

During beneficiary identification, physical assessment of households/beneficiaries are not performed by all NGO's but after reaching the final list of beneficiaries, a physical verification of HH/beneficiaries are performed by all NGO's. During the verification process, the assigned team asks questions to the listed beneficiary and also comprehends the conditions of the house and the vulnerability of the family member.

"When we do physical assessment for verification, we go there and see their houses. We find out and they cannot lie to us. You know. We find out about their family situation with physical assessment." (YVO)

In addition to this, SRP uses the biometric system (either owned or outsourced) to authenticate the beneficiary and also to prevent unauthorised access to benefits.

Good Initiative 5: SRP

Application of Bio-metrics housed within the organisation for beneficiary authentication

NGO such as SRP uses biometric system for authentication of the beneficiaries during distribution process to ensure that one beneficiary not receiving the assistance again in the same slot.

Some NGOs (2) take help from the government to ensure the authenticity of the beneficiaries.

"By coordinating with the government, we have chosen the beneficiaries, because government has list of poor and deserving peoples and address /areas"

Good Initiative 6: DCA, YVO

Using double identifiers for beneficiary authentication

DCA and YVO use additional identification numbers apart from national id numbers for the authentication of the beneficiaries during distribution of assistance.

(SWRO)

One of the study respondents highlighted the challenge of existing discrepancies between the ID cards of the beneficiaries.

"It is a difficult work because some people have two or three National IDs and different ID numbers." (RHDO)

3.1.2.3 Beneficiary confidentiality procedures & records management

The process of beneficiary selection inherently bestows the NGOs to access large volume beneficiary information and they are highly personal. One NGO mentioned that even when they are asked to send the data to the FSAC cluster for cross check, de-identified information (such as name, telephone numbers or address) is shared with the cluster.

"Well, when we collect data from our beneficiaries so we never share the data with anyone else even sometimes the government asked us for the beneficiaries list or some data but we haven't shared the data with the government." (RAADA)

ORCD highlighted that they do not allow other people to witness the interview with the beneficiary so as to keep the information safe and secure. They do not give the data to any other party like Ministry of Migration, ministry of Hajj and religious affairs. AMRAN (Afghan Mobile Reconstruction Association) mentioned that they keep the information of the beneficiaries safe by entering in the KOBO toolbox database that is password protected and only manager has access to that data. Contrastingly SFL was not found to be concerned about the confidentiality of the data.

> *"….the list is shared by the community the eligible beneficiaries go to the final stage of response which is shared with us and we distribute it here, there is no place for privacy." (SFL)*

ARDA informed that when beneficiaries take interviews, they are requested to sign the consent form for it. The consent of the beneficiary is needed to share the information with the donor.

> *"We have a confidentiality/consent form for it. And we sign it with the person. Their agreement is needed to share the information with the donor so the visibility platform is shared to them." (ARDA)*

Most of the NGOs (7/13) used IT databases to manage the receipts and records of the distribution of the assistance. Generally, Excel sheets and software are used to record the data regarding the receipts. Once the beneficiary data is stored electronically, then only technical staff set the password to control the accesses to these databases.

Three NGOs used the conventional hard copies to store the data in some office space. Two NGOs kept the records of the distribution both ways, soft copy and hard copy.

> *"We keep the list and the receipts in excel as well as in our database we have all the receipts the hard copy in the boxes. First, we have the general list, and their tazkira and what types of assistance they have received and their documents and signature and prove of all assistance they received is available and in case the donor asks for the picture we are able to provide the information." (AMRAN)*

3.1.3 Monitoring process

3.1.3.1 Monitoring during beneficiary selection and distribution

Almost all the NGOs (11/13) reported that they have a sort of monitoring team/section, which is involved in monitoring the process of the distribution of the assistance; however only ORCD explicitly reported that it conducts real-time monitoring mechanism. The responses from the rest is a mix; rely on the Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) (1), rely on the communities and government (6) to observe and approve of their activities or provide feedback via telephone, receive third party monitoring (2), or they don't document monitoring process (2). ACHRO talks about the community feedback and states that they educated community elders who are called during the survey and food distribution and are asked about whether the survey teams go to houses and whether there are any complaints about the survey and the distribution processes. ORCD that implement real-time monitoring, uses filming at the time of card verification and distribution to make sure there are no misrepresentation.

> "We were filming them, they would be holding their tazkiras with themselves, we would take videos of them and the tazkira would also appear on the video and then we would cross-match at the monitoring and evaluation center to confirm whether he/she is the same person who was assessed, whether it is the same tazkira number, whether it is the same tazkira or it is different. We were monitoring this way so that there wouldn't be any embezzlement and waste" ORCD

3.1.3.2 Post distribution monitoring (PDM)

The PDM is generally performed after one week of distribution. The aim of PDM was generally to specify the immediate outcome of the projects. Wherein monitoring team performs house checks, enquires about the assistance and details on the assistance spent, followed by feedback on overall distribution process. AMRAN, ADEO and ORCD randomly select the household for the PDM. One of the NGOs mentioned about using third party for the PDM.

> *"RHDO conduct post distribution monitoring, through monitoring committees, which include five persons. The monitoring members are assigned to monitor each activity included in post distribution." (RHDO)*

> *"I think this is the monitor section. The third party that they are monitoring us is another party with WFP." (SFL)*

3.1.3.3 Approach adopted by NGO's for providing food assistance to female beneficiaries

Afghanistan is highly gender segregated society and two decades of development promoted women's social participation and empowerment. However, Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan take over since August 2021, segregation again put in place at extreme level. All the NGOs interviewed have female staff members in the program team to facilitate the identification of the female beneficiaries. Female staff members travel to the field distribution sites and facilitate distribution to females in receiving the aid.

> Good Initiative 7. SWRO
>
> **Preference and increasing probability of selection of female beneficiaries**
>
> The first criteria for beneficiary identification adopted by SWRO is female, which increases the probability of the vulnerable females to be listed for the assistance.

Good Initiative 8. YVO: Gender sensitive approach wherein female staff members performs female need assessment

NGO such as YVO send the female staff members in the targeted area for need assessment so as to comprehend the needs of the females more precisely. Additionally, NGOs have number of female staff in the implementation team to support female beneficiaries at every stage of receiving assistance.

> *"In this part of our program, in every program, we will definitely have a female employee, and this program is operated by women, because the woman can better communicate with the woman. The women are part of the program, is led by the women and we do not have any problem in this area." (SRP)*

> *"As our field colleagues surveying houses for the most vulnerable people to find for the female beneficiaries' selection. We hired the female staff for assessment and distribution." (RHDO)*

None of the NGOs reported providing any remuneration or reimbursement of transportation to the mahrams who assist female beneficiaries to collect cash/ token/voucher. Female staff members also conduct PDM by visiting the house of the female beneficiary and enquiring about the use of the assistance.

> *"For post distribution monitoring (PDM) we should have female colleagues until they go to the homes and visit the women beneficiaries and ask whether they received the materials that were distributed and given to their Mahram on behalf of them on a certain date. If they say yes, then we can confirm that the beneficiaries received the materials." (RAADA)*

Although 13 NGOs targeted for the KIIs were sequentially approached by snowball method and therefore findings herein provide insights from the male perspective as the all the interviewed NGOs were male headed. In the face of escalating gender segregation, ones with means to leave the country did so and NGOs' female staff seems to confined with work in "female domains," programme activities that directly deal with female beneficiaries requires the assignment of the female staff by the NGOs.

3.1.4 Complaint management system

Organisations institutionalise collecting and responding both positive and negative feedbacks from their beneficiaries and stakeholders can unlock their potentials by constantly improving quality and accountability of their interventions. Various international standards in delivering humanitarian assistances account complaint mechanisms to enable humanitarian organisations to see their service delivery from eyes of beneficiaries and execute power responsibly. In line with the standards, international donors are increasingly requiring the introduction of complaint mechanism a prerequisite for funding.

The KIIs found majority NGOs have already introduced one way and another a system to collect and manage complaints from their beneficiaries. Designating mobile phone to receive feedbacks is the most commonly adopted means. 10 out of 13 NGOs distribute the posters and cards with their contact numbers and ask the people to call on these numbers to register any complaint.
The complaints are received and divided into two categories, one that need prompt action and other which can wait. They inform the team about the complaints and the complaint resolution is processed.

> *"They are being shared with the central office, and then those complaints are being evaluated to see if the complaints are in higher level or a lower level? Then it will be decided accordingly and give the feedback to the filed officers. Their complaints are being followed and evaluated to see what the reasons for the complaint are? are they accurate or just a false statement? and give the response within one week or 10 days to the complainant." (SWRO)*

Further, some NGOs (5/13), have installed boxes in the field in which people can put their complaints namely, RAADA, SRP, ACHRO, RHDO and ARDO . However, telephone was found to be a better option. For projects in rural Afghanistan where low literacy is still prevailing issue, installing complain boxes alone does not ensure hearing concerns from beneficiaries that projects are targeting.

> *"Several times our team went and opened the complaint boxes but we didn't find complaints inside the boxes. We only found three complaints inside the boxes but those complaints were just for annoying us and they were not serious complaints. The phone system is very comfortable for filing a complaint." (RAADA)*

NGOs make extra efforts to ensure hearing voices from their beneficiaries. RAADA has a female staff member who takes the calls and record the complaints. YVO uses multiple points to ensure the voices are heard from beneficiaries and project stakeholders by setting three ways of complaint registration. First, it has put complaint box. Second, it gives the hotline numbers to the people to call and complain. Third, people can directly complain to the staff members.

Good Initiatives 9: ORCD, AMRAN

Tracking of beneficiary for complaint resolution

In situation of voice disruptions during telephonic complaints NGO such as ORCD sends a field team for the identification of the beneficiary and resolution of issues. Similarly, NGO AMRAN when it receives calls in the inbox the system also captures the GPS coordinate of the place form where the call came. This helps AMRAN organization to know from what specific village the complaint came.

Most of the NGOs highlighted the nature of complaints were about displeasure as well as inquiring and complaining reasons for not being selected for any type of assistance.

> *"People also complain that I didn't receive the food assistance, this organization came and did assistance to others but I didn't receive assistance. These types of complaints are a lot." (RAADA)*

Good Practices 10: AMRAN

Adoption of Anti-Corruption Policy

NGO AMRAN follows an anti-corruption policy for its employees and confirmation signature is taken from them to prevent inappropriate events

KIIs revealed a number of NGOs recognise the most eminent challenge of their service delivery is the number of beneficiaries assisted by their humanitarian programmes fall short of the people in needs of assistances.

3.1.5 Risk management and strategies adopted by NGOs

3.1.5.1 Field surveillance for distortion of assistances

11 out of 13 NGOs have monitoring teams/divisions, which are designated to ensure transparency in the implementation of the program and prevent any involvement of extortion money. 2 out of 13 NGOs depend on the complaint mechanism and request the beneficiary to make a complaint in case of any inappropriate experiences.
AMRAN has an anti-corruption policy for its employees and confirmation signature is taken from them. In case such case is reported from the field, staff is directed to solve these onsite and organisation is informed about the same. SWRO shared that is has not experienced any case of inappropriate event to date.

> *"We have a complaint mechanism for this. So, in the beginning when our teams go, we give the people brochures and awareness about the complaints which is on top level." (YVO)*

> *"Okay, so while selecting a house, I do not give any authority or permission a third party. Because when I do survey, I only ask them to provide a monitor who could monitor us and cooperate with us" (ORCD).*

3.1.5.2 Preventing theft and robbery during cash transfers & food items

Given extremely volatile security situation in Afghanistan, inherently ensuring safe transfer and distribution of cash and goods for humanitarian programme is central concerns of the NGOs. 5 of the 13 organizations utilise the services of the third party such as money exchanger/money service provider and telephone company for the distribution of cash. A limited number of money exchangers in Afghanistan also have obtained license to provide money transfer services. In fact, every money service provider is a money exchanger but not the other way around. This is appropriate approach for the program considering the onus of the cash movement and its distribution lies with them since they are skilled in transferring money using low profile without being noticed by anyone. They also have licensed security guards whom they can use anytime they need to transfer money from one place to another and to distribute to the beneficiaries.

> *"We do not want to get physical money to avoid such a thing. To prevent this, we contract with the third party. That is with the money exchanger to transmit the money to the village." (YVO)*

One NGO depends upon the telecommunication service providing cash transfers to beneficiary SIM cards; hence this avoids the need for physical movement of cash. Another NGO uses the hawala system to distribute the money.

> *"… we transfer the money through the communication companies Etisalat, Roshan,…." (AMRAN)*

ADEO shared during interview that it uses financial services providers for the transfer of the money who determine the mode for cash transfer and ADEO just refunds them.

> *"…, we use financial service providers for this reason, because the security of our money is guaranteed, we run the project through them." (ADEO)*

On the other hand, RHDO and SRP coordinate with the governmental forces or some security services to escort the cash transfer and distribution process.

SFL was concerned about the theft in the food items because they require storage facilities with proper security such as storage that is lockable and is guarded by guards.

Services used by different NGOs for combating Security Issues is through transfer of risk to third party:

1. *ORCD: Money Service Provider*
2. *ACHRO: Through Banks*
3. *RAADA: third party (Afghan Wireless Company)*
4. *YVO: Money Changer*
5. *AMRAN: take help of Bank for Mobile Banking, NGO people go to the area with the bank vehicle and distribute the cash.*
6. *ADEO: Financial Service providers, HAWALA*
7. *SRP: Hawala System*
8. *ARDA: Money Exchanger*
9. *AMRAN: Communication Companies like Etisalat and Roshan, using banks or Hawala system*

Community and government authorities' engagement is a key factor in ensuring security of the assistance materials.

> "We just prepare/inform the people that we have the distribution of the money to you on this day, we transfer the money to the office and we ask for help from the security forces, there is no other way." *SRP*

3.1.5.3 Managing community & stakeholders needs and expectation

The KIIs found a number of NGOs uses community dialogues to mitigate tensions generated by mismatches of project coverage and needs for assistances. ORCD and RAADA use community dialogue for creating awareness about the beneficiary selection and overall program to reduce ambiguity within the community. RAADA gives an orientation session in the village in the presence of influential people, head of the village and Mullah Imam and describes the objective of the project and also clarifies the type of assistance and the criteria for beneficiary selection. In this way, people are not misled/misinformed about the services/assistance.

SWRO highlighted the challenge and pressure that come along while dealing with government functionaries during the program. Two NGOs out of total participants denied facing community level issues considering the effective communication strategies already they adopted for transparency.

Good Initiative 11: AMRAN

Using community dialogue as a measure to address apprehensions within the community

NGO such as AMRAN conducts a community dialogue session before the initiation of the project which includes explanation of the project's objectives and the criteria for the beneficiary selection, so as to reduce the ambiguity regarding the selection criteria. The public dialogue is attended by donor representative, the authorities, community leaders, village elders and the shura members.

3.1.6 Coordination with stakeholders

The response to question on 'do you work alone or in some collaboration with other NGO while implementing food security programs' received varied responses from all NGO's. Some of the NGO's mentioned implementing projects jointly with other national and international NGO's while few were implementing as sole organisation.

" *"We are the only ones currently but we also had some internal NGO partners, including WFP, a project in Helmand headed by HARD, and Its center was in Kandahar and we worked with them as a partnership" -SWRO*

"we worked in both, separately and as join venture with other national organizations. we had a joint project with SRP organization in Jawzjan province"-ADEO

““We used to work alone before, but lately we worked jointly in some projects with an organization called Goal International, an Irish organization. The remaining projects we carried out ourselves alone.”-SRP

In relation to reducing duplicity of program implementation, sharing of ideas and resources at such as for cross checking of beneficiaries, NGO’s coordinate with other development sectoral organisations. It was evident from interviews that all study NGO’s were connected to FAO and WFP via FSAC cluster

“We do it alone but with the coordination of FSAC Cluster and leading of WFP and FAO we go ahead with their coordination. we have coordination with other organizations who work in this field. We cross check our lists with those who work in different areas and districts we coordinate our activities with ACBAR.”- YVO

“Our association is on the level of cooperation. To prevent duplication in the area. The funding and implementation are ours. So we would only share our plan on cooperation level to governmental and non-governmental local and active organizations which we wanted to have a project or do assist.”- ARDA

Coordination with local, provincial and central levels of Islamic Emirate has posed some challenges to study NGO’s while implementing programs. The key issues faced were related to delay in approvals, government interference at the stage of beneficiary identification and selection (Table 5)

Table 5: Coordination issues raised during KIIs

S.no.	NGO	Coordinating issues	Quotes
1	NGO-I	Getting approvals from government	*“we have some problems, you know this country is full of problems, in every stage it has its own problems, like difficulties in getting letters from the government officials, in implementation from the beginning to end it has its own difficulties there is no doubt in that.”*
2	NGO-II	Government interferences.	*“We have faced the interference challenges of the previous and also the current government. For example, once the government demanded that we should give the money of absent beneficiaries to the district but we didn’t give money to the district and the district had a wrong behavior against us. We are facing these kinds of challenges.”*
3	NGO-III	Biased lists	*“The current challenge I say it obviously. It is the intervention of Emirates in our programs if it is humanitarian or not. Most of the authorities try to give you a list. They try to introduce their friends. This is the challenge we face every time.”*
4	NGO-IV	Biased lists	*“the one challenge that I mostly come across is that the Migration give me lists and they say that these should be included, it shouldn’t be included, they say I evaluate them. I do evaluate them anyway but they say that these should be included.*

5	NGO-V	Lack of coordination with relevant government departments, delayed processes from the districts	*"Sometimes we have challenges in the cooperation of the relevant departments, in some cases they do not cooperate with us or sometimes they prolong the process which off course is solved by understanding the issue in some places. In the same way we often have problems with the districts, which do not allow us to work at once until we explain to them about the project and about the organization, these are all type of challenges that we face during the project."*

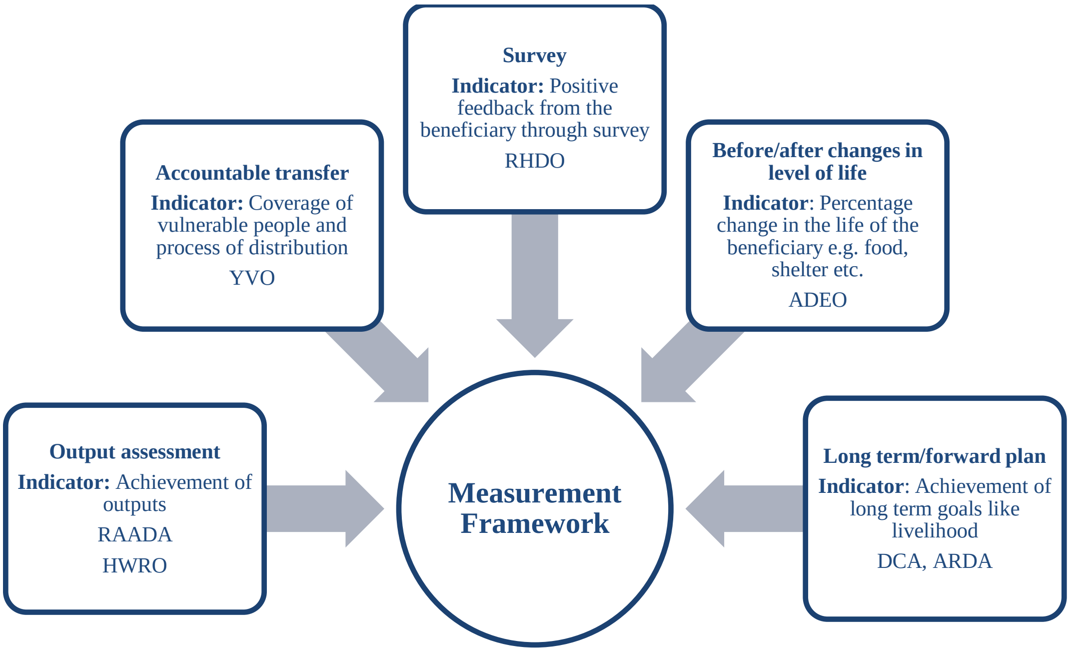
3.1.7 NGO's Evaluation Framework

All the NGOs participated KIIs were confident that the beneficiaries are certainly satisfied from their services and dissatisfaction to the NGOs are normally expressed from those people who didn't receive any kind of assistance. However they informed that they chose the beneficiary based on the predefined criteria, so they were content. ACHRO said that it has received a letter of appreciation from the community also. AMRAN had a different point of view; it said that one cannot satisfy all the people, so it has set benchmark of between 80 to 90% for beneficiary's satisfaction on their assistances.

ARDA mentioned that it always explains the aims and objectives of the project and criteria of the beneficiary in detail to the community people to make them understand that everyone can't receive assistance. In this way, it gains their credits and satisfaction.

> *"Generally, those who benefitted from the project are happy because they have received materials. They are thankful and appreciate the aid. Also, they are satisfied" (RAADA)*
> *"People are satisfied with the Aids they received, even though knowing that their needs are high, but in general our beneficiaries are satisfied." (ADEO)*
> *"There is one thing that if you survey it is impossible to satisfy everyone and we have put a margin for us if 80 to 90 percent show satisfaction then the project is successful and we have earned the people trust on us." (AMRAN)*

Figure 3: NGO's Measurement framework



The KIIs with NGOs found the benchmarks for the success and failures of the projects were defined diversely across respondents as demonstrated in figure 3. However, definitions are largely classified to short-term project inputs and outputs and accountable distribution process. NGOs employ one or more of these definitions and measure them by either quantifying changes between before and after interventions or simply collecting positive feedback via survey.

11 out of 13 NGOs were concerned about the immediate outputs whereas 2 NGOs laid emphasis on improvement of the long-term outcomes for the beneficiaries. DCA was concerned with the base line and end line results.

> *"See, we have set a long-term goal for ourselves and whatever is the purpose and motive of the office will be left out. We have a base line and finish line even for the small project." (DCA)*

Similarly, ADEO take into account the difference which is brought by the service to the life of beneficiary, to the society for outcome measurement. ADEO assesses the difference using previous assessments and use the percentage change as a measure of outcome additional to utilisation of cash against predefined purpose.
YVO's example demonstrate the NGO is concerned with the process of distribution in evaluating their project success. The evaluation is guided with principles to account integrity of its assistance and dignity of beneficiaries;

> *"First, the genuine person should get the service. Second, the service should be provided to the beneficiaries keeping their honour safe. Thirdly, the assured amount of money is given to the people. Lastly, all the amount should reach to their houses."(YVO)*

In process of conducting interviews with the NGOs, a concern voiced that humanitarian assistance may create dependency among beneficiaries and its effects remains only immediate and limited in promoting resilience. ARDA pointed out the fact that the effects of the humanitarian and emergency assistances are temporary. The beneficiaries get the services till the project is running, without having any long-term impact. ARDA believes that assistance for agriculture is best approach to build beneficiaries'-resilience and reducing dependency on aid.

> *"…there are different services. Humanitarian response service takes thing and distribute it. That's right the donor gives a very high package to a beneficiary using a bag of flour which is good for some time however, somethings that you gave once and ate it and finished and no alternative package has been worked on in the future." (SFL)*

Selecting appropriate assistance depending on the crisis and beneficiaries requires much consideration and issue of balancing emergency and development deserves further discussion.

3.1.8 Service Transfer Modalities (Cash/voucher, foods, shelter/NFI)

NGOs provide different types of assistances to the beneficiaries. Assistances include foods, cash/voucher distribution, non-food items including materials to repair damaged houses.

3.1.8.1 Type items distributed by NGO's

11 key items were identified through the KIIs that NGOs distribute to beneficiaries as listed below in the table. Agriculture seed, flour and oil were top three most commonly distributed items by NGOs.

Table 6: Items distributed by NGOs participated KIIs

SN	Items for distribution	# of NGOs	Name of NGOs
1	Agriculture Seed distribution	6	RAADA, SWRO, SFL, ACHRO, AIRO, ARDA
2	Farming toolkit	2	RAADA, SWRO
3	Flour	4	ORCD, AMRAN, RHDO, ARDA
4	Rice	3	ADEO, ARDA, ORCD
5	Beans	1	ORCD
6	lentils/pulses	3	SRP, RHDO, ORCD
7	Oil	6	ADEO, AMRAN, SRP, RHDO, ARDA, ORCD
8	Wheat	3	ADEO, SRP, ARDA
9	Salt/sugar	3	AMRAN, SRP, RHDO
10	Vegetables	1	SWRO
11	Milk	1	AIRO

3.1.8.2 Determining transfer modality by NGOs

NGOs were asked about their preferred type of food assistance and it was found that 4 out of 13 NGOs were convinced with the idea of providing the aid according to the beneficiary needs. Three NGOs advocated the necessity of delivering household food items such as flour, rice, beans and oil. However, other NGO emphasise the need for contextualising aid as per current need of households.

> *"Food is the complete package" (RHDO)*
> *"It is different, if there is an emergency condition certainly the people choose food items. And those who have something then they accept equipment for improvement. It depends on the condition that which one is acceptable by people, according to their family condition" (ACHRO)*

Although there is a risk of compromising benefit of the food intervention in also improving nutrition intakes, ORCD shared the preference expressed from beneficiaries for increasing quantity of one particular food item against small quantities of many items.

> *"And they (beneficiaries) say if we increase the quantity of these items, then they don't want the other items. So, they ask to increase the quantity of these." (ORCD)*

Interestingly, 7 out of 13 NGOs mentions their perceptions that unconditional cash is preferred by large number of households as cash provides freedom to purchase any good. Two NGOs highlighted using tokens or coupons for purchasing food is also appropriate.

> "We distributed in one of our projects plumpy nut for the children who had malnutrition. But people sold that product in the market because they needed cash more….. Money is more important for people than this product" RAADA

Whereas NGOs believe that cash aid should be used in case of real emergency situation, in normal circumstances distribution of modified seeds and agricultural kits provide opportunities to earn livelihood, combined with special trainings.

> *"If we give 100 Kg wheat to a family after one month it is finishing. If we provide opportunities of work, or give them agriculture equipment or provide them opportunities of kitchen gardening they can use that for whole year. So, in my opinion providing agriculture equipment is better that food for strengthening their capacity." (ACHRO)*

ARDA also claimed that the assistance in agriculture and livestock sector is effective long-term solution for enhancing household livelihood level.

"In provinces the assistance in agriculture and livestock sector is better. Because agriculture is beneficial to the person himself and also to other people and the local market." (ARDA)

RAADA is involved with sericulture and value chain development of silk.

"…RAADA is the only organization in Afghanistan that works for the chain value development of the silk. We distribute silkworm eggs and some other necessary materials and equipment. For horticulture, we distribute some important agricultural equipment…." (RAADA)

3.1.8.3 Linking non-food item with need of household

All the NGOs conduct a need assessment in the target areas and identify the household needs and requirements for non-food items. ADEO explained that the needs of the people differ with the conditions of the community.

"Well, it is a matter of need assessment that we conduct before starting a project." (RAADA)

"Our assessor goes there, there is a column, they ask what the necessities at your home are? What are the necessities other the food items at your home?" (ORCD)

"According to the survey we have done, there are separate sections of non-food needs." (ARDA)

ORCD provides blankets, pressure cooker, teapot, carpet, and clothes to beneficiaries. ADEO and SRP provided pots, pans, plates, knives, gas balloons, clean towels, and buckets.

"Non-food items, as I told you before, we give them blankets, we give them pressure cooker, we give them teapot, we give them a thermos, we give them cups, we buy a tarpaulin for them, a carpet, we give them a carpet, we give them women clothing…" (ORCD)

3.2 Cash Assistance

3.2.1 Type and methods of cash assistance

5 out of 12 NGOs in KIIs provide the conditional cash to the beneficiaries largely as cash for work and 2 of the 12 NGOs deliver unconditional cash assistance. AMRAN highlighted shifting between the two, conditional or unconditional based on the donor mandate and the existing conditions.

"It is pretty much depending on the donor choice sometime it was unconditional but some time the donor wanted such as cash for work." (AMRAN)

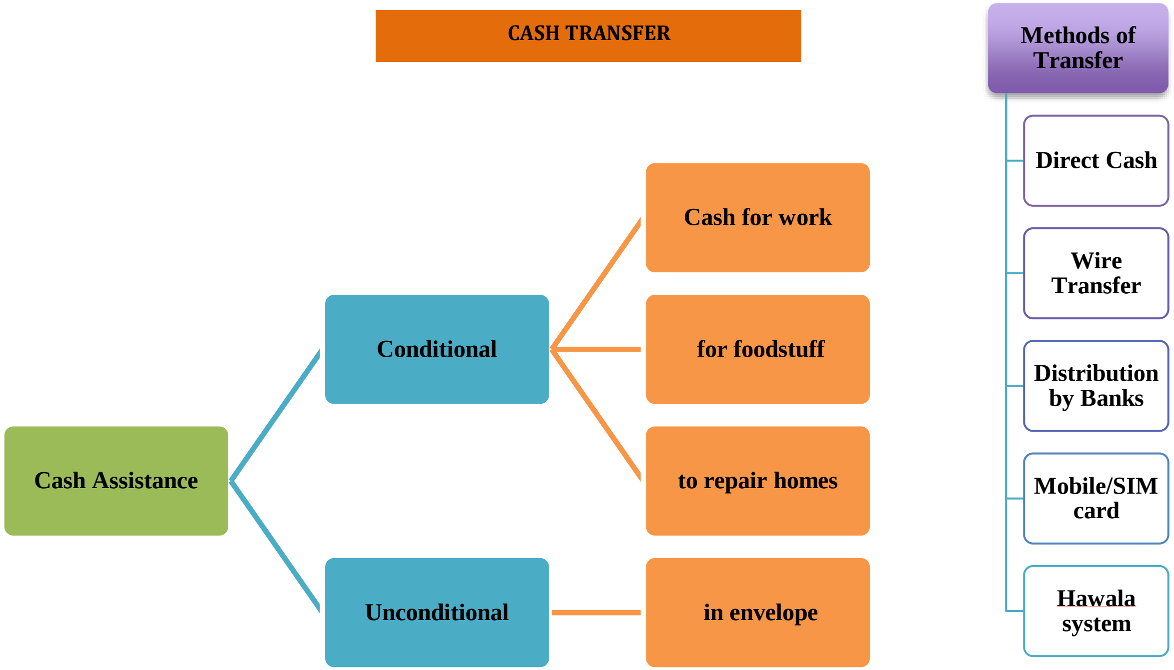
SRP also provides both type of cash transfers (conditional and unconditional), conditional cash for work for beneficiaries capable enough to work and unconditional cash to those who cannot (like old age, women, disabled people).
The organizations working in the agricultural sectors mostly provide the conditional cash in return of work.
ORCD delivers both cash for work and food assistance through money exchanger or through the bank such as company name Boloro.

> *"Nowadays, there is a company called Boloro, we have made a contract with them and we distributed through that. And we do through the bank." (ORCD)*

ADEO delivers cash to the beneficiaries through financial services provider who are given information on total amount to be distributed, the list of beneficiaries and the area.

> *"As I mentioned earlier in general, we implement our cash distribution by the financial service providers, as far as the list of beneficiaries, the type of aid, they amount are specified, we contract with the financial service providers." (ADEO)*

Figure 4: Types of Cash transfer and methods



Out of total respondents, 6 of the NGOs were convinced with the use of electronic payment transfer as they found it secure, followed by direct distribution of cash and the involvement of money exchanger The most common safest medium of electronic transfer is mobile cash considering the risk of carrying cash. Electronic payment was found to be the most preferred method.

AMRAN emphasised on the distribution method to be aligned according to the situation of areas. For secured areas having an accessible bank, the method should be bank transfer and in absence electronic payment method can be used. NGO ADEO incorporate beneficiary preference while adopting any method for If beneficiaries stationed in the city, mobile money services can be used and for villages, hawala system is appropriate method.

> *"it also depends on where our beneficiaries are, and which of these services they have access to. It should be also determined during the assessment that which of these services our beneficiary has access to? "(ADEO)*

For bank transfer, NGO pay to bank in advance and beneficiaries are invited to collect their due assistance, transferring to individual's account is not practiced.

Hawala system is also preferred by NGO's but it is perceived expensive. According to the procedure, beneficiaries are required to visit city to collect cash from contracted hawala exchanger since hawala accountants do not travel to villages. This result in out-of-pocket expenditure on travel by the beneficiary or impending NGOs, thus not a preferred choice.

3.2.2 Challenges faced during cash transfers

Different NGOs discussed various issues in cash transfer. RAADA was concerned about the security issues when transporting the cash from one place to another considering the chances of theft and robbery.

ORCD concerns were about the delays in cash from the donors, which disappoints the beneficiaries.

SFL highlighted the restrictions and sanctions imposed on the banking systems in Afghanistan which make the use of hawala system the only way to send money to Afghanistan. Hawala on the other hand has its own challenges such as the high charges and availability of the very few licensed Hawala providers.

RHDO told that the de-facto government do not accept the SCOPE registration and people have multiple IDs, hence, it is very difficult to identify and verify the beneficiaries.

> *"Well, the main challenge of cash is its security issues. Cash transfer is a little bit difficult in Afghanistan so we have encountered this issue except for it there are no other special issues." (RAADA)*
>
> *"Sometimes it happens that we receive the cash late from the donors, the cash comes late." (ORCD)*

Two NGOs stated that they don't have any challenges in cash transfers

> *"Right now, we do not have any challenges. When we have a program, we talk to the money exchanger." (ARDA)*

3.3 NGO approach to Combination of types of assistance as a package (Annex-B)

All the NGOs had different views on bundle of interventions. 10 out of 13 NGOs were favouring a bundle of interventions integrated together for beneficiaries. The justification provided was the existing high need of households for basic package of services in health, education, WASH etc. On the contrary three NGOs had their reservations for bringing the different assistance in one package. One reason cited by YVO was organisation competency to deliver aid in all sectors which requires coordination among the departments. ORCD was apprehensive about the process of need assessment in case of bundled approach as it would be tedious task to arrive at right set of packages for the vulnerable households. SWRO pointed out bundled approach will increase household dependency on free assistance and refrain community from earning livelihood.

AMRAN explained the interconnecting benefits between the interventions and advocated the idea. ADEO emphasise on tailor made approach for 'no size fits all' wherein the bundle should align with specific needs of the household such as not all five services where only 2-3 is required.

> *"Always giving something to someone, can sometime be harmful, it gives them the habit of laziness and will always have expectations from others. They expect the institutions and organizations to provide everything for them, and they will not do anything for themselves." (SWRO)*
>
> *"It is good in the sense that it a complete and comprehensive task. Because when we go to a house for assessment, what is our aim?" (ORCD)*
>
> *"Their effectiveness if they are combined? If they become a combined package this would be a huge work for an organization. Because any organization does not have specialization in all sections." (YVO)*
>
> "*If you consider your imagination the programs that you mention such as WASH, food security, gender, education I aspect it all are important and should be included and I mentioned earlier the way all these assistance reaches to the people is very good and it has its impact." (AMRAN)*
>
> *"well obviously the need of each target group in each area are different, we cannot provide water services to a group who needs food, or a group whose water resources are polluted, we cannot provide health services).." (ADEO)*

The issue of free aid altering behaviours of local community for their reluctance to work was also highlighted.

> *"Most of the people have become lazy in the past 20 years and most of them are enthusiastic about money." (ARDA)*

3.4 Literature Review of the Humanitarian Aid Processes

After analysing the qualitative data from the KIIs, it was necessary to review existing published evidence for different modalities under humanitarian food assistance (HFA) in light of various guidelines enforced by aid agencies. This overall needs to be compared with existing processes followed by NGO's while distributing assistance to households. In the following subheadings we discuss each process of the humanitarian aid.

3.4.1 Identification of Beneficiary for Humanitarian Aid

The success of every humanitarian or development projects/programme depends largely on appropriate beneficiaries targeting. Literature review highlight the frequent incidence of inclusion and exclusion errors during targeting such as the use of project inputs not for desired purpose e.g., beneficiaries eating or selling seeds given for planting to meet their immediate needs, the sale of livestock after re-stocking and this include lack of ownership or interest to care for project activities.

Types of Targeting and methods used within Food Security:

- Geographical targeting: Based on nutritional surveys/ food security assessment.
- Population Groups: Vulnerable groups targeted e.g., IDPs or refugees
- HHS: Vulnerable HHs targeted by socio-economic status or children.
- Individual: physiologically vulnerable people.
- Community-based targeting
- Self-targeting

The most commonly used vulnerability assessment approach across partners includes FSAC endorsed WFP 12-point vulnerability criteria and ICCT (Inter-Cluster Coordination Team) endorsed HEAT assessment tool[5] for beneficiary selection.

WFP itself measures food security through a composite indicator defined in the widely used Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI methodology)[6]. It considers two dimensions: food consumption (in terms of frequency and dietary diversity) and the capacity to cope (measured through economic vulnerability and livelihood coping). In refugee situations food and cash assistance often plays a major role, so the assessment methodology has to be slightly adjusted in order to measure the actual needs for assistance. CARI unit of assessment is the household and it includes household level indicators related to food security. It doesn't provide area level geographic classification. CARI uses four food security groups (Food Secure, Marginally Food Secure, Moderately Food Insecure, and Severely Food Insecure). CARI consolidates the following indicators

Food security Indicators

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[5] Household Emergency Assessment Tool (HEAT), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/household-emergency-assessment-tool-heat

[6] WFP Targeting and prioritization Operational Guidance Note January 2021, https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000122035/download/

- Food consumption score
- Reduced coping strategy index (rCSI)
- Livelihood coping strategies indicator (food component)
- Household food and non-food expenditure shares

Essential needs indicators

- Economic capacity to meet essential needs (ECMEN) using a minimum expenditure basket (MEB)
- Multidimensional deprivation indicator
- Livelihood coping strategies indicator (all essential needs)

The HEAT tool is used as part of the ECHO funded Emergency Response Mechanism (ERM), to assess the eligibility of conflict and shock-affected communities for one-time multi-purpose cash and WASH assistance. Table 4 presents pros and cons of different beneficiary vulnerability assessment tools.

An inclusion error refers to the receipt of benefits by people who should not be receiving them, while an exclusion error refers to people who do not receive benefits, but should. However, there is a need to differentiate between two sources of error. One is associated with the targeting design, the second one is related to actual implementation of the targeting process.

Errors at design stage:

- Design exclusion error: The proportion of the population in need of assistance but are not included in the targeted group.
- Design inclusion error: The proportion of programme beneficiaries who do not need assistance but still are identified as in need in the targeting process

Errors at implementation stage:

- Implementation exclusion error: The proportion of the affected population who meet the defined eligibility criteria but do not receive benefits.
- Implementation inclusion error: The proportion of programme beneficiaries who do not meet the eligibility criteria but receive benefits.

Table 7: Beneficiary Vulnerability assessment tools Pros and Cons

	Pros	**Cons**
WFP & FSAC 12-point criteria	Concise, limited to 12 points. Hence, easy to identify and verify for selecting vulnerable households	Criteria on access to basic amenities such as access to safe drinking water, sanitation, market, status of malnourishment, loss of HH livestock/income sources, information on productive and non-productive assets are not included

	Less likelihood of inclusion error	Generate large database of vulnerable households' due to low specificity within the tool
Household Emergency Assessment Tool (HEAT) tool	Objective in nature, hence easy to communicate	Unclear how to weight different indicators
	Capture Multi-dimension information including detailed information on income, debt, livelihoods, non-food items and access to communication medium	Leads to high inclusion and exclusion errors
	An easy way to reach most vulnerable groups	Requires comprehensive and reliable information, which is not always collected during registration
	Applicable to all emergency response situations in food security, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education and livelihoods.	
Overall household targeting and vulnerability assessment tools such as HEAT, WFP 12 criteria for community level targeting	Enhances ownership and buy-in of the affected population	criteria not applicable to newly displaced population (within a six months period) as the community is not well known
	Can work well in smaller and cohesive communities	Risks marginalizing stigmatized individuals or groups
		Could be perceived as unfair and partial or reinforce existing power imbalances within the Community
		Not possible to implement in insecure contexts

3.4.2 Verification of beneficiary

Verification process starts once beneficiaries have been enrolled and are verified before they can be approved by senior staff. The key steps to verify the eligibility of selected beneficiaries before providing assistance includes: verifying the selection criteria, selecting and training the verification team, verifying at the household level, identifying discrepancies, and communicating the results of the verification process to community leaders and beneficiaries.

UNHCR and WFP guiding document on validation of targeting process states the necessity of quantifying potential targeting design errors by conducting a qualitative validation exercise to assess the acceptability of the chosen targeting method by the affected population. This step involves performing interviews with both eligible and non-eligible households through KIIs or FDGs wherein questions on the perceived fairness, transparency and understanding of the targeting criteria are put forth to selected households or beneficiaries.[7]

According to Targeting and Prioritization guidance note 2021 by WFP:
Monitoring of the identification, screening/registration and verification processes should allow the detection of systemic errors as they occur in the implementation phase. The guidance note emphasized on conducting random re-visits to a proportion of beneficiaries or applicants. The verification process should be undertaken directly by WFP or a third party (not the implementing cooperating partner) to avoid bias. If rescreening results in a mismatch, i.e. the original screening marked a household as included but the re-screening marks the same household as excluded – a deeper evaluation of the failed match must be carried out. The mismatch may be due to an error committed by an individual or changes to the composition in the specific household. But it could also reveal a more systemic issue such as a broad misinterpretation of the eligibility criteria. Troubleshooting potential issues and implementing any necessary changes is required to minimize targeting errors.

Many NGOs in Afghanistan use SCOPE[8] for generating beneficiary database and verification process despite unacceptance of SCOPE registration by Islamic Emirate.
SCOPE in brief is WFP's beneficiary and transfer management platform that supports the programme intervention cycle from beginning to end. SCOPE is a central repository for WFP beneficiary data. The platform is a web-based application used for beneficiary registrations, intervention setups, distribution planning, transfers and distribution reporting. SCOPE supports all transfer modalities: in kind, voucher and cash for project activities. Depending on needs, under SCOPE targeting criteria can be used to determine intervention eligibility. Locations and other information captured from the field also facilitate identification of target groups to include in an intervention. Distribution lists once created in SCOPE can be exported to send to implementing partners. SCOPE was originally created to be the WFP system for cash operations to support the organization's scale-up of market-based responses to food insecurity. Since then, it has evolved into a platform that can manage the entire programme intervention processes.

Table 8: Verification strategies Pros and cons

	Pros	**Cons**
Through elderly, youth, Imam council	Brings community ownership Intervention equity may be improved if gender and other	Could possibly also cause community rift

[7] https://qa.usermanual.scope.wfp.org/cash-accounts/content/common_topics/enrolling_beneficiaries/verifying_enrolments.htm?TocPath=Beneficiaries%7C_____2

[8] World Food Programme, SCOPE
https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp272586.pdf

	socially vulnerable groups represented	May exclude certain groups for assistance inclusion
Physical visit of each household by NGO team	Brings authentication to process and beneficiary list	Resource intensive for NGO
	Generate awareness about household conditions and problems	
Independent verification agency	Brings transparency and validation to beneficiary listing	Requires additional budget and time for contracting
	Bring new information about beneficiary status which could guide mitigation strategies such as eligibility criteria, re-inclusion criteria or referral strategies to the program and design of a complaint and feedback mechanism (CFM).	
Government defines and verifies	Brings government ownership in the program and facilitate institutionalizing of the program at the exit stage	Possibly bring bias to beneficiary selection
		Delays program implemented due to lengthy approvals and consensus
		Lack objectivity and scientific approach

3.4.3 Cash assistance versus food assistance under humanitarian assistance for food

3.4.3.1 Cash and long-term resilience

Institute of Development Studies report[9] on cash-transfers for long-term resilience in conflict affected contexts assess two aspects through review of evidences, one on cost effectiveness of cash versus food transfer and second being effect of modalities on resilience related indicators. The report highlights the difficulty in tracing cash transfers to beneficiary while assessing the effectiveness of humanitarian cash transfers. The report states that the evidence comparing cash transfer modalities generally focuses on the short-term impacts. The report citing author venton et al put forth that cash has the potential to support the resilience of households to manage shocks but go on to say that this is a hypothesis to be tested rather than a finding of their study on cost-effectiveness of cash transfers in emergencies. The report includes the

[9] Bolton, L. (2016). *Cash transfers for long-term resilience in conflict-affected contexts.* K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies. Accessed from https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/13058

study on experimental research comparing modalities in Ecuador, Uganda, Niger and Yemen finds the relative effectiveness depends on contextual factors by Hodinott et al which suggests the importance of accounting levels of food insecurity, the number of buyers and sellers in the markets for staple foods, it further showed that cash and vouchers improved dietary diversity more than food transfers in three of the countries studied. However, in Niger, food improved nutritional diversity more than cash. Food was relatively more effective in increasing calories in two of the countries studied and the findings also highlights considerable cost differences in delivering cash versus food.

The report presented another study on review of transfers in humanitarian settings by Bailey which highlighted that cash to be more cost-effective than food aid at improving diet quality. The examples cited under the study includes case of Lebanon , a randomised evaluation comparing food and cash transfers in Niger which found food transfers led to increased food consumption and diet quality and those receiving cash spent money on agricultural inputs which will be better for longer-term resilience. Food was 15% more expensive to implement as presented within the study findings.

The report presents UNHCR advocacy for cash or vouchers over food transfers as they can be used to access a wide range of needs. UNHCR further reiterates that cash is a stronger tool in urban settings where market and banking systems already exist.

3.4.3.2 Cash versus vouchers and in-kind assistance risk factors

Institute of Development Studies report[10] on conflict-sensitive cash transfers put forth evidences on the risk and implications of cash and food transfer programs. The report indicates that, while risks involved in cash transfer programmes could be different to those for in-kind assistance, these are not necessarily greater and could even be less.

The report cites varied evidences such as Bailey and Harvey[10] which concludes that cash can be effective at meeting the needs of people dealing with the impacts of crisis and disaster, as a substitute or complement to in-kind aid, although not appropriate at all times and in all places. This requires preexisting factors such as markets need to be functioning or able to recover quickly enough to make goods available and effective delivery mechanisms are needed to overcome the risks involved in getting cash to people. The report further states that there is no evidence of cash assistance being more or less prone to diversion than other forms of assistance. Indeed, electronic transfers could reduce corruption risks through more transparent tracking – logical given that the greatest corruption risks for in-kind assistance are related to procurement, storage and transport.

The report cites author Chene published paper which argues that there is no conclusive evidence that cash transfers are more prone to corruption than payments in-kind stating the example of Ethiopia wherein the switch from food to cash transfers in a Red Cross programme resulted in a significant reduction of theft and wastage associated with food distribution. Supporting the similar argument, the report present

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[10] Idris, I. (2017). *Conflict-sensitive cash transfers: unintended negative consequences.* K4D Helpdesk Report 200. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies. Accessed from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/59df6771e5274a11ac1c4964/200-Conflict-Sensitive-Cash-Transfers-Unintended-Negative-Consequences.pdf

findings from author Gordon who concludes that there is no evidence of cash transfers results in large-scale diversion of aid or that cash is more prone to diversion than in-kind aid. The UK National Audit Office in 2011 findings showed that cash transfers could be delivered safely and cost effectively, and particularly highlighted that e-transfers offered a reduced risk of fraud as well as greater transparency and flexibility for beneficiaries.

The report cites the findings of the high-level panel on humanitarian cash transfers which highlights that, in many contexts, cash was a better way to help people compared to in-kind alternatives. The concerns about using cash – that it might cause inflation for key goods in local markets, be more prone to abuse and corruption or diversion or more difficult to target and might be more likely to be controlled by men and so disadvantage women are not borne out by the evidence.

3.4.3.3 Cash versus food debate by world bank

The world bank policy working paper[11] on the revival of the "cash versus food" debate new evidence for an old quandary provides evidences for whether and why cash transfer work relative to in-kind food assistance. The policy paper presents emerging evidence from impact evaluations in ten developing countries, namely Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Mexico, Niger, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and Yemen. These studies compare cash and food transfers under the same circumstances through randomized controlled trials (RCTs), quasi-experimental methods, or regression analysis. The studies assess the role of social protection in food security through the lens of its three core pillars namely how social protection can enhance food production and agricultural productivity, how transfers can provide access to food and how social protection can be more nutrition-sensitive and a fourth food security pillar, risk or stability connections between social protection and resilience.

The reviewed evidence presented in policy paper shows that, in absolute terms, both modalities cash and food works. When compared to control groups, cash and food transfers (and vouchers when considered) bolstered improvements in a range of indicators such as food consumption, income, dietary diversity, poverty, and malnutrition. The paper also argues that, in relative terms, transfer modalities can lead to varied and mixed impacts over a range of dimensions. A mild tendency of cash transfers to be more effective than food in enhancing food consumption (in five studies out of seven countries), while food seems to outperform cash in increasing household caloric intake (in four evaluations out of six countries). However, overall effectiveness cannot be generalized and it depends not only on particular objectives, but also on the specific indicators used to measure those objectives. Differences in design and context explain part of the difference in performance between alternative transfer modalities. Indeed, the impact of cash and food transfers can also differ in programs with identical

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11 Gentilini Ugo. *The Revival of the ?Cash versus Food? Debate: New Evidence for an Old Quandary?* [Internet] The World Bank; 2016. [cited 2019 Oct 31]. 31 p. (Policy Research Working Papers). Accessed from: https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/1813-9450-7584 [Google Scholar].

design and contexts. Therefore, since transfer modalities can alter the impact pathways of an intervention, transfer selection should be considered as a key choice in safety net decision-making.

The policy paper further states that similar to other program design features such as conditionality and targeting methods, costs is a key factor in gauging performance. In general, the reviewed studies show that cash transfers and vouchers tend to be more efficient than food-based interventions. Approaches for cost calculations are often not clearly described, rely on simplistic assumptions, and tend to be discretionary in the type of cost items considered. More standardized and robust approaches are required so that efficiency analyses match the higher standards of effectiveness offered by the examined impact evaluations.

The policy paper summarized that cash transfers can be considered the modality that provides beneficiaries (consumers) with largest choice while at the same time stimulating local markets. Food transfers provide no choice, but can stimulate markets if procured locally, tend to entail the engagement of a more limited number of upstream, larger producers.

3.4.3.4 Cash transfer programs adoption dialogue two decades back in Afghanistan

Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) background paper[12] on cash transfer programmes in Afghanistan conducted a review on cash and vouchers programs in 2004. The paper highlights increasing shift of government agencies in 2002 towards cash-based assistance for varied programs including food security. The chief reason was lobbing of humanitarian agencies for cash-based assistance and the underlying criticism for food aid being logistically costly and complicated, damages local food production and markets, and it does not necessarily correspond to the community or household level need. NGO Christian Aid, for instance, argued strongly against food aid, on the grounds that it undermined the cereal market for Afghan farmers and encouraged the cultivation of poppy. Aid agencies working in Afghanistan at that particular time agreed that cash has advantages over food aid. There was also agreement about the minimum conditions under which cash can be used. In particular, humanitarian agencies such as MEDAIR agreed that cash payment, or monetisation, is the best policy for Afghanistan's cities. An evaluation of Oxfam's cash-for-work project in Hazarajat summarises the advantages of cash and disadvantages of food. Oxfam decided to discontinue its food-for-work (FFW) programme on the basis of some of these disadvantages. Most agencies used similar arguments to justify their cash programmes. International NGOs were not the only actors making the case for cash-based interventions, the transitional government in 2004 too embarked on an important lobbying exercise in favour of cash, for instance The Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development (MRRD) has requested the international community to use cash in labour intensive programmes for employment generation. The transitional government since 2002 was actively involved in cash-based interventions. There were two national programmes as part of the government's Livelihoods and Social

[12] Hofmann, C.A. (2005)5. Cash transfer programmes in Afghanistan: a desk review of current policy and practice, HPG Background Paper. Accessed from http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/BGP_Afghanistan.pdf

Protection Strategy that involve the use of cash: the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) and the National Emergency Employment Programme (NEEP). MRRD's decisions two decades back on whether to allocate cash or food to areas that the country-wide assessment of 2002 identified as food-insecure on the predicted level of food insecurity. Areas with high levels of food insecurity were allocated food assistance, whereas areas with lower levels of food insecurity were targeted with cash-based programmes. Such an allocation process does not, however, take into consideration market access indicators. The few limited criticisms of cash-based programming centered on the practical difficulties encountered in implementation. The security risks associated with handling cash were probably the source of most concern. Cash was sometimes seen as more vulnerable to looting or misuse than food aid, although food diversion often happens in emergency situations, trucks fully loaded with food are certainly more difficult to take, hide and transport than a briefcase full of cash. Another criticism was that cash programmes do not necessarily target the most vulnerable. Since the embark of Islamic Emirate in September 2021, its policy stance for cash-based assistance has remained unknown.

3.4.3.5 Cash and food transfers, evidence from Yemen

The paper on comparing the productive effects of cash and food transfers in a crisis[13] setting evidence from a randomised experiment in Yemen highlights that cash transfer recipients invested relatively more in activities with higher liquidity requirements (livestock), while food recipients incorporated higher-return crops into their agricultural portfolios. The transfers likely affected both liquidity and risk constraints, though the scope of the productive impact was modest. Cash transfers, but not food transfers, had a positive impact on the acquisition of small livestock. Consistent with theory, however, food transfers positively and differentially affected the likelihood households planted cash crops, though the magnitude of the effect was small. The paper presents similar studies using randomised trials which suggests liquidity constraints are indeed significant. The paper cites that a US$200 cash transfer, coupled with agricultural extension, increased livestock holdings and crop production and so was the case with US$84 cash transfer in Malawi which had similar impacts as well as in Mali, where a US$150 cash grant has led to positive impacts on agricultural production among liquidity-constrained farmers. The paper cites another case of Karlan et al. where in the results showed that food transfers, which may be a particularly important form of insurance during periods of expected price volatility, can enable farmers to engage in riskier, but higher-value activities. Yet, cash recipients do appear to use at least part of their grants for agricultural investment, especially in livestock. This suggests that evaluations of the productive impacts of transfer programmes should be clearer about the role of expected effects in the production process, especially among farmers engaged in subsistence production. The study findings here also provide a potential explanation for the heterogeneity of results in the broad literature on transfers and production: the expected price volatility of a

[13] Schwab, B. 2019. "Comparing the Productive Effects of Cash and Food Transfers in a Crisis Setting: Evidence from a Randomised Experiment in Yemen." Journal of Development Studies 55 (sup1): 29–5429-54, DOI: 10.1080/00220388.2019.1687880. Accessed from https://odi.org/documents/1967/430.pdf

staple food crop during an intervention may influence the extent to which transfers enable an optimal swap to a higher-value, but riskier production strategy or simply alleviate liquidity constraints on investments in current production.

3.4.3.6 Cash transfer and Food security , a German experience

The discussion paper on cash transfers, food security and resilience in fragile contexts[14], a general evidence and the german experience concludes that beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance usually prefer cash to in-kind aid. The paper in support of cash transfer programs states that cash allows beneficiaries to buy what they believe they need most at any given time, additionally, there is an intrinsic value in the dignity associated with being able to decide for oneself what one needs most and not having to queue for in-kind support. By contrast, the reasons why people in need might prefer in-kind aid to cash include concerns about price volatility and security, as well as familiarity with in-kind assistance.

The paper further states that cash grants result in increases in expenditure on food, in the amount of food purchased, and in household dietary diversity. There is less evidence of effects in terms of kilocalorie consumption, micronutrient intake and individual dietary diversity, but the existing evidence indicates that these indicators improve following transfers. The diets of the children in the household have also been found to improve. If food and cash distributions are compared, data showed that there is sometimes a greater increase in calorie intakes when families receive food whereas dietary diversity responds more strongly to cash transfers, possibly because these can be spent more freely. Cash based interventions (CBI) are essentially a multi-sectoral approach. Unconditional cash transfers are thus difficult to include in the relatively sector-driven environment of crisis and development interventions and might require a new aid architecture. Yet if actors feel for some reason that they would like to limit the choice available to beneficiaries for employing the cash received and focus instead on a particular outcome, vouchers or cash transfers accompanied by further components are likely the better choice. For example, the findings on dietary diversity and calorie intake imply that, while cash gives beneficiaries a wider choice and agency, distributing food items (or vouchers that can be exchanged for them) may be a more direct route if the consumption of specific nutrients (such as iodine) is the target of the intervention.

3.4.4 Gender inclusion in HFA

FAO's policy[15] on gender equality requires that gender analysis is incorporated in the identification and formulation of all field programmes and projects, and gender-related

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[14] Camacho, Luis A.; Kreibaum, Merle (2017) : Cash transfers, food security and resilience in fragile contexts: general evidence and the German experience, Discussion Paper, No. 9/2017, ISBN 978-3-96021-029-0, Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Bonn. Accessed from https://www.idos-research.de/uploads/media/DP_9.2017.pdf

[15] Mustalampi, U. (2016). *FAO Guidance note on Gender, food security and nutrition in protracted crises*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations . Retrieved October 31, 2022, from https://www.fao.org/3/i6630e/i6630e.pdf

issues are taken into account in project approval and implementation processes such as collecting base-line data and in the monitoring and evaluation. FAO emphasize on integrating gender perspective in each stage of project cycle from project identification to project closure such as assigning gender marker during stakeholder consultation & analysis of project identification phase; addressing the gender implications in the formulation of the expected impact, outcomes and outputs, complemented by gender-sensitive indicators during project formulation stage and so forth. FAO suggests key gender equality actions for food security programming at each stage of the humanitarian programme cycle.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the humanitarian coordination forum of the United Nations system has published Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action which propose five step actions at different stages of programme cycle as given below. FAO also endorse and emulate the same.

1. Need Assessment involves collection and analysis of sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data on needs, priorities and capabilities relating to food security. It also entails conducting of gender analysis as part of food security needs assessments.
2. Strategic planning includes integration of gender equality into food security programme design for the response, utilizing the findings from the gender analysis and other preparedness data. It is also to ensure a demonstrable and logical link between the gender- specific needs identified for the project activities and tracked outcomes. It is necessary to apply gender markers to food security programme designs for the response.
3. Resource mobilization involves application of gender markers to food security programmes in the response, inclusion of information and key messages on gender and the food security sector at the initial assessment reports in order to influence funding priorities. Additionally regular reporting on resource gaps specific to gender within the food security sector to donors and other humanitarian stakeholders
4. Implementation and monitoring at the implementation stage of food security programmes integrate gender equality and inform women, girls, men and boys of the resources available and also inform them how to influence the project. The next step consists of developing and maintaining feedback mechanisms for women, girls, men and boys as part of food security projects. Developing indicators designed to measure change for women and girls or boys and men based on the assessed gaps and dynamics.
5. Gender operational peer review and evaluation involves reviewing of projects within the food security sector and response plans; assessing which women, girls, boys and men were effectively reached and those who were not and why. Post this step is followed by sharing of good practices around usage of gender markers and addressing gaps.

USAID[16] using IASC guidelines conducted gender analysis in eleven projects on the dimension of identifying barriers to project outcomes, identifying opportunities for achievement of project activities, and identifying existing actors and lessons learned regarding gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). USAID proposed key eighteen practices on the lines of IASC guidelines.

Practice1 based on IASC need assessment: Integrate gender into programming by conducting a sex, age and disability disaggregated gender and barrier analysis.

- When identifying barriers, the project focus on: control over or access to resources; context-specific roles and responsibilities between the genders; differences in the level of labor borne by various gender groups; sources of information; access to markets and technology; freedom of movement; and common causes of gender-based violence (GBV), intimate partner violence (IPV), and child marriage.
- When identifying opportunities, focus on: identification of influential individuals or groups; identification of community assets; positive traits associated with role models; the type of messaging people gravitates towards; and aspects of masculinity in relation to spouses and/or children that are seen as aspirational.
- When identifying existing actors and lessons learned, focus on: the identification of what works and does not work; the specific context/setting for women's participation; GBV reduction; male engagement; and existing legal barriers. The above analysis should build on available secondary data (e.g. program materials or current research with a focus on gender). This helps increase efficiency by avoiding unnecessary inquiries.
- Incorporation of secondary data can be followed by primary data collection with target populations, such as through focus group discussions (FGDs) and KIIs (with religious or community leaders). It can also be substantiated by a yes/no barrier analysis questionnaire adapted to the intended sectoral outcomes that can be incorporated into the primary data collection methods.

Practice 2 When conducting need, market or security assessments ensure women's voices are heard and analyzed separately.

Practice 3 based on IASC incorporating gender outcomes in programme design: to define outcomes to be met via a combination of modalities, use methods that promote a participatory approach to problem and solution identification. Promoting participatory community approaches, for instance, using Selection of Interventions by Participants (SIPS) is a version of the well-known TIPS method (Trials of Improved Practices). Like Barrier Analysis (BA), SIPS focuses on individual behaviors and behavioral determinants, but also captures insights from participants on the experience of trying a new practice, rather than just experience with a current practice.

[16] USAID (2020). Better Gender Outcomes in Food Assistance through Complementary and Multi-Modal Programing. CARE International. Accessed from https://careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/Better-Gender-Outcomes-in-Food-Assistance-through-Complementary-and-Multi-Modal-Programing.pdf

Practice 4 Where the priority is to target women as primary end-users, adopt a "woman plus" approach to targeting and build in intentional space to engage the whole household. This involves establishing a process for selecting/nominating the recipient following the gender analysis and protection assessments. Therefore, not automatically assigning the man "head of household"; instead, resting the decision on the outcome of the gender and protection assessment, ensuring reduced risk of harm.

Practice 5 When choosing intervention modalities to use to deliver your program, consider the distinct cash out costs, risks and opportunities as well as relevance to men and women. For cash transfers, consideration of how likely men and women will each be able to complete cash out without incurring extra costs, such as opportunity costs or costs related to accessing the cash-out point should be looked at. The respective financial literacy rate among men and women, will be one of the primary determinants of their ability to independently complete the transaction, hence needs to be considered in the project.

3.4.5 Post Distribution Monitoring

As per UNHCR & WFP guideline, the key points to be incorporated in the program are:

- Regular monitoring of targeting outcomes for assisted and non-assisted populations is required to ensure the effectiveness of the method, and to provide a basis for necessary adjustments
- Monitoring of targeting processes is crucial to ensure that decisions are operationalized as intended, and that implementation inclusion an exclusion errors are minimized
- Regular targeting reviews, including contextual analysis, qualitative aspects and quantitative re-validation, are important to a robust targeting monitoring system

The key indicators to be monitored includes all relevant outcome indicators (food consumption, coping, expenditure), the eligibility criteria, and context-specific protection indicators. It is also important to monitor the impacts of prioritization on the excluded groups in order to respond quickly to any worsening of the situation. The data collected will also assists in building an evidence base for the continued advocacy for necessary funds to ensure assistance is provided for everyone in need. It is crucial to have a responsive monitoring system that is able to run quick longitudinal monitoring exercises where the same households are followed over time, i.e.; before and after the prioritization or reduction of assistance (e.g., when half rations are introduced). These longitudinal studies provide concrete evidence regarding the impact of prioritization

For instance, following significant resource shortfall in refugee operations in Jordan and Lebanon in 2015, a rapid pre-post study to assess the food security impact of changes in assistance levels was conducted. In Jordan, the study was conducted with the same households before and after they were excluded from assistance. In Lebanon, the same households were interviewed during the cuts, and then again when assistance returned to previous levels. Unlike the regular Food Security Outcome Monitoring exercise, this method is not representative for the entire beneficiary population but presents an important indication of the impact caused by the changes in assistance levels due to temporary funding shortfalls. In Jordan, about 299,000 persons from vulnerable households had their assistance cut. Findings revealed that those with a borderline and poor food consumption score increased by 43 percentage points, while 75% of households engaged in more frequent and severe coping strategies. The report proved to be a useful tool for advocacy. Assistance to these vulnerable groups resumed, but it took several months before previous outcome levels were achieved again[17].

According to Targeting and Prioritization guidance note 2021 by WFP, a regular outcome monitoring (such as through PDM) typically should covers beneficiary households only. To make the exercise useful, it is important to cover non-beneficiary households as well and to stratify households according to different transfer modalities and values. The analysis of outcome indicators will allow country offices to make appropriate adjustments or call for a more in-depth review.

Guideline by Cash and Voucher group (CVWG) Afghanistan, PDM for cash transfer programmes should be done taking into consideration the time which beneficiaries of the programme would take to utilise the money after receiving the payments. In this regard, the objectives of the programme come into play. If the money is intended for immediate needs, then the PDM should be done immediately after the cash payments, at least two to three weeks after the cash distribution[18]. In the event that the cash payments are meant to assist beneficiaries in establishing livelihoods, for example starting a business, then the time in which the PDM could be carried may be extended. There are several ways to gather the information, of which one is the so-called quick appraisal technique, which mainly uses oriented discussions with the Cash Transfer Program (CTP) beneficiaries in groups or on an individual basis.

Table 9: Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) approach Pros and Cons

	Pros	**Cons**
Monitoring using inhouse team	Inform the program staff on real time basis	Result in bias towards program
	Cost saving	
Monitoring using	Independent assessment of program functions and	Expensive and time consuming considering most of

[17] Jordan's Refugee Crisis, paper, September 21, 2015 https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/09/21/jordan-s-refugee-crisis-pub-61338

[18] Food Security and Agriculture Cluster, Afghanistan, POST DISTRIBUTION MONITORING: - Guidelines to Monitor processes, outputs and outcomes, August 2013 https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/POST%20DISTRIBUTION%20MONITORING%20GUIDELINES-%20Afghan%20CVWG%20CTP%20Tool%20Kit.pdf

independent agency	processes, will support program improvement	humanitarian assistance programs are of short duration
	Introduce new tools & methods to the team, thus improves staff learning	Selection of agency could prove to be a tedious task

3.4.6 Communications, appeals and feedback mechanisms

An effective complaints and feedback mechanism (CFM) can indicate barriers to assistance or targeting errors while also promoting a culture of transparency and accountability. Before the actual implementation of targeting, three key steps are required: 1) Develop and implement a communication strategy for the community, government and partners; 2) establish a CFM, and 3) and where appropriate establish an appeal process.

Communication with communities is an essential component of operational effectiveness, security, stability, and accountability to affected populations (AAP). The emphasis should be on consistency, coherence, and transparency when communicating all aspects of the targeting process with the population.

The communication strategy should ensure that:

- Community members understand how to: communicate with programme staff for information, flag potential errors in targeting or programme implementation, and complain about exclusions.
- Community members understand the process and results of their targeting discussions with programme teams. If there is understanding among non-beneficiaries of why they have been excluded and others included, then they can better identify cases where errors may have been made. Good communication can reduce the risk of misunderstandings and the resultant volume of complaints.

There are multiple channels for communication depending on the context, all of which have different implications for time, cost, communication coverage and human resources. This includes:

- Community meetings: Explain how and why beneficiaries were selected and why others were ineligible. In some contexts, publishing beneficiary lists in communities may still be appropriate.
- Social media: Post information in relevant social media forums explaining how and why beneficiaries were selected and not others.
- Phone calls: Call households that were visited and surveyed explaining why they are non-eligible. But note that PoC are often mobile and change their mobile phone numbers and/or share phone numbers with family and friends so this is not always a reliable method of guaranteed communication.
- Information and complaints hotlines: Publicize the numbers widely and ensure all visited and surveyed households are given it.
- Demand-driven meetings: Individuals can visit programme offices or an acting service provider to register queries and complaints

For instance, Awaaz Afghanistan is a collective accountability and community engagement initiative that functions as a tollfree, countrywide hotline number. The affected populations can dial to access information and register feedback on assistance programmes. As a two-way communication channel, needs and priorities from the community are circulated to partners to help improve the quality of programming in Afghanistan. Awaaz is implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) with financial support from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF), the European Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), WFP and UNHCR[19].

According to Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Unit Emergency Response and Recovery Program, Pakistan[20], the complaints received through hotline or real time assessments from beneficiaries and sometimes from community members in general are categorized as

- Feedback: A feedback can be both positive and negative and is generally to do with minor issues; it can be given formally or informally.
- Request for Need Assessment: Sometimes beneficiary/non-beneficiary requests for assistance for him/her or for their village/area. In such cases, such responses will be taken as request for need assessment
- Regular Complaint: A regular complaint relates to program design and implementation/service delivery e.g., changes in timings of food/NFIs distribution, change in location of child friendly space, change in location of NFIs/food distribution points etc
- Complaint of Serious Nature: includes Financial Corruption, Misuse/Fraud of Money or Material, Derogatory/Immoral behaviour with beneficiaries involving verbal abuse/physical assault, Harassment of beneficiary/ Or any act that might harm Save the Children's reputation, Discrimination of beneficiaries on the basis of race, gender, creed or religion Any other complaint judged as serious by MEA Coordinator
- Threat Call/Obnoxious Calls: a call received on complaint hotline is considered as threat call if a caller attempts to threat person/organization or try to influence on any program interventions through unfair means.

Closing of complaints

- All types of complaints received by any channel needs to be entered into Complaint and Response Database.
- All the complaints and feedback received need to be closed in a certain manner. The resolution of a complaint must be reached as soon as possible (within maximum 15 days).
- If the caller's complaint/resolution could not be acted upon due to reasons such as budget/program constraints or if enough evidences could not be found, he is informed accordingly.

[19] 10. Awaaz Afghanistan, https://awaazaf.org/

[20] Monitoring and Accountability Manual, Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Unit Emergency Response and Recovery Program, Pakistan

https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/1358.pdf

- In case of regular complaints and feedback the accountability assistant must inform the caller of the resolution and decision on the complaint by calling him. • In case of serious nature complaints that have proceeded till the investigation stage, the Field Program Manager must convey the resolution to the complainant.
- All complaints must be closed within 15 days. In some cases, if, due to unavoidable circumstances a decision has not been reached the caller still needs to be called and updated on the progress within the specified time frame.

Table 10: Complaint and Feedback mechanism Pros and Cons

	Pros	Cons
Complaint through staff mobile number	Easy and quick communication	Sometimes voice distortions couldn't ascertain type of complaint and accordingly action can't be initiated
		Difficult to identify caller or beneficiary in many instances
Complaint through complaint box	Culturally appropriate, support non-disclosure of complainant identity	Not the most favoured medium by the community Inappropriate depending on literacy level of people targeted
Complaint through dedicated hotline number	Easy and quick communication	Overutilized and misused by beneficiaries

3.4.7 Risk management strategies

According to training report by USAID and FSAC in Kabul 2017, challenges faced by NGO's were largely[21]:

- Beneficiaries targeting, e.g., cases of fake IDPs
- Cash not only use to buy food, but other items as well such as non-essential inappropriate commodity.
- Interference by staff from government line department especially in beneficiaries targeting. Participants reported fake list from related government sectors, cases of corruption
- Lack of legal documents with some beneficiaries and Lack of national ID
- Lack of access to mobile phone network system
- In some instances, suppliers increase prices of the essential commodity when they learn that beneficiaries received cash.
- Low illiteracy rates among beneficiaries to learn and use electronic cash transfer, example lack of beneficiaries' knowledge on m-Hawala

[21] Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) Training Report On Food Security And Livelihood Programming Kabul - Afghanistan

https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fsl_training_report_-_kabul_nov_2017_0.pdf

- Loss of sim cards reported by some beneficiaries
- Lack of sufficient delivery capacity, linked to lack to access to networks in some places and coupled with insecurity/access issues.
- Security risk /access issues /looting/theft cases reported for direct cash/cash in envelop,
- Money traders lack knowledge of humanitarian principles

The actions undertaken by NGO to address some of the challenges were:

- Cash meant for food was not used only for food. Household needed NFIs, balanced diet and other essential needs. Hence, multi-purpose cash approach is adopted
- Appropriate needs assessment, including market analysis, are essential to inform appropriateness, targeting, and modality.
- Some partners used feedback collected during PDM to revise cash transfer methods e.g., from distributing cash in envelop to m-Hawala.

However, for some of the intervention duration for cash transfer is too short to make any meaningful change. Among concerns heard from NGOs subjected for KIIs for this assessment, risks associated with cash-based assistance felt as well while the literature review presented earlier this report argued there is no clear risks differences between cash versus food assistances and risks may be ruled out thereby selecting right cash transfer modality.

The WFP guidelines developed in consultation with United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) [22]suggest further the following:

- Informing all project stakeholders in the community (including elders, local authorities, nonbeneficiaries) about the cash-based project (targeting criteria, the purpose of the entitlement, delivery mechanism).
- Make sure that the community understands the consequences of any threat to security: project suspension or withdrawal.
- Cash-distribution arrangements must be carefully planned. Details of these plans should be shared only among a tightly restricted group of staff on a "need-to-know" basis.
- Informing cash collectors with short notice prior to actual distribution.
- Limit the amount of cash to be distributed at any one time (and increase distribution frequency, if needed). It should not exceed the cash-in-transit insurance amount for the limit to be fully distributed to beneficiaries in one single day. during daylight hours.
- Increasing the number of and/or randomly vary the distribution site locations. Increasing the distribution locations reduces the total value of cash held at any one-site location and varying locations reduces predictability. Vary the individuals (WFP staff) responsible for the on-site distribution.

[22] Cash and Vouchers Manual Second Edition 2014, World Food Programme https://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/staffdev/wfp271375.pdf

- Installing the distribution site on the very day of the distribution.
- Tightening security arrangements at the distribution site.
- Ensuring distance between distribution site and beneficiaries' location is acceptable in terms of security and that cash/voucher distribution is completed in time for beneficiaries to return home
- Real-time tracking of all cash movements by the radio/communications office.
- Avoid spending the night at the distribution site when disbursing cash, even if distribution is completed. It could fuel the rumour that the organization still has cash on site.

Table 11: Risk Management strategies pros and cons

Mitigation	Pros	Cons
Anti-corruption policy for staff	Advantage for ensuring staff compliance to anti-corruption laws, thus minimizing chances of irregular practices	The policy should be complemented with strict staff monitoring system for it to be functional
Use of money exchanger	Reduces risk of carrying cash to the site, easy to operate	Added cost of money exchange services
		Resource consuming process to find a certified money exchanger
Community dialogue to mitigate issues & misunderstandings	Effective in diffusing issues and misunderstanding related to programs	Dependent on community leaders' perception about food assistance concept and translating it to community

3.4.8 Cash assistance

The Afghanistan Cash & Vouchers Working Group laid out Guidance on Cash Delivery Mechanisms, 2019[23] as follows:

Cash In Envelope Also known as "cash over the counter" or "cash in hand": Although cash in envelope has been widely used by humanitarian organizations this far, it is one of the least recommended cash delivery mechanisms because it exposes organization staff to security risks (while transporting the cash to the distribution site) and carries a higher risk of internal fraud (cash diversion by staff).

Hawala: Hawala is the preferred cash delivery mechanism for emergency projects, because of its speed and wide geographical coverage.

[23] Afghanistan Cash & Vouchers Working Group Guidance On Cash Delivery Mechanisms 25 April 2019

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/afgh_cvwg_cash_delivery_mechanism_guidance.pdf

Mobile Money

Token-Based Mobile Money: Offered by some (but not all) mobile money companies, as an alternative delivery mechanism, in addition to their regular sim card-based mobile money services. It is a hybrid between sim-based mobile money and hawala (service is provided by a mobile company, but effectively functions more like a hawala, since beneficiaries don't need a phone or a sim card). It is mostly used in non-emergency projects, or emergency projects where hawala is unavailable or not allowed due to donor requirements (it's faster than sim card-based mobile money, but slower than hawala).

Sim Card-Based Mobile Money: Recommended for non-emergency projects (due to the time required and the need to have a tazkera to create beneficiary mobile money accounts), where multiple cash transfers to same households are required (the time and cost of setting up this system is only worth it if there are more than 2 transfers per household).

Bank

Banks are rarely used by humanitarian organizations to transfer cash to beneficiaries, due to their very limited geographical coverage (are only located in provincial (and some district) capitals), the slowness of registration process, the need for beneficiaries to have a tazkera, a minimum of financial illiteracy, and banks' dislike of taking on humanitarian beneficiaries as customers (who are seen as negatively affecting the bank's image). In 2018, WFP was the only organization who used banks for cash transfers, as part of its development (not humanitarian) programmes, but on a very small scale (0.5% of total number of cash beneficiaries and volume of cash transferred in 2018, across all partners).

Table 12: Modes of cash transfers pros and cons

Modes of transfer	Pros	Cons
Direct cash	Easy for household use and purchasing of food items	High security risk
	Easily available	
Through Bank	Secure	Require either beneficiary active bank account or require physical presence to collect cash from Bank
		Slow moving and consumes time
Mobile/SIM	Easy to transfer	Female beneficiaries might not have their own mobile phone, hence plausibility of not directly reaching to beneficiary
Hawala System	Secure and hassle free	Additional cost for services
		Resource consuming process to find a certified hawala dealer
		Requires beneficiary to collect money at a designated spot of hawala dealer which

		might lead to additional out of pocket expenditure on transportation

4. POINTS TO PONDER

4.1 Coverage

The spiralling increase in Below Poverty Line (BPL) population in Afghanistan excavated by the regime change and following freeze on foreign aid and overseas assets has inflated the demand for emergency assistance and has put forth the concern around beneficiary coverage and hence possibility of extensive exclusion errors. This invariably has pushed humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan in precarious situation with already limited resources.

The interviewed NGOs during the study narrated about their systematic procedure of beneficiary identification, verification and final listing; After the finalisation of the list, almost all the NGOs conduct the assessment of the beneficiaries through physical visit to the geographic target areas followed by visit to the households in order to assess and confirm their living conditions, the information provided by beneficiaries at the time of identification and eventually to verify the authenticity of the beneficiaries. Despite rigorous process of selecting beneficiaries for their HFA based on targeting tools and vulnerability criteria, outcries are evident through KII findings on the significant number of complaints on beneficiary enrolment. Reactions to these complaints vary widely; during the KIIs, some NGOs shared their concerns on limited coverage of their HFA and some seemed paid less attentions. While the limited scope of this study unable to state anything decisive, the study KII findings suspect presence of exclusion errors in large number of modest size humanitarian food programs executed by NGOs which is driven by current Afghanistan economic condition and prevailing funding gap. Moreover, there could be a chance of potential inclusion error as the NGOs mentioned about how the various authorities try to influence the beneficiaries' list which can lead to the inclusion of non-deserving households.

During the literature review, various guidelines lay emphasis on implementing measures to reduce exclusion errors. The missed-out pocket of populations from food security assistance demands scientific rigor in beneficiary selection and verification process as stated under UNHCR and WFP guiding document on validation of targeting process.

However, the study KIIs found NGOs are widely utilizing these targeting tools as well as vulnerability criteria and should applications of these tools meet certain rigor, it is reasonable to question if beneficiary coverage is adequate for targeted areas. Adequate coverage being the significant aspect of HFA, it has been under constant debate in literature and also among FSAC meetings, the gravity of coverage issue can also be assessed through country level macro data of committed fund for HFA against Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM). HFA being largely supply driven (depending on available fund) and meeting short of actual needs might be manifested in testimonies heard during the study KIIs and this deserve further scrutinization. The lack of the body of evidence is discussed in more details in 4.3, however, absence of longitudinal data from enrolled households as well as from non-beneficiary households unable to dive deeper if there is systematic exclusion errors existing in the HFA observed in this study. Although WFP targeting guidance note stressed on either WFP or independent agency to conduct the beneficiary verification process which only handful of NGO's were found using it in among the KII study participants. This is due to several reasons of cost, resources, limited time, perception and donor directives. The coverage issue is certainly double edge sword about number of households versus number of rounds of assistances per household and should be dealt in conjuncture of degree of vulnerability and objectives and therefore highly contexts dependable.

4.2 Coordination

Coordination has been a stumbling block in achieving efficiency within humanitarian assistance space and even more so in prevailing needs and supply gap in the country's humanitarian food assistance (HFA). However, coordination itself is not a solution for coverage issue of humanitarian food assistance. Types of coordination between donor and recipient, within food cluster members involved in HFA, government and non-government were emerged in this study which hinted the pressing issues within this domain.

Some NGOs during current study reported that they were able to distribute the assistance under the present government. However, some informed that there are certain government interferences which are uncalled for according to them. For instance, an NGO mentioned a case when the government officials wished that the cash of the absent beneficiaries should be given to the district which was opposed by the NGO. Literature review presented issues of interference by staff from government line department especially in beneficiaries targeting, presence of fake list from related government sectors, cases of corruption were some of cited evidences. The interference during beneficiary selection and identification by government authorities was also narrated by NGO's during KII. literature review and study findings highlight possibility of bias with involvement of government.

On another tangent, NGOs during KII mentioned about the delay in the release of fund from the donor which leads to unwanted delay in the assistance distribution to beneficiaries which has bearing effect on outcomes and impact. The findings from the KIIs point out the differences between government and non-government agencies around beneficiary identification and verification process. The unacceptance of WFP-SCOPE technology by government department for beneficiary identification was one such instance narrated by KII participants. Clearly potentials to harmonize NGO program implementation approaches through better coordination exists under HFA. There is pressing need to address the coordination issues across government hierarchy with implementing partners, and the present vehicles such as NGO's and FSAC playing the role of advocacy and communication might not be effective as envisaged.

On the other hand, coordination gap such as within the cluster members was also reflected in the interviews with NGO's. The collaboration between different NGO members was asked in the KII's to which the NGOs had varied responses. The evidence on exchange of information and resources across the NGO's varies widely. Some NGOs said that they work alone. Some mentioned that they work in coordination with FSAC cluster, FAO and WFP. One NGO stated that it crosschecks their beneficiary list with those working in the food security or emergency assistance area and coordinate its activities with ACBAR. Another NGO mentioned collaboration and coordination of activities with other NGO in different provinces which might be related to food security or other humanitarian assistance project. It is also necessary to look at the coordination within the organisation and among cluster members, in terms of how effectively such mechanisms are contributing to program efficiency. One element which may promote immediate efficiency may be facilitating a common vehicle for housing data with regarding enrolled households and more unified beneficiary data processing thereby either promoting existing platform like WFP-SCOPE technology with government departments that might require either collective efforts through cluster or upstream political will.

4.3 Performance Measurement and unintended consequences

The lack of body of evidence on the measure of 'Do no harm'

In the KIIs, NGOs were asked about the method of evaluation of their program performance. While through practice of Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) was assuring, large number of NGO's capture outputs and to some extent outcome indicators during PDM exercise; Some NGOs measured the coverage of their project, whereas, some NGOs mentioned about a feedback survey method to capture the outcomes. Further, some NGOs measured the changes before and after the project implementation using Food Consumption Score (FCS) tool. No NGOs stated during KIIs that they care measuring assistance effect on household with variation in number of villages, communities or households over the period (longitudinal data) nor the initiative to measure changes on non-enrolled households. Hence these NGOs are left without any means to rule out risk in inflicting tensions or worst-case conflicts between enrolled and non-enrolled households with HFA and demonstrating meeting 'do no harm' principal.

It is logically justifiable to remain measuring immediate outputs when given HFA is short-lived like few months as their objectives are lifesaving and therefore middle to long term changes on food-intake, nutrition status or vulnerability are hard to envisage. However, WFP guidance note still emphasize capturing unintended consequences as impacts on community/households due to prioritisation and targeting exercise of beneficiaries. Most of the HFA projects failed to capture the same , only achievement of project goals are measure in most of the cases. It is thus debatable, how much value and importance food security actors lay on incorporating 'do no harm' within the HFA programs M&E framework.

4.4 Technology

Using technology as a medium of efficiency within humanitarian food programs.

Technology mediums were adopted by KII NGOs at different stages of beneficiary identification, project management, monitoring, etc in bits and pieces. For instance, an NGO used the software-based beneficiary list for identification of beneficiary as per their criteria. WFP has provided program management online platform known as SCOPE which encompasses all the major components of food assistance, although only handful of study NGO's mentioned using WFP platform. One of the KII NGO mentioned using biometric system to avoid the duplicity in the distribution. Many NGOs reported about the mobile money or money transfer through SIM card for cash distribution, dropping the conventional cash-in-envelope method. Further, NGOs used databases to store and secure information of the beneficiaries. Similar was case with complaints and feedback mechanism. The KIIs indicates incoherent use of technologies in the program implementation by NGOs and there remain huge potential to explore among NGOs to pursue optimal utilization of technology within the all stages of HFA implementation in order to address the issues of transparency, reducing beneficiary apprehensions and distress around enrolment.

4.5 Gender

Gender inclusive humanitarian food programs was partially fulfilled across the study NGO's

The current study KII findings highlight inclusion of female headed households in the eligibility criteria for beneficiary identification set by all the NGOs either using WFP 12 point criteria or HEAT tool. The female headed households were given preference in the identification and selection process as compared to male headed HHs.

Many NGOs during KII mentioned about the mandatory company of a mahram (male family member of HHs enrolled to HFA) to collect the assistance as per sharia law. In order to ensure benefits reaching the genuine female beneficiary, the identity of accompanying mehram was also verified. In addition to this, many NGOs have hired female staff which accompany the team to the area in order to have better interaction with female beneficiaries. Also, one NGO has appointed female staff members for receiving complaints from the beneficiaries so that a female beneficiary can have a comfortable interaction with a female staff.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the humanitarian coordination forum of the United Nations system has proposed five step actions at different stages of programme cycle for achieving gender equality within the program. These steps include incorporating gender analysis during need assessment, inclusion at planning stage wherein gender markers are assigned, resource mobilisation stage, designing monitoring indicators which measure change with participatory involvement of gender groups, and gender peer review and evaluation.

The current study depicts that among the five step actions, gender analysis at beneficiary selection stage and PDM is widely assured, however linkages with outcome indicators or impact was compromised by most of the NGO's implementing HFA in the face of historical setback of women's advancement in the country. There is a compelling need to envision food assistance priorities in light of women needs and establish linkages with women priorities so as to bring humanitarian assistance closer to Afghanistan development goals.

4.6 Cash or food

Cash assistance versus food and NFI, cash being most favoured modality among the study NGO's.

Almost all the NGOs during KII favored the cash assistance as being the best modality based on beneficiary feedback within their respective programs. Many NGOs mentioned that beneficiaries favor cash because cash provides freedom of spending on any commodity as per their convenience and requirement.

Traditionally food security aid was largely comprised of provisioning of goods such as food items, over the years due to lack of evidence on long term impact of food assistance and apparent cost efficiency outperformed by cash (as a general understanding generated from some studies) , this has invariably generated inclination towards cash assistance for food for large humanitarian players. Providing cash forgoing the issues of supply chain, storage, packaging and distribution problems is favoured by NGO's. The literature review presented two-decade old debate and favouritism of previous regimes in Afghanistan for cash-based assistance. The published evidences highlight cost effectiveness in adopting cash as compared to food for assistance. It is also important to note that evidence on diversion of cash or food was found limited in published reports. Cross country studies provide evidence for improving food consumption, income, dietary diversity, poverty, and malnutrition by both the modalities. Albeit cash or food transfer modalities can lead to varied and mixed impacts over a range of dimensions, larger evidence was found on positive impact of cash as assistance.

In terms of assistance transfer modalities , some NGOs during KII acknowledged the importance of long term intervention like, providing seeds, agricultural equipment, some training, etc. to help beneficiaries in attaining a sustainable livelihood. They believed that giving cash or food assistance is short lived and more importance should be given to make households financially independent. Further, there were concerns by the NGOs households dependency on the aid resulting in negative behavior towards seeking employment or upgrading skills which is necessary for their survival.

The extrinsic and contextual factors in humanitarian settings which are unique in every country makes it difficult to generalise the evidences and search for an answer for Afghanistan difficult. In spite of absence of any right answers, it is apparent that cash based assistance functions best in established food supply markets. Moreover, transfer selection can alter impact and efficiency performance for HFA, outperformed cash modality may be considered as a key choice in the face of prevailing needs and funding gap for HFA in Afghanistan.

end

Annexures

Annex 1: List of KIIs with NGOs

No	Name of the organization	Name of Personnel	Position	Date of interview
1	ACHRO	Mubarak Shah Jawid	Office In-Charge	June 6, 2022
2	ADEO	Naqshband Saheb	Director	June 7, 2022
3	AIRO	Ismail Mayen	Director	June 8, 2022
4	AMRAN	Sayed Moqadas	Program In-charge	June 7, 2022
5	ARDA	Hamed Akbari	Program Manager	June12, 2022
6	DCA	Mehmood-ul-Haq	Director	June 9, 2022
7	ORCD	Dr. Momand	Director	June 2, 2022
8	RAADA	Dr. Nazir Ahmad Ghafoori	Director	May30, 2022
9	RHDO	Dr. Faiz Mohammad Atif	General Director	June12, 2022
10	SFL	Amirudin Saleemi	Program Coordinator	June 5, 2022
11	SRP	Najmuddin Shah Rokhi	Director	June 5, 2022
12	SWRO	Dr. Mohammad Khalid Shaniwal	Director	June 8, 2022
13	YVO	Sabirullah Mamlawal	Director	June 2, 2022

Annex 2: Summary of 13 Afghan NGO's experience and their respective areas in food security

Sn	Org Name	Year Established	Work in food sector in Afg	Food & cash services	Non-food services (NFI)	Shelter services
1	ACHRO	2010	2019	advocacy of access to food, disseminating agricultural information, training of farmers, distribution of modified seeds, training of women about cake and cookie cooking		repairing of damaged house
2	ADEO	2009	2012	distribution of money, cash for work for food security, distribution of auxiliary materials (wheat, oil, rice)	pots, pan, plates, knives and gas balloons, or a water bottle, health kits such as clean towels, buckets, and soap	distribution of emergency shelters, tents, carpets, cash assistance for house repair
3	AIRO	2003	-	Providing milk to children, distribution of agricultural seeds and tools.		building shelter
4	AMRAN	1991	2001	food distribution, establishment of society for right to food and National Priority Program, advocacy of food sector, integration of food and nutrition campaigns		building shelter
5	ARDA	2002	2002	food assistance through cash, assistance to farmers, assuring food protection		distribution temporary shelters, repair of house
6	DCA	1988		Cash and voucher distribution for food security		
7	SWRO	2018	2018	distribution of vegetables, seeds, farming toolkit,		

8	ORCD	2011	2018	cash distribution, foodstuff distribution (flour, rice, beans, oil, lentils), cleaning of wells and canals, distribution of milk processing instruments, conducting trainings for cheese making, storage and processing of goods	blankets, pressure-cooker, teapot, thermos, cups, tarpaulin for them, a carpet, women & girl clothing, coats, male and female underclothing. coat male & female	
9	RAADA	2002	2002	Emergency food distribution, food against work, poultry activities (goat distribution, fishing gardens), modified wheat seeds distribution	Distribute silkworm eggs, necessary materials and equipment.	distribution of tents cash assistance for repair
10	RHDO	2014	2017	food distribution as per WFP		
11	SFL	1998	2013	cash distribution, emergency food package, certified seed distribution for farmers		
12	SRP	1996	1996	Food distribution, distribution of vouchers/cards	blankets, quilts, materials that are used in the kitchen, such as pots, bowl	distribution of shelters, cash for work
13	YVO	2001	2020	food assistance through cash		

Annex 3: Advantages and Disadvantages/risks of assistance under food security programs

Beneficiary identification, verification and final listing process by NGOs

1. Preference and increasing probability of selection of female beneficiaries: The first criteria for beneficiary identification adopted by SWRO is female, which increases the probability of the vulnerable females to be listed for the assistance.

2. Bringing community ownership through involvement of community at listing stages: Involving community members at the initial stage of identification of beneficiaries proves to be beneficial approach adopted by NGOs such as AMRAN. In similar context, many NGO's such as RAADA share final beneficiary lists with the community to ensure authenticity. NGO such as YVO hires volunteers from community for identification and verification of beneficiaries.

3. Gender sensitive approach wherein female staff members performs female need assessment: NGO such as YVO send the female staff members in the targeted area for need assessment so as to comprehend the needs of the females more precisely. Additionally, NGO's has number of women in the implementation team to support female beneficiaries at every stage of receiving assistance

4. Appropriate resource allocation using HEAT: NGO such as ORCD uses the UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs HEAT (Household Emergency Assessment tool) for the identification of the beneficiaries. If this method is explored properly, it may lead to cost reduction of conducting need assessment as visiting the area for the assessment incurs costs in the form of physical infrastructure, human resource and transportation.

5. Using community dialogue as a measure to address apprehensions within the community: NGO such as AMRAN conducts a community dialogue session before the initiation of the project which includes explanation of the project's objectives and the criteria for the beneficiary selection, so as to reduce the ambiguity regarding the selection criteria. The public discourse is attended by donor representative, the authorities, community leaders, village elders and the shura members.

6. Involvement of provincial/ district government as a key stakeholder: At the early stage of program implementation NGO such as ARDA seek government support in the identification of the program target area where the program should be implemented.

7. Application of Bio-metrics for beneficiary authentication: NGO such as SRP uses biometric system for authentication of the beneficiaries during distribution process to ensure that one beneficiary not receiving the assistance again in the same slot.

8. Using double identifiers for beneficiary authentication: NGOs such as DCA and YVO use additional identification numbers apart from national id numbers for the authentication of the beneficiaries during distribution of assistance.

Cash distribution good practices

9. NGO AMRAN follows an anti-corruption policy to prevent inappropriate event during program implementation.

10. NGO RHDO utilize the services of independent money exchanger agency such as AWWCC for distribution of cash assistance.

11. Awareness generation during beneficiary gatherings: NGO such as YVO conducts awareness sessions on covid 19 & nutrition among beneficiaries during token distribution process. Similarly, AIRO advocates women empowerment by disseminating awareness on women rights to beneficiaries.

Complaint Management Good Practices

12. Tracking of beneficiary for complaint resolution: In situation of voice disruptions during telephonic complaints NGO such as ORCD sends a field team for the identification of the beneficiary and resolution of issues. Similarly, NGO AMRAN identifies and track caller using GPS coordinates based on beneficiary contact number.

S.no	Type of service	Advantage	Disadvantages/risks	Guidelines
1.	Cash for food items	• People can buy required items. • Cash enables the local market. • Defalcation is avoided. • Desired by the people.	• Cash can be used for things other than foodstuff • It is a short-term solution. • People become habitual of getting money	
2.	Food Items	• Ensures food to the people. • Better for disabled people or women, who can't go to the market.	• Food needs vary according to the area. Needs and the items in the food package cannot be generalized for all areas. • Storage facilities are required • If the stuff is bought in large quantities, it gets expired. • Food items are bought from shops in the cities,	**As per Afghanistan FSAC guidelines for response packages, January 22** *Cash-based food basket* Wheat Flour: 89 kg Rice: 21 kg Vegetable oil: 7 kg Lentil: 9 kg Salt: 1 kg **As per Afghanistan Cash & Voucher Working Group (CVWG) and**

			thus, do not facilitate the local markets. • Not a balanced diet, people need meat and fruits. • It is a short-term solution.	**Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), Guidance Document, February 22:** FSAC engage into a consultative process with their partners to improvise on consideration of the local context and affordability.
3.	Seed Distribution	• Good for people who have land to cultivate • Long term solution • People become self-reliant	• Only for those who have land. • Those who have land might not come in the list of beneficiaries. • Landowners are targeted and not the vulnerable people.	Where farmers are cultivating maize or for summer crops cluster and MAIL recommend providing 12.5 Kg maize seed, 50 Kg Urea and 50 Kg DAP. In cash 90 USD should be provided if certified seeds and quality fertilizers are available in local markets.
4.	Cash for shelter	• Good for repair of the damaged houses.	• People can use cash elsewhere.	**As per Afghanistan Cash & Voucher Working Group (CVWG) and Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), Guidance Document, February 22** Using a rights-based approach, the ES/NFI cluster recommended USD75/family/month as cash support for shelter that includes the costs for rental plus utilities plus minor shelter repairs for the standard

				shelter conditions for a family of seven.
5.	Shelter material	• Good for refugees, IDPs etc in emergency cases of war, floods, earthquake.	• Shelter homes are generally away from the land for cultivation. • Logistics and transportation	
6.	Unconditional cash transfer	• Good in emergency • Desired by the people. • Can be given to people who can't work like disabled person, women etc.	• Security issues. • People become lazy and do not do any efforts	
7.	Conditional Cash transfer	*Cash for foodstuff* • Ensures that people buy food items for this. *Cash for work:* • Protects the dignity of the person. • Some construction gets completed in the area.	• People can only buy food items, cannot buy items like medicine etc. • Not for people who can't work like disabled person, women etc.	**As per Afghanistan FSAC guidelines for response packages, January 22:** 4 USD for unskilled and 7 USD for skilled labour adjusted as per local rates to avoid large pool of labour from formal labour market. To know how many days a person should work to achieve 100% food basket through cash for work, food basket cost (80 USD) should be divided by daily wage labour.
8.	Transfer through banks	• No security issues • Better monitoring	• People are not getting their own money from the banks because of political unrest.	

			• Only for those who have bank accounts.	
9.	Hawala/Money Services Provider/ Money Exchangers	• Can benefit those people who don't have bank accounts. • Money Exchangers are faster than mobile money or banks. • No responsibility of the NGOs to securely escort and distribute the money.	• Hawala people do not travel to villages, villagers need to visit the contractors in the city, hence, post a cost on the beneficiary. • Hawala is expensive • Company or Hawala take high fee (5% or 10%)	
10.	Mobile money	• No travel to get money • Good for female beneficiary • Good for far flung areas	• Only people who have mobile phone and SIM cards can utilize this service	

11.	Joint Interventio n (JI)	• Health and water services are neglected, JI can help • Education sector needs attention.	• People will perceive that organizations will provide them everything, no efforts. • Huge work for organization. • Problems in assessing the need of Household. • One HH will get everything and the other will not get anything, hence, will create animosity. • Needs of the target area is different. Cannot provide water services who need food. • If a HH needs two services, rest services are additional to them. • Chances of duplication of services by varied NGOs	**As per Afghanistan FSAC guidelines for response packages, January 22** The final consolidated MEB 2022 is given below while the process adopted and the guidance on setting up of the transfer values based on the MEB are given in the next section. It is important to note that the items and services included in the list below are selected through an evidence-based calculated estimation relying on available data.

Annexure 4

Key Informant Interview- NGO head

Rapid Assessment of Humanitarian Food Security Assistances for Afghanistan

Conducted by: Health Protection and Research Organization (HPRO);

Supported by: Japan Platform

Verbal Informed Consent

Health Protection and Research Organization (HPRO) is conducting this Rapid Assessment of Humanitarian Food Security Assistances for Afghanistan. The objective of this assessment is to explore pros and cons of the food security intervention modalities. This information will help Japan Platform and possibly other donors to adjust their humanitarian food security assistance modality.

You are requested to participate in this study because your organization has experience in implementation of humanitarian assistance projects. Your participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any point of time if you feel uncomfortable with any question. If you have any query, you can ask anytime. The information will remain confidential and will only be used for research purpose.

Do you agree to participate in the study: Yes ☐ No ☐

If no thank the participant and stop the study.

General Questions

(Please probe or ask follow-up questions as appropriate):

Organization:

1. How long your organization has been working in Afghanistan?
2. In Afghanistan what sectors do you work in?
   Select all that is applicable:
   (1) Food Assistance: Go to section 1
   (2) Shelter services: Go to section 2
   (3) Non-Food Items: Go to section 3
   (4) Cash Assistance: Go to section 4
   (5) Others, please specify
3. How long you have been working in food security sector in Afghanistan?
4. Do you work alone or in some collaboration with other NGO while implementing food security programs?
5. Please share information on what all activitiesyour collaborating partnersNGO/individuals are implementing/
6. What are the criteria for to become a 'beneficiary' in your program?

7. What is the procedure adopted for selection of beneficiary? Please share detailed steps
8. How do you ensure the authenticity of the beneficiaries? (Probe: try to explore the process of verification of bills or any discrepancy in the beneficiary entitlement)
9. Do you hire any third party to identify the beneficiaries? (Probe: ask about the criteria on which they identify the beneficiaries)
10. How do you ensure that no third person is taking any type of extortion money? (Probe: ask about the on-field surveillance of bribes)
11. What different points and stages beneficiary verification is performed please provide information
12. How do you ensure the confidentiality of the personal details of the beneficiaries? (Probe: ask about how do they manage the personal information of the beneficiaries)
13. How do you manage the records of the receipts? (Probe: ask about the recording of the receipts and information about the distribution)
14. Do you find it difficult to deal with people? (Probe: try to explore the challenges and how they overcome these challenges when dealing with common people)
15. How do you conduct the post distribution monitoring? (Probe: ask about mechanisms of evaluation of the distribution money)
16. How do you assess the impact of this service? (Probe: Explore how do they identify the success and failure of the service; do they keep any target to ascertain the success)
17. How do you handle the reconciliations, one service to another service, or one service to many services?
18. How do you verify the beneficiaries and prevent from giving services to duplicate, ineligible people?

Section 1: Food security

1. What type services do you provide in terms of food security? (Probe: ask about the type of services they provide under food security, Food item, cash, food voucher, cash voucher, agriculture equipment, seed, milk, nutrition supplement for child, others, explain)

2. Could you please provide information on steps of distribution process? How much (amount/ quantity) and how often (frequency) the item is distributed. Please provide what is the justification of the amount and frequency (Probe: ask about the selection criteria and distribution process of the services)
3. From the above types what do you think is better? (Probe: explore the importance, also try to get the perspective of the beneficiaries about their interest and requirement of these services)
4. From the above types, which one do people like? (Probe: explain the reason)
5. What are the challenges which you faced during implementation? (Probe: ask about the challenges faced by them in implementation on the ground level, the facilities provided by the administration)

Section 2: Shelter Services

1. What type of service do you provide in shelter? (Probe: Explore the type of facilities given and the target audience)
2. What material do you provide such as tents, house repair and etc. (Probe: ask about the type of material of shelter or cash they provide)
3. Do you face any problems in the implementation? (Probe: ask about the storage facilities and its security, also about the distribution and supply chain)

4. What do you think about the satisfaction of the people towards your service? (Probe: ask about the response of the people towards the service)

Section 3: Non-Food Items (NFI)

1. What nonfood items do you provide?
2. How do you identify which nonfood item can be distributed or is needed by the people? (Probe: Ask about how they do the need assessment for an item and how they recognize the demand of that item)

Section 4: Cash Assistance:

Definitions

Unconditional cash: A direct cash or voucher grant given to recipients with no conditions attached or work requirements (cash for work is conditional cash).
Conditional cash: The cash or voucher is received **after** a condition is fulfilled (e.g., children enrolled at school, participation in training, etc.).

Use conditions: A condition is attached as to how the transfer is spent (e.g., on food, rent or shelter materials, or waiver of payment for school fees). **Vouchers** are often conditional as they can only be redeemed through contracted businesses for pre-determined types of goods and services.

1. What type of cash assistance do you provide to people? (Probe: ask about the conditional and unconditional cash transfers)
2. What do you think is the best method for cash transfers? (Probe: explore the method e.g., Hawala, mobile transfer, cash, cash voucher and etc. which type of cash transfer is easy to do and readily accepted by the targeted people)
3. What challenges do you face in cash transfers? (Probe: ask about the problems faced by them in implementation this on every level)
4. How do you manage the security concerns to prevent any type of theft and robbery? (Probe: ask about the security precautions they take to ensure the safety of the money transport to the village)
5. How do you engage local leaders and authority in the program at various stages (i.e., beneficiary selection, monitoring, distribution)? Please provide examples
6. How do you ensure female beneficiaries receive the assistance, what measures put in place considering the strict sharia law imposition by current regime?
7. what is the current complaint system implemented by the program, please provide details (probe: complaint management assigned person, frequency of complaints received, type received, how it is resolved, time taken for resolution, verbal complaint system or written or both)?

Question For combined set of interventions

How are you feeling about the effects and justifications of combining these interventions together. Please state key reasons and justifications for combined intervention WASH, Healt