

Community Engagement and Accountability in Cash Transfer Programming: A Best Practice Example from Madagascar

This case study documents how community engagement and accountability approaches were integrated into the emergency phase of a pilot cash based intervention programme in Madagascar's capital Antananarivo in 2017, and the benefits this had for the program.

In March 2017, Madagascar was badly affected by Cyclone Enawo. The cyclone caused flooding across the country including in the capital Antananarivo. More than 400,000 people were affected in eight regions, with 80,000 people displaced. As part of the response, Danish Red Cross (DRC) supported Madagascar Red Cross Society (MRCS) to provide unconditional cash grants to cover the basic needs of people living in informal settlements in Antananarivo. The project was funded by the European Union Dinika project.

Mobile money was selected as the most appropriate way of delivering the assistance, which comprised of:

- 60,000 MGA to 1299 people in May 2017 (approximately 18€ / 20 USD)
- 160,000 MGA to 495 people in June 2017 (approximately 47€ / 51 USD)

Although MRCS and DRC had a long-term development project in this area, this was the first time MRCS and the communities had experienced a cash based intervention (CBI). MRCS themselves had concerns about the impact of the cash transfer in the community, where the daily wage ranged from 1000 to 5000 MGA. For this reason, special focus was given to ensuring good community engagement and accountability (CEA) and monitoring and evaluation within the programme to ensure the pilot's success.



Andavamamba's home was damaged in the cyclone. She lives with her four children. She was able to buy bricks to repair the wall with the first instalment and pay for the repairs with the second.

This case study documents six best practice examples of how community engagement and accountability can be integrated within CBI to enhance quality, impact and community acceptance.

These are;

1. [Explaining selection criteria and distribution processes](#)
2. [Training volunteers on how to share and collect information from communities](#)
3. [Working with local authorities](#)
4. [Responding to rumours, feedback and complaints in the community](#)
5. [Community workshops to explain unconditionality and cash purpose and budgeting](#)
6. [Allowing communities to share their experience and learning with each other.](#)

Explaining selection criteria and distribution processes

VATSY
"Izay iray vatsy, iray aina"

Tetikasan'ny Croix-Rouge Malagasy, tanterahina eto Antananarivo, iarahany miombona antoka amin'ny Croix-Rouge Danoise ary tohanan'ny Vondrona Eropaeina voala, handanian'ny fizaran'ny fizaran' ire o olona sy fiasakaviana tena marefo noho'ny fandalovan'ny rivozoza Enawo.

Ireo FEPETRA takiana amin'ny fianakaviana misitraka ny tetikasa vatsy

1 Mason-tsiavana voalohany:

- Traboina volakiry ny rivozoza ENAWO;
- Nipetraka tao amin'ny trano mitokarana vonjy maika, na voamandry ny filaham-pok-ontany tao anaty ny lisitry ny traboina;
- Mbola tsy nahazo fanampiana avy amin'ny vondrona hafa;

Mason-tsiavana faharoa:

- Vehivavy no loham-pianakaviana;
- Fianakaviana maro;
- Zaza mianatra.

2

- Mipetraka ao amin'ireto Fokontany ireto
- Antihomadinika III G hangar, Centre, Sud na FAAMI
- Andohat'apensika I, II na III;
- Antitezana AFovany;
- Andavamamba Arjezika I
- Ankasina

3 Fianakaviana miay:



zaza latsaky ny Stazona



mitondra vohoka



manana fahasembariana



mihoatra ny 60 taona

Ny mpilatraka ny tetikasa VATSY dia omena «PUCE/SIM» iray amin'ny fizarana ny fanampiana:
Kajio ny PUCE/SIM izay omena anao setria lo no leitranao liay fanampiana;
Aza omena olon-kafa ny faneho miaina ny kaontim-bolanao;

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Mpanazava ara-baki:
 ERON

A poster explaining the selection criteria

Data collected during the assessment was used to formulate messages that could be shared with the general community to raise awareness of the CBI purpose, process and selection criteria. Information was shared through house to house visits before the first distribution to make sure that people would be able to follow the distribution process easily when the time came. This was important because cash transfer was new to the community, who were more used to receiving goods or cash for work.

Training volunteers on how to share and collect information from communities

As with all Red Cross Red Crescent activities, the local branch and volunteers played a key role as the face of the CBI within the community. The local volunteers were responsible for carrying out home visits, collecting and sharing information and listening to and discussing peoples' concerns, fears and rumours. As this was the first time a CBI had been used in this community and by MRCS, the volunteers themselves were sceptical about the feasibility of the

approach and worried about the impact the distribution of such large amounts of money might have. To address this, the CBI project team provided training to the volunteers on the project purpose and aims and the messages that needed to be disseminated to community members and how these could be communicated well. In fact, the valuable knowledge the community volunteers had of the local environment greatly helped in the formulation of these messages. This ensured community volunteers could talk confidently and accurately about the project, including answering difficult questions about selection criteria.

Working with local authorities

Local authorities are very important in Malagasy society, especially in informal settlements like the one targeted through the CBI intervention. By engaging with the local authorities and ensuring they fully understood the selection criteria, the CBI team were able to ask for their help to identify and verify beneficiaries, many of whom did not have formal identity cards or proof of residence. Beneficiary lists were then posted publicly in the fokontany (local authority) offices, where community members could examine and challenge them if necessary. These local structures also played a major role in explaining the selection criteria to the community, managing rumours and collecting and responding to complaints.

However, the CBI team also recognized that the power held by local authorities and community volunteers can be a double-edged sword, in that it can also open the project up to the risk of corruption. The team limited this risk through training of volunteers, being clear about the Red Cross principles with local authorities, cross-referencing beneficiary lists and detailed monitoring in the field. The project team also refused any preferential treatment towards these people and did not hesitate to exclude those who broke the rules to protect integrity and transparency with the community.

Responding to rumours, feedback and complaints in the community

Rather than introduce new systems for feedback and complaints, the CBI team built on existing processes within the community and MRCS. This included working through community volunteers and local authorities as mentioned above. However, these approaches were strengthened. This included having a helpdesk during distributions to respond to feedback and complaints and sharing contact telephone numbers that community members could call for more information during awareness-raising activities and on all materials being distributed. Following completion of the first distribution, exit survey, focus group discussions and post-distribution monitoring was carried out, where communities were invited to openly discuss their perceptions of the project, including complaints and fears. This greatly helped inform and improve the approach in the second phase. One aspect which could be improved for future operations would be to ensure all feedback is formally recorded and analysed, with a response provided to the community so they know their issue has been heard and acted upon.

One aspect of the CBI that created a lot of suspicion and mistrust in the community was linked to the fact the cash being provided was 'free' and unconditional, as previously communities had more commonly participated in cash for work projects. Rumours circulating in the community included;

- The cash was dirty money
- Accepting the cash would lead to expectations or obligations
- The money was coming from the devil
- That people would be asked to repay the cash
- The money would be taken back in the future through any means necessary.

The CBI team took these rumours seriously, aware of the impact they could have on the success of the programme. For example, when two beneficiaries returned their registration cards citing religious reasons, the CBI team decided to investigate, concerned that this was linked to rumours that money was coming from the devil. They met with the beneficiaries in person and discovered that one of them did not want to accept 'free' money not earned through hard labour because of their catholic faith. Interestingly gifts in kind would have been acceptable for this person. The other person was afraid to provide her ID card number as she did not understand how her personal information would be used. The team took the time to explain the purpose of the CBI and why cash had been chosen and that personal information would be kept secure. Information was also shared with the whole community to ensure they understood that cash was given without expectation or obligations and was intended to help them cope with the damage left by Cyclone Enawo. Listening to the rumours and fears of the communities and addressing them, helped to reassure people about a new and unusual practice and convince them that no one would ask them for anything in return later on, whether it be community leaders, volunteers, mobile phone company staff or project staff.

Other approaches to help tackle rumours include; finding out where the rumour is coming from and meeting with the source to explain the facts; ensuring all staff and volunteers are briefed on the rumour and feel equipped to discuss and address it in communities; and ensure community leaders and representatives are also briefed and can assist you tackling the rumour.



Mrs Hangar lives alone with her 2 children. Her house floods with every heavy rainfall so she decided to follow the advice given during the shelter improvement workshop and use part of her cash grant for the construction of a raised bed. Her children are now sleeping there and in the event of another flood, she will be able to store her belongings in a safe place.

Community workshops to explain unconditionality and cash purpose and budgeting

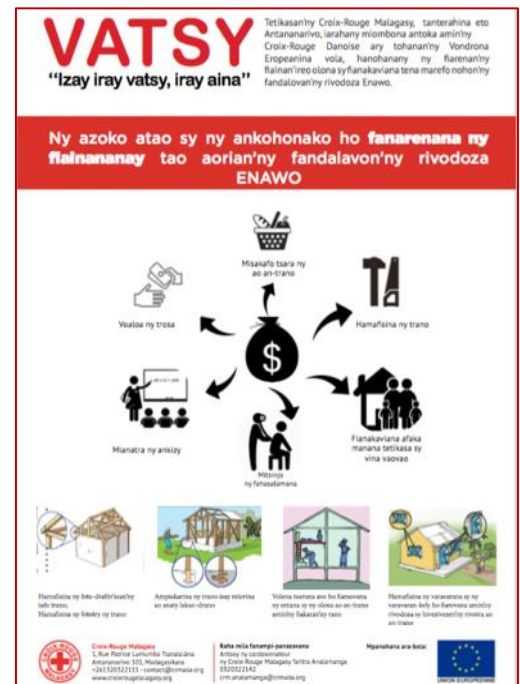
Workshops were held at the distribution sites to explain the purpose of the unconditional cash grants and provide training on budgeting skills. Workshops were also organised to provide advice on shelter reconstruction and to explain how the mobile money system worked.

Unconditional cash grants workshops

As this was the first time the community had received unconditional cash grants, this workshop focused on two objectives;

1. Define the concept of unconditional cash, as many people expected the money would need to be paid back.
2. Support people to identify their own priority as each individual was affected differently by the cyclone.

When entering the distribution site, people were invited to join a workshop session on the meaning of unconditional cash grants. To launch the discussion, posters with icons were used, which could be easily understood by all. Examples of how the cash could be used were given by MRCS volunteers and people were invited to ask questions, share their opinion and discuss among themselves the possibilities for how the cash could be used.



A poster explaining the potential uses for the unconditional cash grant and advice on how to repair shelters in this ex rice field area



Simple visual aids like this helped to explain the concepts of financial management and generate discussion. This one illustrates how working capital can allow personal skills to create benefits.

Budgeting workshops

To support communities to make the most of the cash grant and address concerns from MRCS on the possible 'misuse' of the cash grant for alcohol, the CBI team organised budget workshops during the first distribution. The idea came from one of the community volunteers Elisa, who had previous experience in this field. Notions of business economics, working capital, investment, benefits and budgetary monitoring were explained in a culturally sensitive approach, adapted to the context, location and language. Elisa encouraged people to 'make their money live as long as possible'. She gave an example that instead of reimbursing a debt in one instalment using the full cash grant, people could invest in two chickens, which would generate revenue through selling eggs, allowing the debt to be paid back little by little, and most importantly, would continue to generate income in the long term. People were encouraged to establish their own income generating activities, based on their personal talents and experience. A budgeting booklet was also provided to each person, containing all the posters, and enclosed in a zip lock bag with their sim cards.

The budget workshops had a significant impact, with the post-distribution monitoring finding that many people decided to invest some of their unconditional cash grant in income-generating activities. For example, Jeanine, 70 years old, decided to buy wool to knit and sell her hand-made bedspreads, while another three people decided to pool their grants and start a business to manufacture brooms.

Allowing communities to share their experience and learning with each other

To allow communities to share their experience and encourage one another, photographs and stories of how people had used the cash transfer were collected during the post distribution monitoring and then displayed in the community. This worked well given the low literacy rates and allowed people to see how their neighbours, friends and people they know had used the cash to improve their lives. The reactions to the photo exhibition were very positive and many people asked questions and even took notes on what others had done. This also assisted the CBI team to monitor and evaluate how people used their money and further built understanding and acceptance for CBIs in the community.

Ireo mpisitrika ny tetikasa VATSY



Frederic - 23 taona - Andohotapenaka III

Nampiova ny ainany ny fahazoana fanampiana tamin'ny Croix-Rouge Malagasy satria nahafany nampivelatra ny talentany amin'ny maha-pandra tra azy ary afaka naviny ho diram- bola izany.

Recevoir de l'aide financière de la Croix-Rouge Malagasy a changé sa vie car il a pu exploiter son talent en le transformant en commerce.

Receiving financial assistance from the Malagasy Red Cross changed his life because he was able to exploit his carpentry talent by turning it into a business.

Louise – 82 taona - Anohatapenaka III

Nametraka ny vola azony avy amin'ny tetikasa Dinika izy mba hamoronana ny orinasany madinika hivarotra voankazo sy legioma ary hanomana sakafo mahamay.

Elle a investi l'argent reçu du projet Dinika pour créer son petit commerce de vente de fruits et légumes et de plats chauds préparés.

She invested the money received from the Dinika project to create her small business selling fruits & vegetables and ready to eat meals.



One of the photo exhibitions shared in the community showing how different people were managing to 'make their money live longer'.

Lessons learned

Community engagement and accountability approaches were a fully integrated and core part of the CBI in Madagascar. This helped to build community and National Society acceptance for unconditional cash grants, as well as contributing to the quality and long-term impact of the project. Some of the key lessons learned were;

- 1. Invest in information sharing:** The CBI team in Madagascar carefully planned out how and when information would be shared with the community. This was part of the project plan and resourced properly, rather than assuming it would happen automatically. This focus on information sharing helped to ensure community understanding and acceptance for CBIs. It also contributed to the smooth running of the distribution itself and helped to engage MRCS staff and volunteers in the process and build their support for CBIs. One recommendation for the future would be to engage local authorities from the outset and even set aside some funding so that they can provide the various services requested by the project to the fullest. Additionally, more focus could be given to engaging with non-beneficiaries so that they can support the most vulnerable among them and not be a threat to them.
- 2. Communities are not helpless:** Communities were put at the centre of the project from start to finish and were treated as competent individuals, capable of making their own choices about the best way to recover from the cyclone. In particular, the unconditional cash and budgeting workshops encouraged people to build on their existing skills and think about their long-term futures. This approach recognised that people affected by poverty and disasters are not helpless victims, but individuals with ideas and ambitions which they can be helped to realise when given the right support and information. The results were impressive in that many people were able to invest and grow the amount given to the extent that it had a sustainable impact on the quality of their daily lives.
- 3. Recognise the value of local knowledge:** The CBI team recognised the importance of local volunteers in helping to guide messages and approaches. By listening to and using their input they ensured posters and activities like the budget workshops were contextually appropriate and resonated with local people, rather than using generic information which runs the risk of being ignored. This approach also contributed to building ownership of the project amongst the local volunteers.
- 4. Train volunteers on what and how to communicate:** The CBI team also recognised that local volunteers would be the 'face' of the project in the community. By training them on good communication skills and how the project would work, they ensured the local volunteers would be skilled ambassadors for CBI in their communities. This was especially important given CBI was new for the volunteers and the community.
- 5. Don't ignore rumours:** It is easy to dismiss rumours as idle gossip, however if left unchecked rumours have the potential to derail an entire project. The CBI team in Madagascar made sure this did not happen by taking note of all rumours and dedicating time to follow up the most serious. This also contributed to ensuring the community felt listened to and respected.

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