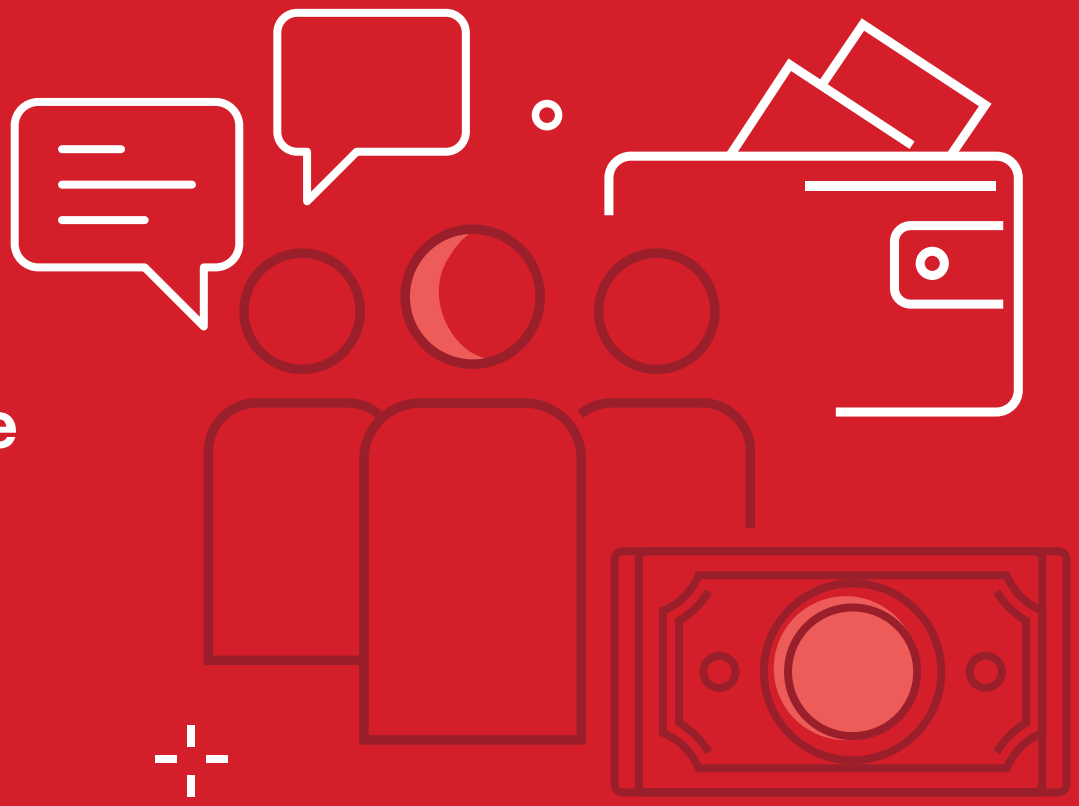
IFRC

CashHub | CommunityEngagement

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19

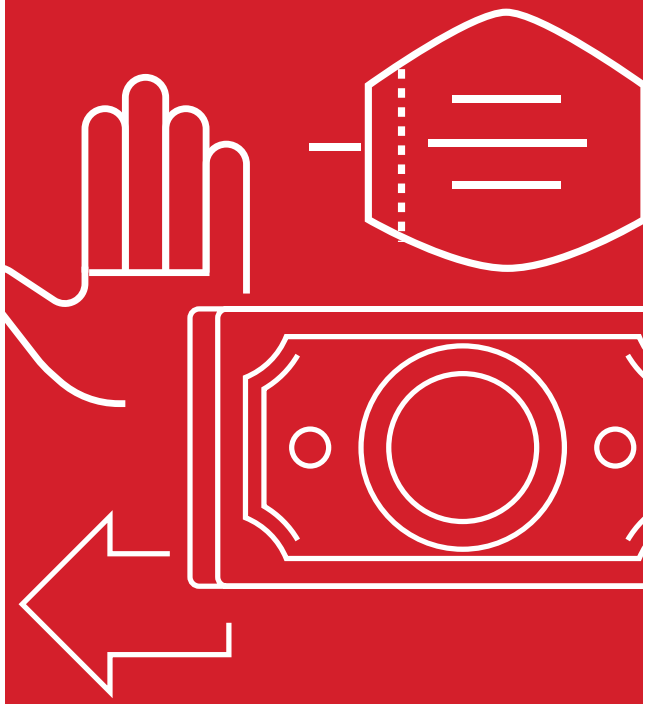


Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19

CVA can be an empowering mode of assistance as it can help to put decision making power in the hands of communities, so that they can recover from crisis with dignity. This is only possible when we ensure the participation and engagement of communities throughout the programme cycle. This tip sheet provides practical actions you can take before, during and after a Cash and Voucher Assistance programme to help integrate CEA principles. The checklist is on the first and second page, and additional guidance is on the following pages if you need help to implement the actions.

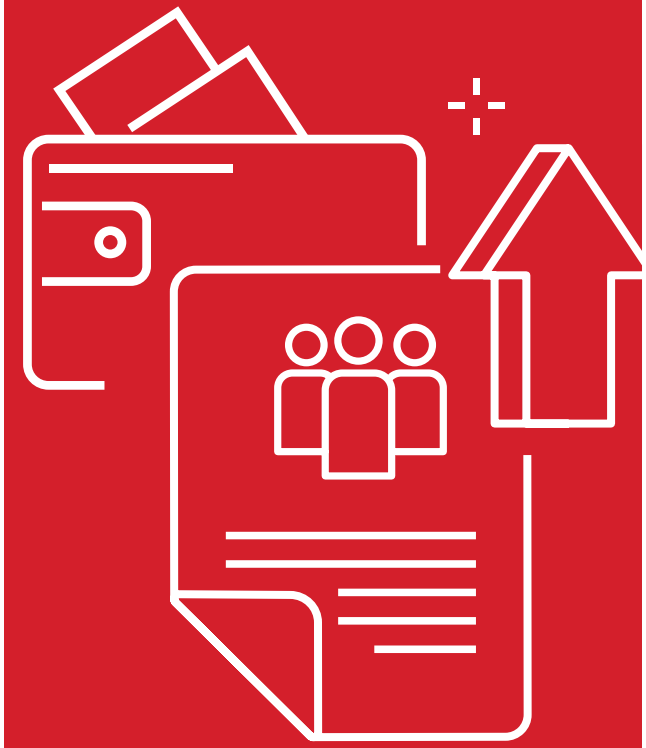
Preparedness & Design	COVID-19 considerations
During the feasibility study or rapid market assessment speak to community representatives about their needs, intentions, and preferences for receiving cash or in-kind assistance. If cash is the preferred option, ask how they would like to receive the cash (e.g. mobile money transfer, prepaid card or physical cash). **The Cash in Emergencies (CiE) Toolkit** has a range of useful tools which can assist in this task which are available here: **Community-level cash questions template M2211**, Household-level cash questions template **M2212**, and Community access to and use of financial services template **M2222**	• Consider whether there is secondary data available to inform your feasibility study rather than collecting primary data. • Assess whether remote data collection is possible, such as through phone calls with key informants. • Assess (through asking community representatives and visiting markets where possible) if markets are open and functional. • Particularly consider if there are vulnerable groups who might struggle to access a market (such as the elderly or those with underlying health conditions who may be at increased risk to COVID-19). • **CiE toolkit tool: Community Access to Markets - M2221** can be referred to.

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19



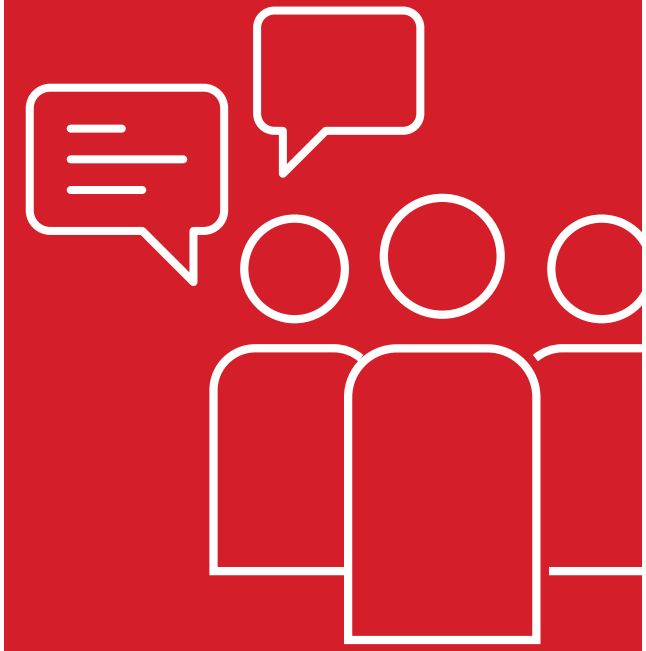
Preparedness & Design	COVID-19 considerations
Ask whether there are existing community committees who you can contact to introduce the Red Cross, our fundamental principles and the purpose of the CVA programme. Make sure to contact women, elderly, disabled and other vulnerable group representatives. If there is no pre-existing committee then consider creating one. Be clear about the role of the committee before, during and after the CVA programme. + (1) See the list of questions to ask when meeting community representatives and use **Tool 12** from the CEA Toolkit for a template ToR for a community committee	• Investigate any public health authority restrictions on meetings. • Community meetings should be held with social distancing guidelines maintained. If this isn't possible then consider calling community committee members instead or asking a trusted community leader to share information.
Targeting specific groups can cause tensions. Discuss the proposed selection criteria with the community committee and ask if they agree, what challenges this might cause and how they could be addressed.	• It may only be possible to speak remotely via phone to key informants to get feedback on the criteria. This will still help to ensure the selection criteria has some participatory involvement from the community being targeted with assistance and should be documented
Once the selection criteria are agreed with the community committee, disseminate this information to the wider community through trusted channels of communication. This might be through a community meeting, over the radio, door-to-door, social media, via phone call or SMS. + Use the **'hotline in a box'** to assess, set up and manage different channels of communication.	• Communication channels which may cause groups of people to gather, such as large community meetings, mobile cinema events or megaphone announcements where people might stand closely together to listen, should be avoided during COVID-19.
Consider referrals from trusted sources that can be verified to reduce exclusion error. Trusted sources could be government social services and local authorities, volunteers, religious or community leaders and civil society groups, for example.	• Due to restrictions on movement during the COVID-19 pandemic – assessment and verification can be more difficult and reliance on trusted sources (and triangulation with these sources) more important. Where data gathered from potential recipients is to be shared with 3rd parties ensure that consent for this is gained explaining exactly what information will be shared and why.

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19



Preparedness & Design	COVID-19 considerations
Speak to vulnerable groups such as elderly, pregnant and lactating women, or people with disabilities about whether they would face barriers accessing cash assistance or barriers using digital technology for registration (such as self-registration). Discuss possible solutions to barriers identified.	• Many NS have switched from using face-to-face interactions to digital technology to minimise COVID-19 risk, but with this comes a greater risk of excluding those who cannot access digital technology. Some NS have overcome this by mobilising community-based volunteers or branch staff who may already be based in the target area to specifically assist certain groups at risk of exclusion.
If appropriate, consider sharing the cash recipient list with the community committee for verification. You may also want to post it publicly in a trusted and easily accessible location.	• With COVID-19 some NS are undertaking physical visits (socially distanced) as part of verification to a sample of households. However, many are verified through phone calls with specific questions related to verifying eligibility criteria that staff and volunteers can be trained to ask which helps to avoid errors in selection.
Ask about people's preferences for asking questions or providing feedback to the Red Cross. Use these preferences to set up a complaint and feedback mechanism which should run throughout the CVA programme. Alternatively, if a complaint mechanism already exists within the NS or the wider humanitarian response, be sure to advertise it clearly to the community. + Use the **feedback starter kit** to set up and manage a feedback and complaints mechanism.	• Consider using remote channels for receiving complaints and feedback, such as hotlines, SMS, social media or call-in radio shows. + Use the **Guidance for National Societies on safe and remote risk communication and community engagement during COVID-19.**
Train or brief volunteers on basic community engagement and Protection, Gender and Inclusion. + (2) See the list of training topics.	• Also consider providing training on Risk Communication and Community Engagement, either remotely or in a socially distanced environment. + Training materials can be accessed on the CEA Hub: **https://communityengagementhub.org/resource/1-day-rapid-training-on-rcce-for-COVID-19/**

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19



Preparedness & Design	COVID-19 considerations
Provide a question and answer sheet to volunteers to use when in communities to help them share consistent information. (3) See questions for a Q&A	• It is likely that community members will ask questions which fall outside of the scope of the CVA programme, including on COVID-19. The Q&A sheet should include answers to these questions too. Refer to the Ministry of Health and WHO guidance as much as possible.

Implementation	COVID-19 considerations
Before the cash is distributed allow time for volunteers to explain to the cash recipients how the distribution process works, why they were selected, how much cash they will receive and for how long, as well as how and when they can access the cash. (4) See list of key information to share with people.	• Wherever possible use remote means or means that respect social-distancing and avoid mass gatherings.
Take extra time to explain the selection criteria to those who were not selected – they are the ones who might disrupt your programme or share misinformation or rumours about the Red Cross.	• Wherever possible use remote means or means that respect social-distancing and avoid mass gatherings.
Use trusted and preferred channels of communication to share key information with the community before and during the distribution. (4) See list of key information to share with people.	• Distributing leaflets or posters with pictures, radio shows, social media or SMS messages could be useful channels to share key information. • Coordinate with Risk Communication and Community Engagement/CEA colleagues on which channels are best suited, and use Knowledge, Attitude and Practices survey findings, if available, on most used and trusted information channels

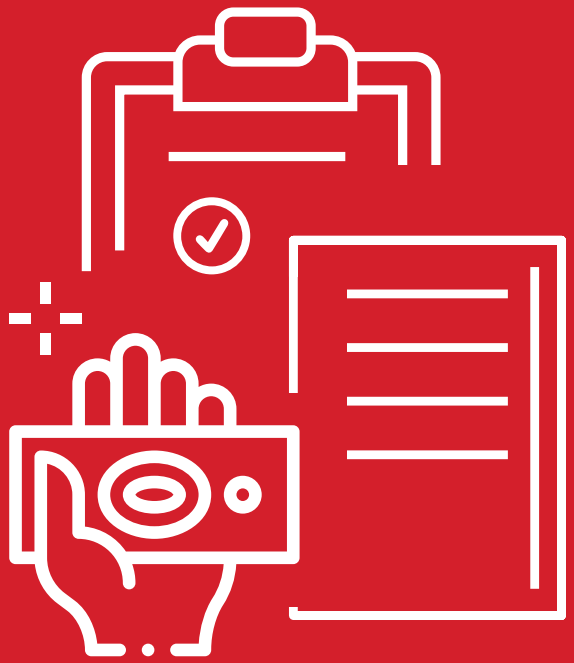
Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19

Implementation	COVID-19 considerations
Involve the community committee in the registration process as they can help to verify households.	• Avoid large registration exercises where people will gather, conduct smaller exercises or verify households door-to-door (with social distancing and other protection measures as appropriate) or over the phone.
During registration, disaggregated data should be collected (sex, age, disability).	• Wherever possible use remote means or means that respect social-distancing and avoid mass gatherings.
Communicate widely in the community that aid is free to minimise the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and corruption. A list of ways to do this is below + (5) See lists of ways to do this	• Distributing leaflets or posters with pictures, radio shows, social media or SMS messages could be useful channels to share key information. • Coordinate with Risk Communication and Community Engagement/CEA colleagues on which channels are best suited, and use Knowledge, Attitude and Practices survey findings, if available, on most used and trusted information channels
If using a physical distribution site ensure there is a lot of signage, in pictures and using local language. Serve vulnerable groups first –pregnant women, elderly, anyone with disabilities. There should be an information desk with a clear process for how to deal with different questions, complaints and feedback. + (6-8) See lists of signs you should have and advice on setting up an information desk.	• Avoid physical (cash-in-envelope) distribution sites if possible and consider using mobile money transfers or prepaid cards (delivered door-to-door, by post, through banks) if these options are feasible and trusted by the community. + For more information on how to organise cash distribution minimizing risks of contamination, refer to the following guidance: **CashHub Tip sheet: COVID-19 Sensitive Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) Across the Project Cycle** (section 5) **Livelihoods Resource Centre - Guidance distributions in COVID-19 contexts** **ICRC Tip sheet: Cash and Voucher Assistance and COVID-19** (section 1.2)

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19

Implementation	COVID-19 considerations
	(Continued from previous page) • If physical distribution sites are used, ensure that people stay 2m apart during queuing, that handwashing stations are set up around the site and that staff and volunteers have access to masks. In some situations where recipients are asked to sign something to say they have received it, the NS has given away the pen. Avoid any situations where several recipients are touching the same surface, piece of paper, touch screen, or pen unless handwashing is superverised before and after. • Cash recipients who are vulnerable to COVID-19 (elderly or those with underlying health conditions) should be given the opportuntiy to nominate a proxy to collect the cash instead. This should be closely monitored by the National Society to avoid bribery or fraud. • Share key Risk Communication and Community Engagement messages during distributions, particularly on safe health and sanitation practices. See below for a list of key Risk Communication and Community Engagement messages to share. + See below for a list of key Risk Communication and Community Engagement messages to share.
Have an updated list and contact details of agencies for SGBV, child protection, legal and psychosocial support services to refer survivors of SGBV or children who reveal an incident of violence to you.	

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19



Monitoring & evaluation	COVID-19 considerations
During the exit monitoring / PDM ask some questions to check if there was good community engagement	Refer to the CashHub tip sheet: **Conducting Monitoring and Evaluation for COVID-19 Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA)**
Regularly review community feedback from multiple sources with key staff after each distribution and throughout the programme. Jointly agree on recommendations and actions to take forward ahead of the next distribution.	
Hold a debrief with volunteers and community leaders to collect their feedback on what can be improved for the next distribution.	

1

Questions to consider during initial meeting with community representatives

- What language do people most commonly speak in the community?
- What is the best method to inform people in the community of what is happening? For example, which communication channels do they use?
- Are there any tensions in the community we should be aware of when designing this programme? Is there a chance we could put anyone at risk?
- How would people in this community prefer to receive cash? Would there be any barriers for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, those with underlying health conditions and people with disabilities, to receive cash or access markets?
- If a physical distribution is necessary, when should a cash distribution happen so that men, women, persons with disabilities, labourers, single-headed households etc. are able to attend?
- What would be a safe location for the distribution site? Are both men, women, elderly, those with underlying health conditions, persons with disabilities etc. able to safely travel to this location?
- How can we ensure that people living with disabilities, those with underlying health conditions and elderly have access to the distribution?
- How can we ensure that children do not become separated at the distribution site?

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19

2

CEA and Protection, Gender and Inclusion topics to include in trainings for volunteers

- Overview of the organisation (especially if volunteers are new to the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement) purpose of the assessment, cash distribution processes and modality, and selection criteria rationale so that volunteers can confidently answer questions from community members
- All staff and volunteers should have signed the Code of Conduct and have received a briefing on it, including prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and how to report misconduct
- Good communication skills and how to speak to people clearly and with respect
- How to answer questions honestly and clearly, including sensitive issues linked to sexual exploitation and abuse, violence or corruption
- How to identify vulnerable groups related to COVID-19 risks and what public health protection measures to take to minimise putting these groups at higher risk as a result of our activities.
- Go **here** for **CEA training materials**

3

Common questions to include on a question and answer sheet for volunteers

- Who is the Red Cross Red Crescent?
- How much cash will I receive?
- When will I receive the cash and for how long will I receive cash payments?
- How do I access the cash?
- If a voucher, how do I use the voucher and what can be redeemed with the voucher?
- What are the selection criteria and why?
- Why are you not helping everyone?
- Do I have to pay for this help?
- We need help now, so why are you asking all these questions?
- When will you come back, and what will you do?
- How can I become a volunteer?
- How can I complain?

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19

- Go **here for a sample question and answer sheet**
- Where do I go if I want more information on COVID-19?
- What steps is the RCRC national society taking to minimise COVID-19 risk when running this programme?
- If I think I or someone in my household has COVID-19 what do I do? (e.g. who do I need to inform? How can I get a test? Etc. this will be dependent in your context and public health authority).

4

List of key information to share with communities

- How much cash is being distributed in each instalment and how many instalments will they receive?
- How to access the cash (e.g. distribution dates and times, how to use mobile money, which bank to go to is using prepaid cards, how to use a prepaid card etc.) - film demonstrations and share on RCRC national society platforms or distribute leaflets with pictures on.
- If a voucher, how do I use the voucher and what can be redeemed with the voucher?
- That aid is provided free of charge – to minimise the risk of corruption and sexual exploitation and abuse
- What your selection criteria is – use pictures to demonstrate this (e.g. a poster of a pregnant women, a picture of a fully destroyed house)
- How you are selecting people – to demonstrate this is done fairly and transparently and address any concerns people have about not being included
- Why you are not able to help everyone – limited resources, need to prioritize the most vulnerable of the aid is targeted at a specific group
- Process to complain
- **Go here for a template poster**
- What COVID-19 public health protection measures to take when receiving or using the cash and voucher assistance (e.g. minimising travel and accessing the markets during busy times).

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19

5

Methods of sharing information with communities

Firstly, it is important to find out how the community gets information now in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic. You can do this by asking the community leaders, checking with the local volunteers or through secondary data about the media landscape in the country (google 'media landscape guide <name of country> - but check this has not changed due to COVID-19. Good options include;

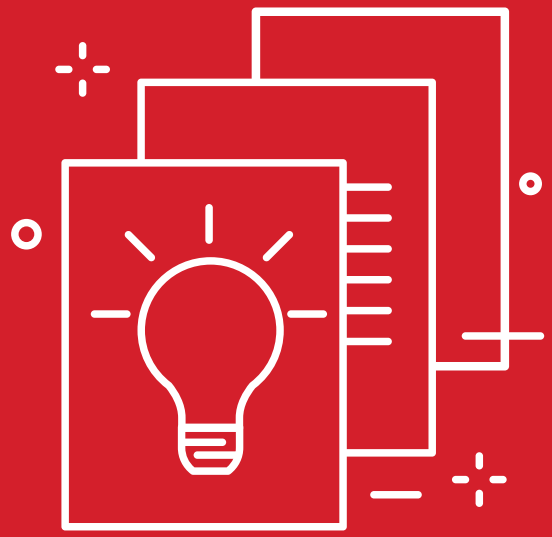
- Asking the leaders and community representatives to spread the information – but you need to check that they are actually sharing the information accurately and reaching vulnerable and potentially marginalised groups within the community
- Send out SMS to people in the community if you have their telephone numbers – you can do this through a bulk SMS service (google 'bulk SMS service')
- Announcements on the local radio
- Through sound trucks – loudspeakers on a vehicle that play recorded messages and travel around the community (avoid this during COVID-19
- Through social media if the community has wide access and it is considered a trusted source
- Putting up posters in key locations in the community (notice boards, schools, health centres, markets, bus stations – anywhere people often pass during their day)
- Through community volunteers – but they need to be trained and you need to check they are spreading the information widely (only if they can do this according to social distancing guidelines and have appropriate PPE)
- Holding a community meeting – if the community is small enough (only if it can be done according to social distancing guidelines)
- **Go here for more information on choosing channels of communication**

6

Signage you should have at your distribution (if you need to do a distribution)

Note that during the COVID-19 pandemic many national societies are minimising mass distributions (in-kind or physical cash) to limit the risk of COVID-19. To do this they are using alternative transfer mechanisms such as mobile money, bank transfer, using bank infrastructure to deliver debit cards, using the post to deliver debit cards, delivering assistance door-to-door, and where distributions are still required undertaking these calling only 10 to 20 recipients at a time to limit the risk of crowds and COVID-19 transmission.

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19



Should a distribution still be required, signs should use local languages and pictures if literacy is low and include;

- A list and pictures of exactly how much cash people will receive, how regularly and through which mechanism (e.g. mobile money, debit cards, bank transfer etc.).
- If vouchers are to be used, how they will work (in terms of where they can be redeemed, item restrictions, how to maximise using all of their value etc.)
- If distributions are to be used, different areas of the distribution – for example where the information desk is, where people go to queue, where the entrance and exits are, and how to travel and be at a distribution site safely considering COVID-19 risk.
- Signs of the geographical area you are covering in the response – this helps respond to people who turn up who are not from the area you are targeting
- Pictures and explanation of the selection criteria – pregnant women, elderly person, those without income etc.
- Posters that explain all aid is free to minimise the risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and corruption
- Posters highlighting any telephone helplines that exist for people to raise concerns, including reporting sexual exploitation and abuse, corruption or where to get help in relation sexual and gender-based violence
- Posters explaining how to minimise COVID-19 risk through social distancing, use of face coverings, one-way systems, restricting entry to certain areas, and promotion of hand washing. Those organising distributions will also need to mark on the ground or with signs 2m spacing to aid social distancing and ensure there is enough queuing space for those asked to attend a distribution at the same time (assuming a batch process is used). There may need to be specific allowances made to assist those who are elderly or have underlying health conditions who may be at more risk from COVID-19. Some IFRC Infographics related to COVID-19 can be found at the bottom of this page: **https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/emergency/global-COVID-19/**

7 Advice on having an information desk

An information desk is very important at a distribution as it gives people a place they can go to ask questions that is separate from the main distribution, meaning your distribution is less likely to be disrupted and the community feel their concerns have been listened to. Some advice for an information desk includes;

- Develop a clear process for how to respond to different questions and complaints – decide in advance how you will respond to likely questions like ‘I meet the criteria and you didn’t asses me’ and be clear about what you can respond to and what you cannot. If possible, have an

investigation process if people genuinely seem like they were missed in the registration. An option could be using local leaders (if they are trustworthy) to verify the claims people are making

- Provide extra community engagement training for the volunteers who will manage the information desk
- Prepare a question and answer sheet to help information desk volunteers respond to the different questions they will likely receive
- The information desk should be separate from the distribution and give people privacy to make a complaints and include a male and female volunteer
- Have a table and chairs for both the volunteers and the person making the complaint
- The information desk should be clearly signposted
- Have a method for recording the feedback you received – this can be on paper, on a spreadsheet on a laptop, on a mobile device using mobile data collection
- If possible, have a list of other agencies you can refer people to for specific services (SGBV, hospital, water, food distributions, PSS etc)
- **Go here for more guidance and tools on feedback systems**

8 Community engagement volunteer roles for physical cash distributions

In addition to the volunteers you need for distribution, consider adding;

- 2 volunteers for the information desk
- 2-3 volunteers to help supervise those arriving for the distribution and ensure social distancing and other protection measures (such as handwashing and face cover wearing is undertaken). These volunteers at the entrance and exit to the distribution line should also be ready to provide information and answer questions related to any distribution.

9 CEA and Protection, Gender and Inclusion questions you can include in your post-distribution monitoring

In addition to the volunteers you need for distribution, consider adding;

- Were you able to collect the cash or voucher assistance safely? If not what could be improved to help improve safety?
- Were you informed in advance about how much cash you would receive and when?

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during COVID-19

- If vouchers, were you informed in advance about the value of the voucher or what commodities could be redeemed with the voucher?
- Were you satisfied with the amount of information shared with you before you received the cash or voucher? If no, what was missing?
- Are you satisfied with the selection procedure for this cash or voucher programme? If no, why not?
- Can you name the main reasons why you were selected?
- Did you have to pay to be added to the cash or voucher recipient list? If yes, to whom?
- Were you given enough information about how to access the cash?
- Were there any security problems during / after the collection of the cash or vouchers? Did you feel unsafe at any point?
- Would you have preferred to receive a different type of assistance instead?
- Did you know how to ask questions or make a complaint?
- If you used the information desk/called the hotline/ spoke to a volunteer, how satisfied were you with the response you received?
- How satisfied are you with the overall behaviour and support of Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers and staff?
- Do you have any comments, ideas for improvement or anything else you would like to mention

Other useful guidance

Further resources:

There are many resources on the CEA Hub to help with community engagement during COVID-19:

- Tips for engaging communities during COVID-19 in low-resource settings, remotely and in-person (GOARN Risk Communication and Community Engagement Initiative: IFRC, UNICEF, WHO)
- How to include marginalised and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement (original version) and Update #1 (IFRC, OCHA, WHO)
- Guidance for National Societies on safe and remote risk communication and community engagement in COVID-19 (IFRC)
  – A guide to preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19 (IFRC)