

Linking Cash and Voucher Assistance with Humanitarian Response and Social Protection Systems

Experience of Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross Society

A summary of the case study on how Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross Society's experience in cash and voucher assistance influenced the Government of Eswatini to shift their humanitarian response and social protection programmes into mobile cash, since the COVID-19 response.

Background

Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross Society (BERCS) is a strong national actor in Eswatini with large community reach and is the main implementor of humanitarian responses funded by the Government of Eswatini. BERCS has a long established and trusted relationship with the government, in particular working closely with the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA). Traditionally, the Government of Eswatini provides humanitarian assistance by distributing goods and food in-kind. The Department of Social Welfare implements four social assistance programmes, distributed mostly via cash in envelopes.

Advocacy work and the introduction of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) for humanitarian response

In 2016, **BERCS became the first actor in Eswatini to introduce CVA** as a humanitarian response modality. The government was sceptical about CVA but following effective advocacy by BERCS, the NDMA allowed the National Society to pilot a multipurpose cash programme.

BERCS worked closely with a national mobile phone network so that the cash assistance could be distributed effectively using mobile money. Throughout the programme, BERCS maintained close collaboration with NDMA, by regularly sharing reports and lessons learnt widely to government ministries. The programme successfully supported 4,200 households in Shiselweni region and was scaled up. This set a precedent and opened the path for other actors, including WFP, to implement CVA in Eswatini.

The success of this intervention and ongoing advocacy by BERCS and other actors convinced many in the government of the efficiencies and benefits of using CVA.

COVID-19 response

In March 2020, the government introduced movement restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that meant goods-in-kind could not be distributed in the traditional way. As BERCS and other agencies had previously demonstrated the benefits of CVA, the **Government of Eswatini decided to implement the first government funded response using mobile cash**. BERCS were actively consulted and used their experience to feed into the response plan.

By early August 2020, **the government had distributed mobile cash to 65,000 households** nationwide for six months, successfully supporting 25% of the population, with **91.4% of recipients satisfied with the support**.

Twinking the existing social protection system

During the COVID-19 response, the Government of Eswatini also **switched the modality for all existing social assistance programmes to mobile money**. This is a permanent change influenced by BERCS' effective advocacy on CVA; a snowball effect that has resulted in a more efficient and streamlined delivery mechanism.

Key learnings and opportunities

BERCS have successfully influenced their government to introduce CVA as a modality for humanitarian response and social assistance. **BERCS continues to work closely with the government** and there are opportunities to further strengthen the links between humanitarian response and social assistance. **Globally, Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies are well-positioned** to use their auxiliary role and expertise to advocate for wider use of CVA as one step to strengthen social protection systems to better support those in need.

Read the full case study on the [CashHub website](#).

