



# MENA Cash Centre of Excellence

## *Peer-to-Peer Exchange Programme*

Report  
February 2023



## Contents

MENA Cash Centre of Excellence .....	6
Peer-to-Peer Exchange Programme Background.....	6
Executive summary .....	7
Overview .....	8
Peer-to-Peer exchange Schedule .....	9
Day 1:.....	9
Outcomes of Day 1: .....	10
Day 2:.....	11
Outcomes of Day 2: .....	12
Day 3: .....	13
Outcomes of Day 3:.....	14
Day 4:.....	14
Outcomes of Day 4: .....	15
Day 5: .....	16
Outcomes of Day 5.....	16
Successes: .....	17
Challenges: .....	18
Next steps of collaboration .....	19
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	20
Pictures.....	21



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## Definition of Terms

CCoE: Cash Centre of Excellence

SARC: Syrian Arab Red Crescent

PRCS: Palestine Red Crescent Society

YRCS: Yemen Red Crescent Society

ERC: Egyptian Red Crescent

LRC: Lebanese Red Cross

NS: National Society

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

CVA: Cash and Voucher Assistance

DM: Disaster Management

INGOs: International nongovernmental Organizations

IFRC: International federation for Red Cross and Red Crescent societies



## MENA Cash Centre of Excellence

The MENA Cash Centre of Excellence serves as learning, capacity strengthening, evidence based and advocacy platform in the MENA region on cash and voucher assistance hosted by Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) in partnership with and under the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The Centre supports knowledge management, facilitates peer-to-peer exchange, and contributes to learning on RCRC Movement CVA, along with supporting CVA advocacy and leadership and promoting policy engagement in the region. The Centre also provides high quality contextualization and translation of CVA technical resources and content with a specific focus on MENA regional contexts.

The Centre of Excellence seeks to complement, build on the experiences of, and collaborate with existing Movement initiatives – including specifically the Movement’s [Cash Hub platform](#), and the MENA Regional CVA Community of Practice (CoP).

## Peer-to-Peer Exchange Programme Background

Peer-to-Peer exchange programmes bring together MENA Region National Societies professionals who play lead Cash and voucher assistance role in order to meet face-to-face in purpose of Expanding their Cash and Voucher related skills and knowledge by sharing with each other experience, challenges, best practices and concerns.

It is also a space for peer-to-peer professional dialogue as well as a source of knowledge shared by external experts on the issues in focus.

The Peer-to-Peer schedule was based on a participatory approach.



## Executive summary

The Peer-to-Peer Exchange programme is the second exchange programme coordinated by the Cash Centre of Excellence in the MENA region.

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society has hosted this exchange visit.

The guests were participants from four MENA National Societies:

- Lebanese Red Cross
- Yemen Red Crescent Society
- Egyptian Red Crescent
- Palestine Red Crescent Society

Each participant had a different CVA background as showed in the table below:

Name	National Society	Position
Elias Hazoury	Lebanese Red Cross	Economic Security Programme Officer
Hikmat al Amine	Lebanese Red Cross	Economic Security Programme Manager
Pilar Badran	Egyptian Red Crescent	Project Manager
Mostafa Abou Khayr	Egyptian Red Crescent	Finance Officer
Waleed Al Mihya	Yemen Red Crescent Society	Senior Protection Officer
Abdallah Azap	Yemen Red Crescent Society	Project Unit Assistant
Majd Batrawi	Palestine Red Crescent Society	Project Manager
Mahdi al Jamal	Palestine Red Crescent Society	Head of disaster Risk Management
Ms. Farah Ghadri	Syrian Arab Red Crescent	CVA Reporting Officer
Ms. Sally al Edlbi	Syrian Arab Red Crescent	Cash and Voucher Assistance - Officer
Mr. Khaled Maadani	Syrian Arab Red Crescent	Cash and Voucher Assistance - Officer
<b>Facilitators and technical support</b>		
Mr. Nabeh Allaham	Regional Cash and Voucher Assistance Thematic Lead MENA	
Ms. Nagham al Sayegh	MENA Cash Centre of Excellence Technical Coordinator	



Ms. Reem Jawhari	MENA Cash Centre of Excellence Technical Officer
Ms. Pia Jensen	Technical Cash Advisor CashCap/ British Red Cross
Ms. Marta Alejano	Cash & Markets Advisor Cash Hub/ British Red Cross

The aim of the Peer-to-Peer Exchange Programme is to provide a dynamic and effective space to:

- 1- Bring together MENA region National Societies who play lead CVA roles
- 2- Enable in-person sharing of experiences
- 3- Allow in-person sharing of best practices and challenges
- 4- Facilitate in person sharing of lessons learned

## Overview

The Peer-to-Peer exchange programme was facilitated face-to-face in Syria. The programme ran over five days, starting on Sunday January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and ending on Thursday February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023.

Participants gathered in Lebanon or Jordan before heading to Syria one day prior to the exchange. The schedule of Peer-to-Peer Exchange was based on the CVA competency framework, host national society cash experience and programme, requests from the guest national societies, and relevant topics to the MENA region.

Experience sharing and information dissemination were done through presentations, group work, case-study analysis, shadowing exercises with SARC staff, and field visits.



## Peer-to-Peer exchange schedule

The Schedule of the Peer-to-Peer exchange programme was designed to keep a balance between group work and presentations throughout the 5 days to keep the learning environment dynamic and engage all participants.

### Day 1:

Day	Theme	Time	Activity title
Day 1	Introduction	9:00 am - 9:10am	Welcome message from host
		9:10 am - 9:40am	CCoE Intro
		9:40am-9:50am	Intro to peer-to-peer programme
		9:50 am-10:20am	Ice Breaker
		10:20 am-10:40am	Coffee Break
		10:40 am -12:10pm	Introduction Workshop
		12:10 am- 12:30pm	CVA Self-Assessment Tool
		12:30 pm -12:45pm	Expectations of the exchange Programme
		12:45 pm-12:50pm	Explain the schedule
		12:50 pm -1:00pm	Objectives of the Day (Protracted Crisis)
		1:00 pm - 2:00pm	Lunch Break
	Protracted Crisis	2:00 pm - 3:00pm	What is a protracted Crisis
		3:00 pm - 3:15pm	Syria response to protracted crisis
		3:15 pm- 4:00pm	Cash in Protracted Crisis Exercise
4:00 pm - 4:15pm		Consolidation	

The first day started with opening words from the Host national society SARC, IFRC regional office, and CCoE.

The introduction outlined the agenda and the main objectives of the exchange programme. The Parking Lot was introduced as an opportunity to discuss topics of interest in further detail at a later stage, so as to keep discussions fluid without deviating from the agenda. An Icebreaker introduced the participants to each other on a personal level, which helped facilitate collaboration in-group work exercises the



following days, and provided a basis for further networking during breaks and free time.

The next session focused on presentations prepared by every National Society to introduce other participants to their Cash projects, what they have done during the past, what is the strategy that their National Society follows, as well as the vision of their national society in cash. The presentations were shared with CCoE prior to the Peer-to-Peer exchange programme to make sure that the information is relevant and that all presentations included all what is needed.

The presentations resulted in several discussions on common challenges faced across national societies in the region, including data sharing/protection and partnerships with external partners. Some challenges were moved to the parking lot to be discussed later in the programme, as per the prepared agenda.

The last part of the day focused on the concept of using CVA in protracted crises. This topic was chosen because all national societies participating are currently operating in protracted crisis.

SARC presented the efforts done to use CVA to respond to protracted needs, and how CVA has been linked with early recovery efforts (e.g., by combining CVA with livelihood activities).

A short presentation on the concept of social protection was followed by group work on developing an action plan for linking CVA programming with social protection using a case study. Each group presented their action plans in plenary where similarities and challenges were discussed.

### Outcomes of Day 1:

- 1- Cash focal people and members involved in Cash from five different National Societies, had the chance to meet face to face after COVID 19 restriction and engage in different Cash related discussions.
- 2- Every National Society prepared a presentation introducing their organogram, their processes, and details about CVA.
- 3- Participants were informed of each national society's current cash programmes, , main modalities and delivery mechanism, and different type of cash programming design.
- 4- Every member noted his or her expectations from the exchange programme.
- 5- Open discussion on how SARC has been responding to the protracted crisis coordinating with different actors and responding to the basic needs and using integrated programming as much as possible.



6- The session on how to use CVA in protracted crisis was informative and introduced participants to different approaches to linking CVA to social protection. The group work gave the different national societies and overview of which actions would be required in their own responses in order to prepare for linkages of ongoing CVA activities and social protection initiatives in their respective countries.

This day enhanced communication between members and set a solid base for the coming days of the exchange programme.

### Day 2:

Day	Theme	Time	Activity title
Day 2	Modality Selection	9:00 am - 9:10 am	Objectives Of The Day
		9:10 am - 10:00 am	Cash school participation experience -CASH Syria journey
		10:00 am - 11:00 am	Modalities Mechanisms Selection
		11:00 am - 11:30 pm	Break
		11:30 pm -12:00 pm	Exercise
		12:00 pm - 12:10pm	Material Dissemination
		12:10 pm - 1:30 pm	Integrating Departments In CVA
		1:30 pm- 2:30 pm	Lunch Break
		2:30 pm - 4:20pm	Visit To SARC Departments
		4:20 pm - 4:30 pm	Consolidation

The second day started with a quick recap on the first day, with focusing on the core objectives and agenda of Day 2.

Next Mr. Nabeh Allaham shared with the participants his experience in the cash practitioner development programmed (CPDP) or (cash school) experience during the last 2 years. He started with introducing the programme, its goal, the development methodology, key achievements (deployment, research, webinars, training), and what are the main requirement to graduate. Then he pointed out how cash school improves the participant's skills and supports him to be able to set up the cash system in place with his national society. He finished by answering all the questions from the attendance.



The next session focused on explaining in detail the timeframe and milestone of Syrian Arab Red Crescent cash journey. Ms. Sally al Edlbi and Mr. Nabeh Allaham presented the SARC pathway and road map from 2019 until the visit date, with focusing on the preparedness phase, setting up the system, main challenges as well as key achievements.

This session interspersed with a critical and interesting questions on the building system, working approach, and challenges, as the unique context in Syria open the door for more discussion on implementation of cash including topics such as, inflation, volatile exchange rates, economic sanctions, lack of basic commodities and access to basic services) , and how the modalities function a good role in decreasing the challenges impacts .

The next session focused on group work on a case study of designing and readjusting designs of CVA projects mid-implementation. The case study was based on the 2019-2020 economic crisis in Zimbabwe and the lessons learned from both technical advisors of the British Red Cross working for a UN agency and the national society during that period. The group work resulted in fruitful discussion on the modalities, delivery mechanism, and transfer value calculation. The exercise ended up with presenting each group its intervention approach in addition to provide the feedback and recommendation from the other groups.

At the end of the day, the participants had a visit to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent headquarters to be introduced to the different SARC departments and their main activities.

### Outcomes of Day 2:

- 1- Participants were engaged in an open discussion related to Modality selection since every national society uses different mechanisms.
- 2- The group work exercise, enhanced the critical thinking of participants and initiated a discussion on what modality should be used in different contexts, including considerations on risks and mitigation measures.
- 3- Participants presented how they integrate other departments in CVA projects and this enhanced an open discussion on how the Lebanese Red Cross works on CVA processes of the loading the ATM cards with money with the FSP.
- 4- Members rotated around SARC building and were introduced to Livelihoods Department, Media and Communication Department, DM Operations Department, Information Management Department, CVA Department, Finance Department, and INGOs offices.



This Day boosted the engagement of the participants especially engaging in open discussion, and in the exercise.

### Day 3:

Day	Theme	Time	Activity title
Day 3	Experience Sharing	9:00 am - 9:10 am	Objectives of the Day
		9:10 am - 10:40 am	SOPs Session
		10:40 am - 11:10 am	Break
		11:10 am - 1:10 pm	Shadowing Activity to SARC
		1:10 pm - 2:10 pm	Lunch Break
		2:10 pm - 2:30 pm	Reflect Back to shadowing
		2:30 pm - 3:30 pm	Take the Stage
		3:30 pm - 4:00 pm	Positioning

The third day started with a recap on the second day and follow up on all comments and feedback given during the first 2 days. Moving on to the session of the Standard Operating Procedures, it was delivered by IFRC cash thematic lead (Nabeh Allaham). The session focused on building up the cash system SOP within the National society, and covered the various cash steps (preparedness, assessment, distribution, and evaluation). The presentation started with a brainstorming what are the SOP and the essential purpose and role of tool. An open space was given for the participants to share their SOP experience, with answering relevant questions. What should be mentioned here is the different structure of national societies provide accurate evidence on the flexibility of writing the SOP.

Providing three different types of SOP (Step by step, hierarchical SOP, and Flowchart) with a real example to clarify using of each type, opened the doors for more advanced questions. The facilitator divided the participants into two groups in purpose to design a cash SOP in assessment step, to be shared later by every group and provide the feedback and comments. This raised the opportunity to discuss the SOP steps in an efficient way. After that, the shadowing exercise aimed to allow that participants to engage with SARC departments in day-to-day tasks as well as opening the space for all the participants to engage in open discussions that raised a lot of important topics that were discussed later on in the Peer-to-Peer exchange programme.



### Outcomes of Day 3:

- 1- Participants attended a theoretical/practical presentation about SOPs and they were engaged in an exercise about the following topic.
- 2- Participants engaged in a shadowing exercise where they went to SARC, meet the members of departments, sit with them for an open discussion, and sharing experience on topics of interest.
- 3- Participants were able to reflect back on the shadowing experience and sharing lessons learned and points of improvement according to its relevance to their CVA programmes and own context.
- 4- Lebanese Red Cross presented about the Lebanese Vulnerability census and Multidimensional poverty index and shared tools, processes, and lessons learned.
- 5- Mr. David Pepiat gave the members an opportunity to be introduced to the senior leadership perspective about CVA.

This day advanced the discussions and was a major event that created several topics of discussion that were tackled later on, Every member chose the topics of interest and had the chance to engage with SARC employees in a discussion that aimed to build up certain skills and understand how things work in different contexts.

### Day 4:

Day	Theme	Time	Activity title
Day 4	Data Management	9:00 am -10:00 am	Data Management Introduction
		9:00 am 10:30 am	Data Management in SARC
		10:30 am - 11:00 am	Data Management Experience Discussion
		11:00 am - 11:30 am	Break
		11:30 am - 1:30 pm	Take the Stage (Lebanese Red Cross)
		1:30 pm- 2:30 pm	Lunch Break

During the first 3 days of the P2P initiative, The CVA IM component aroused the interest of the participant and that was written in the parking lot flip chart that was posted on the wall. The fourth day focused on using the IM tools in cash activities within various steps. The IM cash specialist in SARC (Rama almzain) started with an overview on what is IM and what is the important of using the IM in CVA. She mentioned the essential role of IM department to support the Cash unit in all projects steps. After that the CASH coordinator (Sally al Edlbi) went into the details of the



operation procedures and explained the role of each during the process, the most interesting part was:

- Converting the hard survey to ODK app to be used by the volunteers on the field, and how the survey moved from cash unit to MEAL department, then to IM department.
- Importing of the data from SARC server by IM department and shard with cash unit the results to look and to check and follow up on the missed information for each record.
- Sharing the results with the branch with instructions on what and who to get the required information.
- Then to finalise the list of targeted groups based on scoring system with the eligibility criteria.
- Coding the list of records and share with the contracted FSP upon agreed template.
- Raised the main challenges and lessons learned in distribution phase, common issues with families' data, and highlight the correction process with the FSP.
- Ended with the Core tips of making the process faster and smooth.

In the next stage the Lebanese red cross present their experience with IM , that support a lot their work during and after the Beirut blast , within cash and other activities ( Lebanese vulnerability Census ) , the presentation raised up , coordination between the HQ and filed team on gathering data , identified the location of the survey . proactive registration platform that reflect the progress of operation on the field, coding system method from LRC for sharing the data with FSP and donors in security and safety, monitoring the cases , hot line mechanism for rapid support for any pending issue.

The topic raised several questions, and it was an open discussion lead by the Participants themselves based on what was relevant to them, and what they needed to know from each other.

#### Outcomes of Day 4:

- 1- Participants were engaged in an open discussion about Data Management and Data security.
- 2- Participants showed high interest about the topic of Data Management and had many questions during the presentation led by SARC.
- 3- Continuation the presentation given by the Lebanese Red Cross about the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index and the Lebanese Vulnerability Census, and



other National societies presented how they integrate other departments in their National Societies.

This day raise the discussion of one of the most important topics that the participants requested, and it was topped up by a presentation given by SARC.

#### Day 5:

Day	Theme	Time	Activity title
Day 5	Field Visit Day	10:00 am - 10:30 am	Objectives of the Day
		10:30 am - 11:30am	Introduction SARC Branches
		11:30 am - 11:40 am	Break
		11:40 am - 12:40 am	Ready to Departure to Field Visit and Intro
		12:40 am - 7:00 pm	Field Visit
		7:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Dinner

The field Visit day was one of the most interesting days of the Peer-to-Peer exchange. Participants had the chance to visit one of SARC's most experienced Centers in Homs area, and got the chance to meet volunteers who practically work on project implementations.

Participants also visited beneficiaries and saw how projects are implemented, in what areas, and what the outcomes of the projects are.

#### Outcomes of Day 5:

- 1- Members had the Chance to visit SARC in Homs Branch where they met the volunteers and field workers, and they had the chance to go on ground and visit beneficiaries.
- 2- Members were introduced to how the management and implementation of a project happened on a branch level especially on a large scale.
- 3- They were introduced to the preparedness level of the branches.

This day allowed participants to meet volunteers from SARC Center in Homs. The visit also allowed participants on the programme to visit the field as well as beneficiaries.



## Successes

- 1- Five national societies were able to meet in one MENA country.
- 2- Cash focal people from the MENA countries had the chance to engage in discussions that focused on the Cash projects in their countries and how they implement different modalities in different contexts. The same discussions led to identification of similar challenges faced across national societies, with one or several national societies bringing suggestions on new approaches or lessons learned from facing the similar challenge in their country of operation.
- 3- Participants and technical advisors shared experiences from working in different contexts and discussed global cash trends.
- 4- Participants were able to visit SARC Departments where they were involved in open discussions about topics that they think are of concern and added value to their National Societies.
- 5- The MENA CVA link and connection between focal people is strengthened and an easier communication line has been developed.
- 6- A group of Cash Practitioners is formed for future development and open to MENA topics discussion.
- 7- Participants now have a view of what to improve in their own cash programmes in their national societies.



## Challenges

- 1- The process of picking Host and Guest national societies taking to being either Hosts or Guests

Since the Peer-to-Peer Programme is a new concept, and the MENA Cash Centre of Excellence is an initiative that has been operating for almost 2 years now, it was a challenge to explain to the higher management of the MENA National societies about this initiative, and the importance of participating. Guest and Host picking was a challenge taking into consideration needs and ability to meet the need through the programme.

- 2- The availability of the five National Societies at the same time

Knowing that the MENA is a complex region and all participants have ongoing projects and responses, it was a challenge for the CCoE to set a fixed date for the Peer-to-Peer exchange programme, especially for five consecutive working days.

- 3- Paper work and Boarder Clearances

The complex situation in the MENA re-join made it a challenge in order to be able to gather participants from five different countries, in one area.

- 4- Schedule amendment

Since the Peer-to-Peer exchange programme is an experience-sharing event, it was difficult to stick to a certain time for every session especially that open discussions are encouraged and participants had a lot of experience to share in every topic.

- 5- Time shortage

The 5-day programme was very beneficial, yet not enough for participants to take all the information that they need. In addition, having a programme for more than 5 days is challenging since participants cannot postpone their daily work in their National societies for more than this assigned time.

- 6- Technical Challenges

Some technical problems hindered proper communication due to connectivity issues.



## Next steps of collaboration

- Support in following up on areas of improvement for every national society and provide the necessary support.
- Tailor CCoE activities based on the needs discovered in the engaged national societies
- Have topics of discussion about CVA MENA related concerns and matters
- Support in strengthening MENA CVA network

Focusing on five main topics:

- Information Management and Data Management
- Standard operating procedures
- Cash for Health
- Cash for Work
- Cash for Shelter



## Conclusions and recommendations

The Peer-to-Peer exchange programme was indeed a success.

Such programmes are highly needed and with more focus on certain technical CVA pillars. In addition to another types of activities that align national societies leadership on CVA advocacy.

The burden of funding limitations is very explicit and a cash programme design in national societies is not enough to cater for the needs and increasing crisis in MENA region, were a more collaborative coordinated and adapted approach in Cash Assistance should be well thought of between the community, CVA actors, governmental leaders, and concerned entities in each country. They should all take the lead to contribute to a sustainable long-term recovery.

# Pictures

