

Movement Cash and Voucher Assistance

Strategic Framework



Developed by the RCRC Movement
Cash Peer Working Group Endorsed
by the IFRC Governing Board (2023)

+C IFRC



ICRC

Introduction

Cash and voucher assistance (CVA)¹ is widely recognised as an essential tool in delivering better humanitarian response. Overwhelmingly, people affected by crisis prefer to receive cash or vouchers over in-kind assistance. The use of CVA has grown substantially over the last six years, accounting for approximately 19% of international humanitarian assistance in 2021 and representing an important part of most responses around the world.² A substantial and rigorous body of evidence has documented CVA as the most effective and efficient way of getting humanitarian assistance to people who need it, whenever possible and appropriate, along with its positive multiplier impacts on local economies. CVA also plays a transformative role in enabling choice, participation, and a sense of dignity for the people at the heart of our work. At its core, CVA relies on community engagement and needs assessment and rests on the premise that people are experts of their own situations and should therefore be enabled to make their own decisions about how best to meet their needs in times of crisis, building greater resilience over time.

In recognition of its transformative benefits, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) has made strong commitments to the scale up and mainstreaming of CVA, drawing on the unique role and mandates of Movement entities, to respond to conflict, climate-related crises and disasters, both in the immediate and the longer term. These commitments have been mirrored in the widespread growth in Red Cross Red Crescent National Society CVA capacity, with investment in preparedness playing a key role in the Movement's response readiness using CVA.

In its latest strategic plan, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) made a clear declaration of the importance and key role of CVA within its work, identifying cash leadership as a global flagship initiative across the network. Within this commitment to scale up its delivery of cash, the IFRC set the target of providing 50% of its humanitarian assistance through CVA by 2025.

Similarly, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has made strong and decisive investments in cash capacity across its international work. The ICRC aims to use CVA to go beyond its traditional needs analysis and provision of assistance, building responses which better support people's evolving priorities and needs. As a local responder within a global network, the ICRC has committed to the scale up of CVA across its programming and continues to build its cash capacity in order to deliver CVA even in the most remote and hard to reach contexts.

¹ Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) refers to the direct provision of cash transfers and/or vouchers for goods or services to individuals, households, or group/community recipients. CVA has several synonyms including Cash Based Interventions (CBIs), Cash Based Assistance (CBA), and Cash Transfer Programming (CTP), but Cash and Voucher Assistance is the recommended term.
CALP Glossary: <https://www.calpnetwork.org/learning-tools/glossary-of-terms/>.

² 'Tracking Cash and Voucher Assistance', Development Initiatives, September 2022,
<https://devinit.org/resources/tracking-cash-voucher-assistance/>

Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies across the Movement continue to strengthen their commitment to CVA, investing in their organisational and operational cash capacity and using financial assistance to support needs across a wide variety of contexts, crises, and disasters. National Society staff and volunteers worldwide attest to the transformative and empowering impact of CVA in the hands of those who need support, contributing to a global evidence base which showcases CVA as a dynamic tool for change.

The Movement's previous CVA Strategic Framework focused on scaling up the use of CVA and promoting the need to invest in it as a standalone tool. Since that framework was put in place, the Movement has invested heavily in increasing the use of CVA in its response. In 2021 alone, 916 million CHF was delivered to 7 million recipients across 82 countries, and investments in cash continue to grow as evidenced by IFRC, ICRC and National Society cash delivery, strategies, and targets.

The case for cash has been made. To meet the targets that have been set and to fully deliver on the Movement's ambition, focus must now shift to how CVA can be further strengthened, integrated, and mainstreamed across all Movement programmes, operations, and organisational systems. Therefore, this 2030 CVA Strategic Framework sets out an updated Movement ambition – that CVA becomes a default response option for and across all sectors and programmes, able to support locally-led and community-driven response throughout a uniquely global network.

In this way the Movement, in recognising its unique positioning as a set of local actors linked as a network with global expertise and resources, is now focusing on how to guarantee its capacity to deliver scalable, timely and accountable CVA whenever and wherever appropriate. Underpinning commitments to increase scale and build capacity is recognition of the need to further improve CVA-related processes, invest in community-level participation and accountability, and strengthen linkages with national social protection systems.

The purpose of this CVA Strategic Framework is to provide an updated overarching frame and vision for CVA in the Movement. The Framework is intended to guide, unify, and provide direction to Movement members as they develop their own CVA priorities, providing a high-level structure with reference to which each Movement member can develop relevant CVA-related strategies, policies, procedures, systems, programmes, and partnerships.



Positioning and amplifying our added value

As one of the largest implementers of CVA in the humanitarian field³, the Movement continues to grow and invest in its CVA capacity and to deliver impactful responses using CVA around the world. The Movement has been increasingly able to position itself as a partner of choice for CVA delivery because of the unique structure it is built upon and the fundamental principles at the heart of its mandate.

Working at local, provincial, and national levels, National Society staff and volunteers are rooted within communities, serving through local action in the face of conflict, disasters, climate crises, and emergencies. As a comparative advantage with other humanitarian organisations, it is through their constant presence and local access within their communities and auxiliary role with their public authorities that National Societies are able to be the first responders and last mile deliverers to small, medium, and large-scale crises across the world.

CVA is a tool which works flexibly throughout the responses, contexts, and crises that National Societies are working within, empowering people across communities and countries. The inherent benefits of CVA as a tool shares core values of inclusivity, empowerment and recipient choice with Community Engagement and Accountability ways of working and are closely aligned with the principles of dignity and access at the heart of Protection, Gender and Inclusion work.

Key to providing quality and timely cash and voucher assistance to those in need is CVA Preparedness (CVAP)⁴. This includes ongoing investment in building and sustaining organisational capacity by integrating CVA into organisational tools, systems, procedures, and staff capacity, as well as strengthening active leadership support, internal and external coordination, and effective communication. CVA can be used for early and anticipatory action, facilitating proactive response for communities who are faced with the effects of the ever-growing severity of the climate crisis. It can also be used to support the delivery of quality humanitarian assistance with a wide community reach across response and recovery phases, and in support of resilience building.

As auxiliaries to public authorities, National Societies have the opportunity to provide local leadership and to further position themselves as the local partners of choice for CVA. This positioning also provides National Societies with space to create links with existing social protection systems to deliver humanitarian assistance, using CVA to complement and enhance government support structures where available and when appropriate, and to engage on regional and global CVA solutions as part the IFRC network to address CVA needs in route-based migration and other cross-border contexts.

³ 'Tracking Cash and Voucher Assistance', Development Initiatives, September 2022, <https://devinit.org/resources/tracking-cash-voucher-assistance/>; 'The State of the World's Cash 2020', CALP Network, July 2020 <https://www.calpnetwork.org/resources/collections/state-of-the-worlds-cash-2020/>

⁴ Source: 'Dignity in Action: Key data and learning on cash and voucher assistance from across the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement', 2022. The Movement has invested in the creation of updated CVAP tools and guidance including a dedicated theory of change to support CVA capacity building.

Vision

Through cash and voucher assistance, people are able to anticipate, respond to and recover from crises while generating resilience to lead safe, healthy, and dignified lives with opportunities to thrive.

As the world's largest humanitarian network, the Movement plays a pivotal part in leading and contributing to the global CVA agenda. By further mainstreaming and promoting the use of CVA in programmes and responses, the Movement can showcase the transformative nature of CVA and continue to ensure that crisis-affected people are at the heart of every response.

This Strategic Framework recognises the key role CVA can have in strengthening our responses to the ever-increasing challenges of conflict, climate-related crises, and natural disasters that communities across the world are facing, leveraging CVA as a versatile tool to be used across sectors, programmes and contexts, contributing to the resilience and empowerment of communities as a foundational goal of the response. The Strategic Framework sets out what this vision would look like when CVA is mainstreamed at both a local and global level and outlines five core enablers which will play a key role in making the vision a reality.



Goals



Localisation

Cash and voucher assistance is locally led through leveraging National Society permanent presence and access within local communities and role as auxiliaries to public authorities.

National Societies are local actors committed to investing in permanent presence, access and trusted relationships rooted within communities. National Societies across the world have a legislated mandate to serve communities through their auxiliary role, alongside their national and local authorities. In addition, National Societies also have the flexibility to partner through the IFRC network and with other national and international organizations. Central to ensuring efficient, effective, and accountable National Societies is the need to continuously sustain and upgrade core institutional strength at national and branch level through National Society Development including CVA preparedness. A core goal of this Strategic Framework is that National Society leadership is committed to mainstreaming CVA to address both basic and diverse needs, through cash ready⁵ local action and global reach, and where possible and appropriate, linking humanitarian assistance with national social protection systems to extend humanitarian reach and speed service delivery.



Global Reach

Cash and voucher assistance enabled humanitarian action is delivered through the Movement's unique combination of local actors working together and by harnessing the support of a global network.

The Movement leverages its constituent parts to deliver humanitarian assistance using CVA across countries and contexts, providing local action with global reach. In delivering this global reach, it is the goal of both the IFRC and ICRC to continue to ensure appropriate systems are in place that are fit for purpose and can be leveraged by the Movement network in order to deliver scalable, timely and accountable responses using CVA.

The strength of the Movement's CVA footprint is rooted in systems, processes, procedures, and tools that reflect and contribute to sector-wide best practice, align with the standards and requirements of support functions, and ensure clear roles and responsibilities, thereby promoting quality and accountability across the design and implementation of operations using CVA.

⁵A National Society is CVA ready when it is able and likely to deliver appropriate assistance in the form of scalable, timely and accountable CVA. Movement CPWG (2021) Guidance for Mainstreaming CVAP for Effective Response. <https://cash-hub.org/resource/guidance-for-mainstreaming-cash-and-voucher-assistance-cash-preparedness-for-effective-response-chapter-1-cvap-areas/>



Mainstreaming

Cash and voucher assistance is a default response option for and across all sectors, promoting integrated assistance and meeting diverse needs throughout all phases of humanitarian action.

CVA is considered a default modality throughout the Movement in all phases of humanitarian action, including in anticipatory action, response, recovery, and resilience building. Quality and accountability are ensured through the integration of inclusive and community centred CVA expertise across the design, implementation, and monitoring of programmes, and within a wide array of support function profiles.

Central to providing cash as a default response option is the integration of CVA throughout the Movement's systems, processes and tools, further embedding CVA as a multisectoral and versatile response option.



Enablers

- Extending reach and impact through evidence and learning
- Transforming systems, processes and tools
- Resourcing through people, expertise and funding
- Leveraging our collective strength
- Leading change

Striving to strengthen people-centred humanitarian assistance, the Movement will improve the accountability of CVA and empower communities at the heart of the response, actively invest in developing evidence-based learning, and endeavour to harness innovation.

Extending reach and impact through evidence and learning

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Local communities actively participate in driving and contributing to how CVA is designed and implemented; they are empowered through the greater participation of National Society volunteers, and the Movement's prioritisation of affected communities at the heart of the response.



Quality CVA is achieved through investment in inclusive monitoring and evaluation practices, with strengthened community accountability mechanisms and minimum standards in place for each programme.



Local expertise, knowledge and skills are captured and shared across the Movement and with the wider humanitarian sector to inform ongoing CVA practice, policy, and advocacy.



The Movement fosters a mindset and culture of evidence-based learning, striving to continuously improve programme design and implementation and investing in a research agenda focused on addressing knowledge gaps and emerging trends in CVA.



Regional and global hubs and centres ensure Movement experience and learning are shared, promoted, and disseminated across various channels, such as peer-reviewed publications, learning events, and online platforms.



Global reach



Localisation



Mainstreaming



The quality of CVA in both programming and systems is continuously improved and cultivated by adaptive management, a culture of creativity, dynamic design thinking, and the integration and use of new technologies.



Digital solutions are harnessed to improve CVA delivery, help address the digital divide, and promote financial inclusion where feasible and accessible for crisis-affected communities.

Resourcing through expertise and funding

Ensuring that timely and accountable CVA can be delivered at scale, the Movement commits sufficient financial and human resources to support effective CVA capacity development at both global and local levels.



Support services, including finance, procurement, contracting and information management have transformed systems and processes to meet the increased demand for scalable, timely and accountable CVA.



Agile and appropriate decision-making processes within operations and programmes are developed which are flexible enough to respond to rapidly changing contexts and evolving needs on the ground, while maintaining accountability to communities and transparency within CVA delivery.



Greater collaboration and cross-functional coordination is fostered between different functions involved in CVA design and delivery, eliminating operational silos, and promoting a more cohesive approach to CVA-enabled humanitarian action.



Digital tools and systems are adopted and supported, which facilitate the speed, quality, and accountability of recipient registration, verification and deduplication, and delivery of CVA at scale, while ensuring responsible data management and safeguarding recipient data privacy and security.



The IFRC and ICRC have appropriate systems, processes, and tools that enable the selection of the most suitable response model for a given context (drawing on the wide base of experience among the IFRC's 191 members and among IFRC Secretariat and ICRC teams), without compromising timeliness, scale, or community accountability.



Movement reach is maximised and its collective effort is showcased through the alignment of system requirements and policies on strategic points, including deduplication, referrals, and reporting events, and online platforms.

Leveraging our collective strength

The Movement's internal collaboration and shared commitment to the prioritisation and scale up of CVA strengthens the delivery of humanitarian assistance and reinforces the Movement's position as a partner of choice at local and global levels.



The delivery and impact of CVA is strengthened through long-term partnerships forged by National Societies with public authorities and local actors, including in the use of CVA within existing social protection mechanisms and shock responsive systems.



Movement staff and volunteers are equipped and prepared to lead CVA coordination roles at national, regional, and global levels.



CVA is delivered at scale and complements other forms of assistance, with Movement members prioritising internal coordination in both bilateral and multilateral operations.



The speed, reach, and accountability of humanitarian responses delivering CVA is improved through the development and maintenance of global strategic partnerships, which reflect the Movement's commitment to collaboration and can be adapted to fit different contexts.

Leading change

Leaders across the Movement demonstrate their commitment to strengthening and mainstreaming CVA by allocating the necessary resources to build cash readiness and through externally advocating for the transformative role of CVA.



National Societies include CVAP as a priority theme within their organisational development plans, committing the necessary funding and human resources to strengthen cash readiness.



National Societies establish CVA as a recognised component of their auxiliary role with public authorities and as an integral part of their commitment to localisation with other humanitarian actors, prioritising coordination and actively seeking out opportunities to engage with public authorities on integration with social protection.



CVA is considered a default response option for and across all sectors, with National Society leadership supporting the integration of inclusive, accountable, and timely CVA into local branch services.



IFRC and ICRC advocate with donors and other international partners to invest in Movement CVA capacities as a key localisation investment.



Principled leadership guides decision-making on CVA mainstreaming and positions the Movement as a key CVA thought leader in both humanitarian and development contexts.

Acronyms and glossary

CPWG

Cash Peer Working Group: A body of Movement technical advisers who collaborate on efforts to scale up and improve the quality of cash assistance.

CVA

Cash and Voucher Assistance: The provision of cash transfers and/or vouchers for goods or services to individuals, households, or group/community recipients.

CVAP

Cash and Voucher Assistance Preparedness: The investment in cash capacity and readiness through the integration of CVA into National Society tools, systems, procedures and staff capacity, as well as strengthening active leadership support for CVA along with coordination and communication.

ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross

IFRC

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IM

Information management: The collection, management, analysis and dissemination of data and information to support decision-making.

Annex 1: counting cash 2.0 – Targets

	Indicator	Suggested Targets
1	Percent of CVA through a framework agreement delivery mechanism	100% of all Cash Read NS have FA by 2025
2	Percent CVA expenditure (ICRC & IFRC) Or Percent NS branches delivering CVA	At least 50% of assistance in the form of cash by 2025
3	Number of days from disaster to CVA delivery(only applied to sudden onset and approved anticipatory action)	At least 50% of Cash Ready NS can deliver CVA within 48 hours to a sudden onset emergency by 2025
4	Number of CVA programmes with key CEA/AAP activities	100% of all Cash Ready NS have 2 CEA/APP component in place by 2025
5	Number of people supported with CVA in number of countries across the world	Continue Tracking
6	Amount (CHF) delivered to people by the RCRC Movement through CVA	Continue Tracking