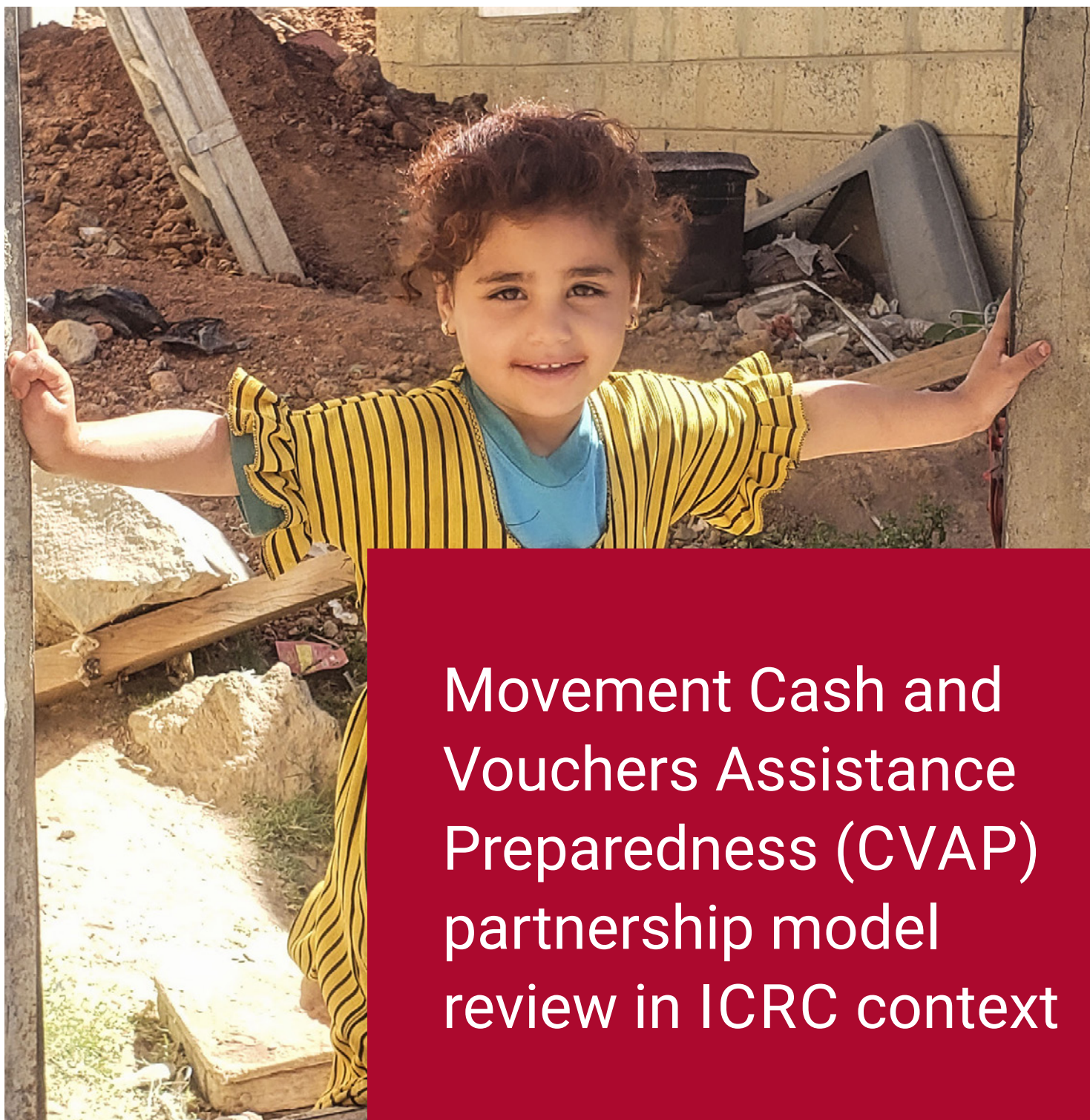




ICRC



Movement Cash and Vouchers Assistance Preparedness (CVAP) partnership model review in ICRC context

Yemen

Overview

Yemen has consistently been the poorest and most food insecure country in the MENA region, with concerning levels of malnutrition, long before the conflict. Currently, nearly half of the population cannot meet minimum needs of food consumption and high levels of acute food insecurity are becoming the norm in Yemen. Efforts to prevent a wide proportion of the population from sliding into more severe levels of deprivation are hampered by conflict, the increasing fiscal and economic challenges, limited institutional capacity, poor infrastructure, and the growing gap in essential services. Furthermore, humanitarian assistance, which helped millions in Yemen to avert the most severe levels of deprivation, has become increasingly low and unpredictable (Yemen IPC, February 2024). In Yemen, several humanitarian organizations including ICRC and Yemen Red Crescent (YRCS) have been using cash and voucher assistance (CVA) in their programs and there is acknowledgement from the YRCS to adapt to the global humanitarian assistance shift from the traditional in-kind to CVA intervention where feasible.

Yemen Red Crescent Society (YRCS) has the ambition to enhance their capacity to design and independently implement cash-based assistance on a large scale since 2021. With the support of British Red Cross (BRC) and the ICRC, the programme is designed to support YRCS CVA Preparedness (CVAP) for three to five years as per the standard recommendation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement).

The support to YRCS through the [Movement CVAP framework](#) included in the past three years:

- A dedicated CVAP Delegate (seconded from BRC and embedded into ICRC Yemen Delegation under EcoSec)
- Funding to support CVAP PoA (Plan of Action) activities including programmatic costs¹

Having recently completed a [lesson learned workshop in November 2023](#), CVAP with YRCS is now starting its third year and is reaching a stage timely for an evaluation to capture the tested CVAP model with BRC/ICRC to make future recommendations.

There is broad agreement across the Movement partners interviewed that embedding a CVAP delegate into ICRC to support the Yemen Red Crescent Society (YRCS) with their cash preparedness journey is a successful and effective model, offering benefits to both ICRC and the National Society (NS) and it is recommended to replicate the model in other delegations.

This report aims to capture the benefits and successes of this programme, discuss challenges, and offer recommendations both for exiting in YRCS and for replicating the model in other delegations.

¹ For 2022 and 2023, BRC contributed USD 800'017 specifically for CVAP and ICRC also contributes to non-CVAP specific funds such as YRCS core staff costs.



Photo © Yemen Red Crescent Society

Benefits of the model

For YRCS

Prior to the programme, it was challenging for YRCS to engage with Movement partners to deliver cash due to a lack of tools and systems which resulted in partners switching /preferring delivery of in-kind assistance to communities instead. The progress made in cash preparedness for YRCS through this programme is clear and tangible. Within the first two years, YRCS have achieved some key milestones in their preparedness journey including having a CVA focal point in role, development of assessment tools, standard operating procedures signed off, financial service provider contract secured and an operational internal cash technical working group of YRCS. Being able to outline their plan of action allows the NS to be in control of their priorities when approached by donors and partners and partners are able to trust the NS to implement CVA assistance. YRCS are already demonstrating accountability in their cash assistance and attracting other Movement partners, such as the Norwegian Red Cross who are supporting them to pilot through the newly contracted financial service provider (FSP) reaching to 1,300 households and 600 expecting mothers with Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance and voucher for health in 3 and 5 governorates in 2024 respectively, as well as with the Kuwait Red Crescent through a vouchers for food program in 2023. Prior to implementation of both programmes, YRCS staff and branches were trained on the programme, CVA tools, programme implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

YRCS saw other added benefits from having closer links with ICRC, having a focal point within ICRC with a sole focus on supporting the NS, they were able not only to draw upon expertise and benefit from shared learning from the wider Economic Security (EcoSec) team, but it also allowed them to use and adapt ICRC tools, SOPs and, in the initial stages, utilise ICRC's FSP contract to pilot cash implementation. Furthermore, YRCS founded added value in the influence of the delegate held within ICRC to bring people to the table for important meetings and workshops.

For ICRC

The benefits of this CVAP model and having a CVA prepared NS were not exclusive to YRCS. ICRC also reported added value in cooperation, access, and capacity building through something practical and concrete like the CVAP framework.

Cooperation: The model enabled strengthened links with YRCS with delegates expressing a greater appreciation of the NS mandate and how it works in contrast to ICRC and correspondingly a greater understanding of ICRC from within the NS leading to more effective cooperation.



The embedded delegate has created more opportunities for ICRC to collaborate with YRCS outside of our initial plan, much more this year than we expected where YRCS have asked us to widen locations and ICRC were open to change.”

Filipe Costa Galo Tome De Carvalho, Cooperation Coordinator, ICRC

The model also has enabled the set-up of an internal Cash Working Group composed by key YRCS staff but also Movement partners in country convening partner NS, ICRC, and IFRC. This created space for YRCS to share what the key aspects of CVAP they need work on, as well as strengthen the cooperation between YRCS and Movement partners to mobilize support for CVA not only from ICRC and BRC, but also from Danish RC, Norwegian RC, and Kuwait RC.

YRCS having more leverage in some areas and able to access areas that ICRC were unable to.

Capacity building: Investing in NS capacity building is a component of ICRC mandate and having a cash ready NS is vital for ICRC to be able to upscale responses, which is particularly important in a context such as Yemen where the likelihood of the emergence of escalation of need is high. Furthermore, respondents noted that now YRCS is more attractive to other donors, this reduces the burden on ICRC to always provide budget for cash responses.



A cash ready National Society is beneficial to ICRC, particularly in Yemen where having a strong National Society, that has the right infrastructure in place means we don't need to mobilise delegates or human resources, we can just work with the NS. This allows a quick to scale up ICRC response”

Abdirizak Ahmed Maalim Mohamednoor, EcoSec Coordinator, ICRC

A ready and prepared NS is of collective interest for all Movement actors and should always be led by the NS. The Plan of Action (PoA) is a key deliverable of the CVAP framework which highlights the priorities of the NS.

In the context of Yemen, ICRC is the best suited partner to support YRCS for the following reasons:

- ICRC is the only other fully operational Movement actor (ie full Delegation) such that ICRC had Programmatic, Logistical, and Financial technical capacity and structure to support
- Yemen is an armed conflict context
- Yemen is also a context in which other Movement actors have limited access such that having a strong NS is critical in having operational footprint

However, recognizing that other Movement actors are also present in Yemen, the support to YRCS should not be the sole responsibility of one Movement actor, but should instead be a collective and coordinated effort.



Challenges

While the model has delivered considerable achievements, the programme has encountered challenges rising both out of the model and the programme itself.

Resourcing

Tight resources within YRCS, both in terms of personnel and budget can result in the NS having the tools but not the means to institutionalise cash assistance. While cash pilots are vital to build NS capacity in CVA, the NS requires sustainable, strategic support and planning to have a greater impact on the communities they serve.

Coordination

All respondents agreed that overall, the position has been well placed within EcoSec where it can draw upon technical expertise, share tools and experience with the role of Cooperation to mediate between ICRC and the NS, address any challenges or blockers and support the delegate when there are difficulties in this respect. While this model broadly works effectively when the people in these positions are enabling, the support the position receives can be inconsistent, particularly with Cooperation, where it doesn't always receive the recognition and engagement it requires to be most effective and rather than being an enabling function it can become more of a gate keeper. This has on occasion lead to some confusion on reporting lines and on other occasions has led to delays and blockages in approvals.

Buy in

The success of the model is dependent on individual acceptance and understanding of the programme, particularly at senior leadership level who decides on priorities of activities / partnerships and head count within a Delegation. The position initially encountered bottlenecks when there was a lack of buy in and understanding for the programme which led to gaps in recruitment and the decision to put the CVAP Delegate position on rotation (ie based in Djibouti and Yemen) impacting the effectiveness of the position.

Practical issues for the delegate

The position is hosted by the Cash Hub through BRC, embedded within ICRC to work directly with the national society. This makes reporting lines a little complex. Both delegates and the ICRC reported that this is well managed broadly, but it does lead to some difficulties and complexities when it comes to HR matters such as R&R policies and leave with the delegate negotiating two HR systems and policies.

Recommendations

Set a strategic approach

BRC and ICRC initially started this CVAP partnership model with a short-term pilot in Nigeria which came with several challenges. With willingness from both sides to continue testing and learning, the Yemen experience has been more long-term, structured, and sustainable.

While the success of the programme is clear and outlined in this report, many of the challenges faced by the programme are attributable to individual buy in and the differing approaches to what the CVAP framework is aiming to achieve. Therefore, the [CVAP framework](#) would benefit from a wider recognition of the Movement and makes it important that the Grant Agreement Document (GAD) between ICRC and BRC and the GAD between ICRC and YRCS, both outline clear objectives, milestones and plan of action, an agreed approach to delivery and clearly defined roles, responsibilities, reporting lines, communication protocols, and expectations not just from the delegate but from the individual departments within ICRC, the NS, and any partners.

BRC believes this model could be scaled up to a Global Partnership. For this to happen is very important to have a consensus of what means to work with NS and be clear about what are the CVAP strategic objectives linking that with NSD and localisation.

The PoA developed by the NS through this process is also key to know what to expect, open opportunities to other PNSs to support the programme and reduce the impact of individuality on the programme's success. Any Movement partner wanting to engage with YRCS on CVAP should reflect and contribute to the existing objectives, milestones, and plan in the above mentioned GAD to avoid confusion and overlaps.

Furthermore, given the programme is about preparedness and, therefore, intrinsically linked to NS development, it is critical that the PoA is considered in any wider NS development initiatives to prevent duplication of efforts and to identify synergies. This is currently ensured by the CVAP Delegate working with YRCS.

Multi-year programme

Experience has shown, it is not enough to develop CVA tools/SOPs and contract FSPs if the NS is not able to implement them. To be successful the programme needs to have a long-term commitment and support for 3-5 years, allowing the delegate time not only to support with reaching their cash ready milestones in terms of preparedness but importantly to support with implementation. A multi-year approach allows predictability for the national society to rely on support to achieve the expected milestones, to test their capacity and to learn and adapt. This is consistent with the findings of other CVAP initiatives as it is reflected on the Evaluation of the RCRCM [CVAP Support](#).

Delegate requirements

The delegates in this programme have been praised throughout this evaluation for their approach and work on this programme. The selection process is essential and choosing a delegate with the right profile and approach leads to the success of the programme. While technical expertise is important, and the delegate will need to be able to influence and advocate on behalf of the national society, technical support can also be augmented by EcoSec and the Cash Hub. Relationships are key in this role and the delegate needs to be able to engage and identify with the national society while having a wider understanding of the movement and an ability to understand and work within the parameters of ICRC.



Exit Strategy

All respondents agreed that the delegate position is integral to the success of the cash preparedness journey for YRCS and noted that while YRCS has made considerable steps towards becoming cash ready, the continued support of the delegate is essential while further pilots are conducted to test the newly signed SOPs and the newly contracted FSP and while cash preparedness is expanded to more branches (currently only 8 out of 22 branches have implemented cash, including 1, 3 and 4 branches with funding from Kuwait RC- Voucher for food, Norwegian RC- MPCA and voucher for Health and ICRC/BRC - MPCA respectively). Importantly, a delegate and support from ICRC is needed to support YRCS to develop a strategy across departments to incorporate CVA into their responses. Some other activities that were identified were:

- Conduct CVA Capacity self-re-assessment (end of 2024)
- Conduct a lesson learned workshop later in the year to identify the gaps and where partners can support
- Define and promote CTWG TORs including roles and responsibilities to ensure the groups continue to meet after the delegate position has ended.
- Strengthen internal infrastructure, equipment, and technology, incorporating cash into systems and processes (Finance, Logs, IM, comms, CEA, compliance)
- Promote cash capacity to other partners in country including those within and outside of the Movement such as the UN.

There is consensus that a full-time delegate position is still required to support the knowledge transfer and capacity building needed for YRCS to achieve CVA independence and deliver effective and meaningful assistance to beneficiaries. It is important to remind that the CVAP framework ultimately aims to encourage YRCS to own and control their cash preparedness journey independently. Therefore, the transition of the percentage of ICRC time dedicated to the NS to allow them to become slowly independent and financial support should be prioritized next year.



We strongly recommend the continuation of CVA delegate position until the end of 2026. The delegate's expertise and technical support are essential for strengthening the National Society's CVA capacities and ensuring the sustainability and enhanced impact of our programs. The continued presence of the international delegate will empower the National Society to achieve CVA independence and deliver effective and meaningful assistance to beneficiaries."

Abdullah Saleh Al-Azap, National Disaster & Crisis Management Coordinator, YRCS.

Conclusion

Overall, the CVAP framework has shown positive results such that:

- YRCS has shown significant progress in their capacity to respond with CVA. However, the implementation of activities in Yemen continues to be challenged by several factors; restrictions by authorities in both south and north of Yemen. There is a limited ability to access areas of work due to security challenges, such as front lines. The adoption rate to new ideas is progressing, but it takes time. ICRC and BRC will need enough time to successfully complete and hand over the file, ideally in 2026.
- The Movement CVAP framework can be effective for NS including in conflict setting. We have seen the CVAP framework applied in many NS that are often non-conflict setting. This experience shows that the framework is equally relevant for NS in conflict setting and the ICRC.
- In some contexts, ICRC is the best suited partner. It is often argued that capacity building of NS is not of ICRC mandate. However, there is vested interest in having and building strong National Societies to enable the Movement to have the most reach and access in times of crisis. In some contexts, ICRC may be best positioned to support the NS for reasons that ICRC may be the most operational partner in country.

It should be recognized that a strong and prepared NS is of collective interest of the Movement including the ICRC. There's appetite from BRC to keep exploring this partnership in another context and identify what needs to be in place to make it successful. Yemen is only the second experience. A strong Movement partnership can enable acceptance and/or increase operational footprint serving more of the affected people and where ICRC is the best suited partner, this CVAP model could be considered in other Delegations.



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