

Learnings from National Societies in their process of becoming leaders of cash working groups

All National Societies can engage in cash coordination, regardless of whether their direct cash experience is limited or just beginning. Their local presence allows them to play a crucial role in ensuring a people-centred approach. National Societies can enhance the quality of cash assistance by sharing information and advice on program design based on community needs, assessing cash feasibility, providing insights on vulnerabilities, and helping to define targeting criteria, registration processes, and community participation and accountability mechanisms. It's important to build confidence in the unique contributions of the National Society and emphasize their added value, rather than adopting a low-profile approach limited by direct cash experience.

1 Leadership cash coordination positions require backing from National Society leadership.

There is a direct correlation between leadership support for cash initiatives and active engagement in cash coordination. Leadership awareness of coordination is crucial. When National Societies have experience in other coordination structures and leadership understands the benefits of coordination, they are more likely to support cash coordination. If cash coordination is viewed only as a technical priority, there is a high risk of failure because cash focal points often do not have coordination as part of their responsibilities, leading to a lack of prioritization in time allocation. Co-chairing a cash working group should be integrated into the National Society's vision and strategic priorities, rather than being viewed as merely a technical task. The co-lead should have a direct link to the leadership to raise awareness, facilitate information transfer, and create connections with other areas where National Societies can provide support, such as emergencies and disaster management.

2 Prepare for the role.

And dedicate time to identify what the National Society can bring to the leadership role and explain how it can complement the efforts of others.

3 Allocate resources for coordination.

Financial resources for staff and coordination activities must be included in program budgets. Often the main challenge is the availability of National Society staff, who are often overwhelmed with their regular duties while coordination meetings can be demanding, especially with multiple subgroups. On the other side, lead organizations contribute with human resources, space, and IT equipment for meetings and data collection, as CWGs typically do not have their own budgets for these needs. All active participation in coordination requires appropriate resources, when it comes to lead role, this is even more important.

4 Separate roles and responsibilities.

When co-chairing the CWG, it is crucial to clearly separate the co-chair role from the individual's organizational role. If the same person represents both roles, it can be confusing for external actors and challenging for the individual, especially if the group decides against the National Society's position. A different person should represent the National Society in the CWG to allow the co-chair to remain impartial.

5 Develop realistic job descriptions for the Cash Focal Point.

Leadership positions are demanding and cannot be effectively managed if the cash focal point's regular role is not adjusted to accommodate the time needed to co-chair the group. When a National Society holds a co-chair role, it requires at least two people dedicated internally to CVA. In Ecuador, the cash focal point dedicated 30-50% of her time to cash coordination, which was only possible because another person handled regular activities.

6 Lead with experience and technical capacity.

Lead roles in the CWG require experience and technical capacity, as well as dedicated time. Therefore, senior staff with CVA experience should take on these roles. Frequent staff rotation in National Societies can complicate this, so if necessary, the National Society should recruit someone with the right skills.

7 Select the right soft skills profile.

The role requires patience, especially when dealing with political processes, as well as the willingness to listen, openness to feedback, and the ability to provide constructive feedback. The individual should be perseverant and able to identify ways to move forward together, with the capability to advocate and navigate political landscapes, obstacles, and partnership dynamics.

8 Internal Cash Working Group

can improve organization, capitalization, and quality participation in external coordination. If more people understand cash activities, responsibilities can be shared. In-country Movement cash working groups can also enable support from partner national societies (PNS) when needed. However, when PNSs attend the CTWG instead of the National Societies, it must be clear that they represent the National Society, ensuring there is only one voice for the Movement, which is the National Society.





Cameroon Red Cross © IFRC

9 Manage increased workload during emergencies.

Large-scale emergency responses increase workload and make coordination more complex. However, this is when coordination is most important. If additional resources cannot be provided, National Societies must ensure that their own priorities do not undermine their engagement in coordination.

10 Emphasize coordination in Cash Preparedness processes.

Most cash preparedness action plans are not ambitious regarding external coordination, often limiting activities to attending CWG without specifying the level of engagement or aiming to co-lead. However, these plans present an opportunity to build capacity for coordination and budget for participation.

11 Build trust with external partners through persistence and transparency.

Trust is built through consistent transparency and information sharing. Even in a leadership position, new initiatives may need to be piloted with a few partners to demonstrate their value before others join. For example, the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative in Kenya started with four partners before expanding.

12 Share experiences and information.

Credibility within the Cash Working Group (CWG) comes from sharing experiences and information. To be recognized as a key player in CVA, it is essential to share the National Society's experiences, tools, and other relevant information within the CWG. For effective information sharing, data must first be collected internally. Improving data management systems, evidence, and learnings within the National Society will facilitate external information sharing and enhance their key role.

Checklist:

Requirements for a successful lead role in Cash coordination

Leadership engagement

- ✓ NS leadership understands the importance of cash coordination and how it aligns with the National Society's strategic priorities.
- ✓ NS leadership supports human and resources allocation to coordination roles.
- ✓ NS leadership is informed regularly about progress and challenges in cash coordination.

NS preparation for the role

- ✓ NS strengths and unique contributions to the leadership role are identified.
- ✓ National Society disseminated its strengths and how this complements the efforts of others.

Building trust & communication

- ✓ NS maintains open communication with partners and shares information consistently.
- ✓ NS experiences, tools, and best practices are documented and shared regularly within the Cash Working Group (CWG).
- ✓ In case of new initiatives, pilot projects are implemented to demonstrate value and build trust before scaling up.

Resource allocation

- ✓ Financial resources for NS coordination activities are included in program budgets.
- ✓ NS maintains an inventory of human resources, space, and IT equipment that can contribute to coordination activities.

Role clarity, experience & technical capacity

- ✓ Cash Focal Point role is clearly defined and includes realistic time allocation for coordination responsibilities.
- ✓ Coordination lead roles are assigned to Senior staff with CVA experience (If necessary, recruit individuals with the right skills and experience).
- ✓ If needed, training and mentorship support is provided to develop soft skills such as patience, listening, feedback, and advocacy.

Role separation

- ✓ NS representative role in the CWG and the co-chair role, are maintained separated to avoid conflicts of interest. Different persons are assigned to each role.

Emergency workload management

- ✓ Coordination is identified as a key priority in emergencies.
- ✓ Contingency plans include additional resources allocated for cash activities to manage increased workloads and not undermine coordination.

Examples of National Societies experiences engaging with Cash Working Groups

Kenya Red Cross Society, Pioneering Cash Coordination lead and linkages with Social Protection

A significant achievement for the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) as co-lead of the Cash Working Group (CWG) in Kenya occurred in 2023 when the Social Protection Secretariat joined the group, sharing the institutional chair role with National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) on behalf of the Kenyan Government. While NDMA focuses on Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) counties and the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP), the Social Protection Secretariat has a nationwide focus, thereby reducing fragmentation. This was made possible by KRCS's role as a facilitator, engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including development actors, the UN, INGOs, NGOs, and grassroots organizations in the advocacy process.

KRCS's leadership role in the KCWG since 2017 has been crucial in driving progress. Over the years, KRCS has maintained the group's momentum and driven changes through perseverance and consistent efforts to unite humanitarian, disaster management, and social protection actors. Success factors for the KCWG include trust among partners, which leads to active participation and information sharing. This has resulted in specific products like the development of [Minimum Expenditure Basket](#) (MEB) guidelines used by partners and joint approaches such as the [Joint Market Monitoring Initiative](#) (JMMI) introduced in March 2022. Additionally, a new advocacy workstream was created to focus on joint advocacy efforts, and the KCWG dashboard is a work in progress.

Recommendations for NS from the KRCS process include having a strong understanding of the context, demonstrating goodwill, possessing advocacy capabilities, building trust, and showing Impartiality. The principles of the RCRC Movement have been enablers throughout the process.



Ecuadorean Red Cross: Leading with Technical Expertise in Cash Coordination

Ecuadorean Red Cross (ERC) was elected to co-chair the Cash Working Group (CWG) in 2023. The National Society has played a pivotal role in the Cash Working Group (CWG), particularly in producing and harmonizing technical documents for all members implementing CVA. One key achievement is the development of the CVA [toolkit](#), which has been validated by the Government Risk Management Secretary. Although the Government of Ecuador is not a member of the CWG, the Ecuadorean Red Cross ensures coordination with the National Risk Management Secretary. They have also facilitated coordination with other relevant groups. Under ERC leadership, the group moved from relying on external consultancy-based products to use local capacities for market monitoring and reports.

This role has highlighted the Ecuadorean Red Cross's (ERC) experience and strong technical capabilities in CVA. The Government Risk Management Secretary has publicly recognized ERC's work and leadership in this area. ERC is now seen as a reference organization, known for its high level of positioning, territorial presence, and implementation capacity. In the event of a disaster similar to the 2016 earthquake, ERC has the technical and human resources to scale up CVA efforts effectively.

Currently, the Ecuadorean Red Cross remains an active member of the CWG but has chosen not to run for the co-chairing role in 2024.



¹ <https://www.cruzroja.org.ec/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Guia-de-uso-de-herramientas-para-la-implementacion-de-PTM.pdf>



Colombian Red Cross, National and Regional Reference cash actor

The Colombian Red Cross Society (CRC) is a foundational member of the national Cash Working Group (CWG) and served as co-chair from 2016 to 2020, alongside the World Food Programme. In Colombia, the CWG fosters collaboration between humanitarian and government organizations, ensuring well-coordinated and organized responses that effectively address the needs of affected populations.

CRC has established strong relationships with key humanitarian actors, and the engagement within the CWG has further strengthened these connections. The National Society also maintains a positive relationship with the government, supporting advocacy and joint management of responses, especially with disaster management actors. Initially reluctant about cash transfers, the national government was invited to collaborate on the national CVA protocol, leading to the recognition of cash as response modality. The collaborative approach and joint participation with authorities have led to successful cash transfer interventions. Improving communication with all actors, institutions, and communities through the perception process is essential for continued success.

CRC's five-year tenure as co-chair has significantly contributed to CWG achievements. Thanks to its leading role in cash coordination, CRC is currently a key CVA player in-country and a reference actor. Exceptionally, the NS is a reference not only at the national level, but also within the RCM, in the rest of the Americas. Moving forward, will continue to engage actively and uphold its role as a reference actor on CVA at both technical and strategic levels.



Chad Red Cross, demonstrated expertise and capacity

The Chad Red Cross has been an integral part of the national Cash Working Group (CWG) since it was established. Its widespread presence across the country and its expertise in Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) have positioned it as a key actor and valuable partner for other stakeholders in country.

Although not a co-chair, the National Society hosted the CWG twice in 2023, with its focal point leading the meetings alongside the co-chair. Additionally, the CRC focal point chaired the technical group responsible for establishing the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), which is now used by all organizations.

Given its recognized experience and capacity, the National Society is considering applying for the co-chair role in the near future.

Burkina Faso Red Cross, Ensuring Access and Advocacy for CVA in Complex Environments

The Burkina Faso Red Cross Society (BFRC) has been an active member of the Cash Working Group (CWG) since its inception in 2015. Although not a co-chair, the National Society has significantly contributed by hosting group meetings and supporting advocacy efforts. In the challenging security context of Burkina Faso, the National Society is crucial in accessing areas where other actors cannot operate, providing vital information that enables coordinated responses, identifies gaps, and ensures better coverage of needs.

One area led by the Burkina Faso Red Cross Society (BFRC) has been the use of e-vouchers and cash back for nutrition. This approach allows beneficiaries to use an electronic value card to select food from local suppliers according to their preferences, along with a small cash amount to cover other needs. Other organizations have adopted this modality following feasibility studies and the experience of the National Society. However, due to a recent ban on using cash in certain regions, BFRC and other organizations have shifted to using only e-vouchers.

As key humanitarian actors in country, the National Society continues to advocate for the use of cash in all areas, utilizing its auxiliary role and participation as a core member of the National Disaster Response Committee.



Indonesia Red Cross, Pioneering Certified CVA Capacity Building

The Indonesia Cash Working Group (CWG) was established in 2018 and is chaired by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Among its several co-chairs is the Indonesia Red Cross Society (Palang Merah Indonesia - PMI). These co-chairs form the CVA Advocacy Group, which acts as the “think-tank” of the Indonesia CWG.

CVA coordination has proven to be an effective mechanism for PMI, ensuring good collaboration with other CVA practitioners in Indonesia. PMI actively participates in various joint needs assessments, cash feasibility studies, and the calculation of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB).

From an external perspective, PMI plays a crucial role in influencing the acceptance of CVA by state actors at various levels—national, regional, and local. PMI’s unique position in CVA is highlighted by its significant contribution to the CWG through the CVA certification project. In this project, PMI leads the development of the curriculum and system for HR CVA Certification.

As one of the two Professional Certification Agencies (LSP) for disaster management in Indonesia, authorized by the Indonesian Professional Certification Authority (BNSP), PMI is responsible for setting up the certification program. In collaboration with the Indonesia CWG, PMI develops both the curriculum and standards for CVA certification/accreditation, covering both soft and hard skills.

Looking ahead, PMI envisions that CVA standardization will eventually be included in one of Indonesia’s National Standards.





Lebanese Red Cross ©

Lebanese Red Cross, Cash Coordination in National Working Group

LRC played a cochair role with UNHCR & OCHA in Lebanon, that aligns with the new cash coordination model agreed on in the Grand Bargain, collaborative work has been done to develop the ToR and have CVA actors involved, with efforts to develop a national plan and work accordingly.

This needed commitment of time and effort, expertise in facilitation and identifying top priorities to start with on the national level taking into consideration the Lebanese context or armed conflict, economic crisis, refugees' influx, etc.

As key humanitarian actors in country, the National Society continues to advocate for the use of cash in all areas, utilizing its auxiliary role.

In emergency contexts, LRC is playing an active role in coordination with interagency working groups, basic assistance, food security and agriculture, and with governments, ministries, UN agencies and stakeholders to ensure effective and efficient assistance to those in need.

Annex 1

Cash Coordination in RCRC Movement key CVA strategic documents

As the world's largest humanitarian network, the Movement plays a pivotal part in leading and contributing to the global CVA agenda, including cash coordination.

Movement CVA framework 2030

Key to providing quality and timely cash and voucher assistance to those in need is CVA Preparedness (CVAP). 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.

Enabler:

Leveraging our collective strength

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

Enabler:

Leading change

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.**

Cash and Vouchers Technical Competency Framework for Rapid Response Deployments

Domain:

5. Partnerships and Coordination

Collaborate and build partnerships with key CVA stakeholders including RCRC Movement actors, national actors, government, the private sector, external humanitarian actors, coordination structures and working groups.

5d. External CVA Coordination

Manages NS participation in coordination mechanisms set up by non-RCRC Movement CVA actors and ensures NS is systematically represented and shares experience.

Cash preparedness for effective response (CVAP)

Area 4 – Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), Coordination and Partnership

Component 4.4 External Coordination

Participation in the national CVA WG

Participation in regional and global coordination initiatives

Component 4.5 External Partnerships

Partnerships with external actors (as appropriate)

A new Cash Coordination caucus model was established in 2022 to bring greater predictability to cash coordination in IASC settings. The new model is built on the principle of localization, enabling more inclusive coordination with greater participation of national and local actors, and helping to ensure decisions regarding cash interventions are made closer and with greater accountability to the crisis-affected population. In the new Global Cash Advisory Group (CAG) established to support the implementation of the new coordination model, two seats have been assigned to the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (RCRCM), one for IFRC and one for Kenya Red Cross Society and recognising the voice of localisation that the RCRCM brings.

While there is not one standard way of working and the coordination model must be driven by local context, there is lots that can be learnt from different experiences. That is why, documenting the experience of RCRCM local leaders can be useful for other National Societies willing to learn from peer National Societies and looking for guidance while doing their own processes to establish or reinforce their role in CVA coordination. This could be relevant both for IASC and refugee settings and where the new model is being rolled out as well as in countries where the IASC is not present.



Opportunities for National Societies when engaging in cash coordination



National Societies added value to cash coordination. Increased localisation and recommendations for external actors



Full report: Cash Coordination

Methodology

Information has been compiled through interviews and structured data collection forms from National Societies cash focal points and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) regional CVA coordinators and representatives.

This learning document and gathering of examples will be reviewed and added to on an ongoing basis by a newly established cash coordination working group.

More information and contributions

We would like to continue building on this series with new materials based on National Societies experience. If you have relevant Red Cross Red Crescent experiences related to Cash Coordination that can contribute to this area, please contact Andra Gulei, Cash Hub adviser and lead researcher for this report by email andragulei@redcross.org.uk.