

STATEMENT FROM THE PRINCIPALS OF OCHA, UNHCR, WFP AND UNICEF
ON CASH ASSISTANCE
5 December 2018

We, the Principals of OCHA, UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF have, in recent months, continued to engage in discussions on cash-based assistance as one of the most significant reforms in humanitarian assistance in recent years, one that helps us to better serve affected populations in a principled and dignified manner and gives them a greater decision-making role in their own lives interrupted by conflict and natural disasters. We recognize the need to improve complementarities between our mutual efforts in the field, create synergies and ensure that affected populations receive the best assistance and services in a cost-effective manner. We recognize the primary role of governments in supporting vulnerable populations and will build on, utilize and leverage existing government systems, whenever possible. With this in mind, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, as operational agencies delivering cash programmes alongside other forms of assistance, and OCHA agree on the following:

- a) We reaffirm our commitment to provide cash (for food, non-food items and access to services and other support) through a common cash system in crises globally. We are committed to secure and fully realize the efficiency and effectiveness gains that cash assistance presents and to avoid parallel systems amongst operational agencies or the duplication of financial instruments.
- b) Our priority is for cash transfers to be delivered to vulnerable populations in ways that are simple, safe and easily accessible for the recipient and maximize the value of the assistance they receive. Each person identified for cash support should be able to access humanitarian assistance from operational agencies through a common cash system.
- c) This common cash system is collaborative, inclusive and builds on a single transfer mechanism approach and joint cash programming - from needs assessment to monitoring. It can be deployed in most settings, and is based on the identification of 'shared business needs' across agencies. The system will be 'collectively owned, jointly governed and have clear and predictable roles, responsibilities and arrangements and will be available to multiple partners (including partners outside the UN). The governance of the system needs to give everyone confidence that costs are covered but no surplus or "profit" is generated.
- d) Based on data protection principles, operational agencies will harmonize their data management approach through interoperable data systems and data sharing agreements, with the objective to move towards a common data management and tracking system based on common beneficiary lists and easy access to beneficiary identification, thereby avoiding duplication.
- e) This common cash system will also encompass joint cash feasibility assessment, coordinated targeting of beneficiaries, a single transfer mechanism, joint post-distribution monitoring and pursuing accountability to affected populations through agreed complaints and feedback mechanisms.
- f) Finally, we recognize that the design and delivery of cash assistance is further enhanced when other national and international actors with complementary expertise are engaged. We will collaborate in a manner that supports the primary role of governments and also engages operational actors providing cash assistance, including other humanitarian agencies and organizations, the World Bank, cash assistance networks and alliances, the private sector, and donors on this agenda.

We look forward to taking this discussion forward within the wider humanitarian system in the coming months and in line with action plan that has been developed.