



‘Cash-Based Assistance Programmes for Internally Displaced Persons in the Kabul Informal Settlements’

An Evaluation for WHH and DRC – May 2014



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trends recorded in early 2014 confirm the rising humanitarian needs of Afghans displaced by conflict, natural disasters and man-made disasters: 650,000 Afghans are known to be internally displaced¹. Forced to leave their homes, IDPs gravitate for protection to urban centres. Kabul ranks first in this forced migration scenario: the capital city holds 56% of the urban population with 80% of the population residing in informal settlements². Within this population, IDPs are particularly vulnerable.

Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) are actively providing, in the Kabul Informal Settlements (KIS), targeted assistance to enhance the livelihood potential of IDP households. This is achieved through food and non-food items, direct cash assistance and in-kind donations. During the harsh winters, WHH and DRC work with members of the KIS Task Force to coordinate emergency response and a comprehensive winterization plan.

To improve aid delivery and effectiveness, WHH piloted during the 2013/2014 winter a mobile-based cash assistance programme aimed at supporting IDP families living in the KIS using Roshan's M-PAISA service.

To assess the strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages of these cash-based assistance modalities – and to draw on lessons learned for future programming in support of IDPs in urban informal settlements – WHH and DRC have commissioned *Samuel Hall* to undertake an evaluation of the 2013/2014 winter's cash interventions through a three-phased approach including a baseline, midline and endline survey.

This research is part of *Samuel Hall's* expertise on migration and displacement research, and part of its Urban Studies Programme 2014.

Given the recent introduction of mobile cash assistance in the KIS, the methodology designed is dedicated to evaluate user perceptions, as well as provide key impact and vulnerability indicators to help implementers refine the technology for future assistance. This executive summary provides the key findings of the study.



Image 1: Beneficiaries in New Parliament

¹ UNHCR, 2014. *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement* – January Monthly Update

² WB, 2014. *Afghanistan : Urban Land Management Reform in Kabul*

I. A positive evaluation of the impact of cash-based assistance for IDPs in the KIS but a lack of “local credentials” to be addressed in future programming

The evaluation shows that the WHH/DRC pilot project was successful in assisting IDPs’ winter needs, with an excellent technical implementation and positive satisfaction rates among beneficiaries. This pilot paves the way for a more ambitious programme – targeting more sites and more beneficiaries.

Yet, **the concept of M-Paisa/Mobile cash transfer is poorly understood by beneficiaries** – the need is for more community awareness-raising and mobilization, training and information sharing on the benefits of this technology and type of assistance (especially as compared to more ‘traditional’ assistance mechanisms). *“If NGOs working in the KIS want more buy-in from communities and beneficiaries, they have to explain them, step by step, why and how M-Paisa (Roshan) or M-Hawala (Etisalat) can reduce the influence of middle-men and avoid food diversion, for instance. It has not been done enough on this project, whereas DFID had specifically asked (the implementing NGOs) to convey this message” (Telecommunications Expert and ex-Roshan Sales Manager).*

II. Taking stock of limitations and constraints for a more robust programme roll-out

The research team, in this report, highlights a set of key limitations and constraints to inform future programming. These have been framed around four key vulnerabilities:

- **Vulnerability Variable 1 – Gender:** Female IDPs can be empowered through mobile phones and mobile cash transfers: only 35% of female respondents said that they owned their cell phone. Men tend to hold the main “communications tool” of the family, as such, the mobile cash transfer initiative may represent an opportunity to socially empower female beneficiaries.

Sensitization and training efforts should target female beneficiaries as they show a low understanding of *how* to withdraw money, and lag behind on *when* to draw money: while a large majority of male beneficiaries (83%) seek the cash immediately, more than half of female respondents wait for more than two days before cashing in.

- **Vulnerability Variable 2 – Literacy & Illiteracy:** How to engage the illiterate in using mobile cash transfers? Literate beneficiaries have a much better understanding of this distribution modality. The lack of education is a key explanatory variable, undermining beneficiaries’ capacity to use M-Paisa and withdraw cash. The programme needs to: improve the quality of training sessions and tailor them to illiterate beneficiaries; adapt pedagogically to different literate and illiterate groups; provide refresher courses through practical exercises.
- **Vulnerability Variable 3 – Household income:** Poorest beneficiaries have more difficulties to understand what M-Paisa is, as only 12% of them (endline – 8% midline) can provide a satisfactory explanation, while 27% of the best-off (endline – 48% midline) gave the right answer. The midline survey suggests that poorest respondents are less likely to withdraw money themselves (5% only, to be compared with 30% for the second tier and 40% for the best-off) and the endline reveals that such a lack of practice finally had an extremely negative impact on poorest beneficiaries’ ability to withdraw money, as almost 9 out of 10 ignore how to withdraw money in practice (minus 44 percentage points between the mid- and endline phases).
- **Vulnerability Variable 4 – Age:** Data reveal a better understanding of M-Paisa among youth, i.e. the 15-24 year

old sub-group. They can be capitalized on to increase the chances of success of future programming. But if youth tend to be more at ease with the mobile cash transfer modality, it is also worth noting that the interest in the M-Paisa system is not only a question of age and generation. Age is not necessarily an obstacle to the understanding and use of M-Paisa.

III. A 10-point plan: Recommendations to strengthen future cash-based assistance programming for IDPs in the KIS

1. Keep (direct and/or mobile) cash distribution as a key modality option: cash injection can be the fastest way to avoid life-threatening situations during the winter, but it must be administered in parallel to in-kind assistance as beneficiaries struggle to understand the concept of M-Paisa in theory and in practice
2. Keep focusing on in-kind assistance, while improving the quality, diversity and adequacy of selected items, with a focus *first* on food aid, and *second*, on fuel for cooking and heating
3. Scale-up and replicate the mobile cash project, as a potential 'best option' in terms of security and transparency in a worsening economic and political Afghan context
4. Tailor M-Paisa training sessions to the beneficiaries – and especially the most vulnerable, as only a minority of IDPs have actually attended a session, and since training sessions have *not* been used to raise communities and households' awareness of the positive aspects of the M-Paisa technology
5. Develop training sessions, beyond livelihoods, in nutrition and health, needed to ensure stronger protection framework that minimises health risks in a context where children are particularly vulnerable to the harsh winter conditions
6. Develop specific programmes for three vulnerable groups: women, youth, and the illiterate. As an example, by finding culturally sensitive and practical methods of entrusting certain sums of aid money or products only to women, NGOs will enable them to better provide for their husband and children with fewer risks of having men diverting the assistance.
7. On the longer-run, exit the poverty cycle through relief/resilience activities. By making sure that beneficiaries can obtain skills that go beyond daily labour, NGOs can offer a real opportunity for the individuals to save money in the near future.
8. Promote information sharing and operational coordination with other stakeholders (donors and NGOs)
9. Set a multi-faceted monitoring system notably through a longitudinal monitoring of a panel of beneficiaries and non beneficiaries, and collecting data on local markets as a warning system to prevent inflation
10. Improve communication and transparency with communities and beneficiaries to ensure community buy-in and effective complaint mechanisms.