TOOL 5

USING CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE FOR MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

**Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in Emergencies** / IFRC / Pilot version – July 2019

OVERVIEW

Using Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) for hygiene items may give women and girls more freedom of choice to select the sanitary materials they prefer, are used to and feel most comfortable using. Using vouchers instead of distributions was also found to increase beneficiary satisfaction, be more convenient and reduce security risks associated with distributions, increase revenue of local vendors, and save time and money for the implementation team[[1]](#footnote-1).

The decision on which response option is most appropriate (in-kind, cash or voucher) and feasible for menstrual hygiene depends on a number of factors, including beneficiary preferences, operational markets, access to markets, availability of appropriate menstrual hygiene products, safety and security of staff, volunteers and beneficiaries, household dynamics, and programme objectives. In addition, National Society capacity and financial transfer mechanisms (e.g. mobile phone payments, paper vouchers, bank card etc.) also play an important role in decision making.

This tool provides:

1. Key assessment questions and considerations for using CVA for menstrual hygiene,
2. Examples of how cash or voucher assistance could be used for menstrual hygiene,
3. An example Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) table which is used to define and calculate the value of the grant/voucher, and
4. An example form for collecting information from local markets on the type of menstrual hygiene items are available, their cost and other important details (e.g. absorbency of sanitary pads, style – wings or no wings, sizes and styles of underwear etc.).

Contact the country or regional CVA Focal Point for support and advice right from the beginning. Further information can be found in the [IFRC Guidelines for Cash Transfer Programming](http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/guidelines/guidelines-cash-en.pdf), [IFRC Market Analysis Guidance](http://webviz.redcross.org/ctp/docs/en/3.%20resources/1.%20Guidance/1.%20Key%20documents/RCRCM%20MAG_EN.pdf) and the [Red Cross Red Crescent Cash in Emergencies Toolkit](http://rcmcash.org/toolkit/).

KEY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Some **key questions** which need to be answered to help make decisions are:

* Can the identified needs be met through specific commodities and/or services or can be through cash/vouchers?
* Is CVA in accordance with local government policies?
* Are markets accessible after the emergency?
* Are needed items available in sufficient quantity and at acceptable prices in the local markets?
* Does the NS has the internal capacity (programmatic, financial, logistic) to implement cash interventions or has implemented cash or voucher projects in past?
* Does the IFRC has HR capacities with CVA expertise available in the country?
* Is assistance through cash or vouchers a preferred option for the beneficiaries?

Remember that although women and girls are the end-users of menstrual hygiene products; they may not be the ‘decision makers’ about how household income is spent or what is purchased. Although CVA can target individual women and girls (rather than household level), it is important to understand the local dynamics of decision making and household spending.

In some contexts, women and girls may also not feel comfortable to purchase menstrual hygiene items such as sanitary pads from male vendors, or from vendors where they can be seen obviously purchasing sanitary items. It is important to consider and understand these aspects when assessing which response options (cash/voucher or in-kind) are appropriate for the context.

The preferences of women and girls for different types of sanitary items can be different after an emergency compared to before.

Where women and girls have been displaced or moved due to an emergency or crises, remember that the items available may be different compared to what they used to use ‘back home’ before the emergency. They may not be familiar with or have experience using the type of pads and other materials available.

If using cash/vouchers as response modality, it is vital to make sure that women and girls are still given a demonstration and training on how to use, wash, dry, dispose etc. their menstrual materials, as well as practical and factual information (including IEC material) on personal hygiene, staying healthy and the menstrual process.

EXAMPLES OF USING CVA FOR MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

Some examples of how CVA can be used for menstrual hygiene include:

* Cash grants or vouchers to women and girls for purchase of menstrual hygiene items (pads, underwear, and soap – ensuring not to forget core supportive items such as bucket, rope, pegs, pouch or bag for privacy). Grants or vouchers could be **restricted** (e.g. they must purchase certain types of materials from certain vendors) or **unrestricted** (e.g. they decide what to purchase depending on their priority needs).
* Cash grants or vouchers to households for water, or construction or improvements of latrines or bathing areas. Grants or vouchers could be **conditional** (e.g. provided once the household has reached a milestone such as having private walls or a barrier around the toilet, or construction of a handwashing facility). They can be **targeted to vulnerable groups** (e.g. targeting unaccompanied minors, female-headed households or those women and girls with physical or learning disabilities).
* Cash-for-work mechanisms for maintenance and operation of communal/facility latrines, bathing areas or for collection, transportation and management of solid waste (Note: must think about personal protection equipment for people handling menstrual waste).

MINIMUM EXPENDITURE BASKET (MEB) FOR MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

The [Minimum Expenditure Basket](http://webviz.redcross.org/ctp/docs/en/1.%20toolkit/Module%203%20Response%20Analysis/M3_2%20Transfer%20value/M3_2_1%20Set%20the%20value/M3_2_1_1%20Transfer%20value%20calculation%20template.xlsx) (MEB) is a tool which is used to define and calculate the value of a grant (or voucher).

For menstrual hygiene, the MEB calculated is for one women or adolescent girl (**NOT** for a household or family).

There are a number of core items that women and girls must have in order to be able to manage their menstruation. These minimum items are outlined in Tool 8; and the MEB for menstrual hygiene must be aligned and include:

1. Initial, core items (full kit): needed every 12 months[[2]](#footnote-2)
2. Replenishment of consumable items (top-up kit): needed every 3 months[[3]](#footnote-3)

Any additional items that are needed, as well as specific details on menstrual products (e.g. style of pads, colour of cloth and underwear, type and fragrance of soap etc.) need to be discussed directly with women and girls in focus group discussions. Remember to also consult with women and girls on “how to” (and not only limited to “what”).

**An example MEB for disposable sanitary pads is shown below. Note that there is:**

* Initial (ONE-OFF) transfer, then
* Replenishment or top-up (RECURRENT) transfer every 3 months

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **INITIAL (ONE-OFF) NFI EXPENDITURES FOR MHM** | | | | |
| **Products** | **Quantity per woman or girl** | **Unit price  (local currency)** | **Expenditure per woman or girl (local currency)** | **Comments** |
| Disposable sanitary pads (pack, minimum 8 pads per pack) | 6 |  | 0.0 | Items aligned with IFRC minimum items for MHM kits, and additional items agreed with women and girls. (E.g. Pads, underwear and bathing soap alone are not enough - women and girls must be supported with buckets, rope, pegs, laundry soap, bag or pouch for privacy as well as additional optional items depending on the context such as torch, skirt or cloth, extra bags for disposal and so on). |
| Bathing soap (100 grams minimum) | 6 |  | 0.0 |
| Underwear (cotton) | 3 |  | 0.0 |
| Small carry pouch or bag | 1 |  | 0.0 |
| Plastic bucket with lid (6 to 10 litres capacity) or wash basin | 1 |  | 0.0 |
| Additional item 1 |  |  | 0.0 |
| Additional item 2 |  |  | 0.0 |
| Additional item 3 |  |  | 0.0 |
| Additional item 4 |  |  | 0.0 |
| Additional item 5 |  |  | 0.0 |
| **Total NFI (for MHM) expenditure per woman or adolescent girl** | | | **0.0** |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RECURRENT (TOP UP OF CONSUMABLES) NFI EXPENDITURES FOR MHM** | | | | |
| **Products** | **Quantity per woman or girl** | **Unit price  (local currency)** | **Expenditure per woman or girl (local currency)** | **Comments** |
| Disposable sanitary pads (pack, minimum 8 pads per pack) | 6 |  | 0.0 | Items aligned with IFRC minimum items for MHM kits, and additional items agreed with women and girls. (E.g. Pads, underwear and bathing soap alone are not enough - women and girls must be supported with buckets, rope, pegs, laundry soap, bag or pouch for privacy as well as additional optional items depending on the context such as torch, skirt or cloth, extra bags for disposal and so on). |
| Bathing soap (100 grams minimum) | 6 |  | 0.0 |
| Additional item 1 |  |  | 0.0 |
| Additional item 2 |  |  | 0.0 |
| Additional item 3 |  |  | 0.0 |
| Additional item 4 |  |  | 0.0 |
| Additional item 5 |  |  | 0.0 |
| **Total NFI (for MHM) expenditure per woman or adolescent girl** | | | **0.0** |

EXAMPLE FORM FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION ON MHM ITEMS

Adapt and use this example form to collection information on availability and prices of menstrual hygiene items in local markets. Use this information to complete the MEB.

1. **Location**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| City / Town |  |
| Name of market/ shopping area |  |

1. Availability and price of MHM related items

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Item | Is it available?  *Yes or* ***√*** | Price: top 3 brands  (local currency) | Other information |
| **1** | **Pack of disposable sanitary pads**  **(regular absorbency)** |  | ***Write name of brand***  ***Write price*** | **How many pads in a pack?**  **Sticky on the bottom?** |
| **2** | **Underwear – cotton, elastic waistband, ‘bikini’ style (e.g. without legs) so that pads with wings can be used** |  |  | **Colours and sizes available?** |
| **3** | **Washable (reusable) sanitary pads**  **\*Purposefully sewn cloth pads or absorbent, soft cotton cloth pieces.** |  |  |  |
| **4** | **Plastic bucket with lid, approx. 7 Litre capacity, not see through** |  |  |  |
| **5** | **Personal bathing soap, bar** |  |  | **How many grams (size)?** |
| **6** | **Laundry soap (for washing pads and clothes)** |  |  | **Bar or powder?**  **How many grams?** |
| **7** | **Rope (for clothes-line), plastic coated or similar** |  |  | **Length in metres?** |
| **8** | **Plastic pegs (for fastening pads and underwear onto drying line)** |  |  | **Number of pegs in pack?** |
| **9** | **Small drying rack for pads and underwear (round, with clip at top for hanging)** |  |  |  |
| **10** | **Small plastic bags, 1 - 2 L capacity, with handles, non- black colour** |  |  |  |
| **11** | **Pouch for storing or transporting pads, small size, not see-through** |  |  |  |
| ***Add other items as applicable; for example:*** | | | | |
| **12** | **Tampons (pack of)** |  |  | **Regular or super absorbency?**  **Applicator or not?**  **How many in a pack?** |
| **13** | **Locally appropriate cloth e.g. kanga, sulu etc.** |  |  |  |
| **14** | **Torch** |  |  |  |
|  | **…** |  |  |  |
|  | **…** |  |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD – EXTERNAL** |
| In 2014 the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) distributed family hygiene kits to refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) as part of the Syria crisis. Post-distribution monitoring showed that sanitary pads, towels and safety pins had low rates of usage.  Main challenges were that standard family kits did not account for family size, beneficiary preferences or hygiene needs. Kit distribution also undercut local markets and had a complex supply chain.  A market survey was conducted and it was recommended that humanitarian actors consider using a market-based approach with vouchers for hygiene items. See [‘Market survey for essential hygiene items, Kurdistan, Iraq, July 2014’](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/Market%20Survey%20of%20Essential%20Hygiene%20Items_Kurdistan%20JULY%202014.pdf) by NRC and UNICEF. | |

1. UNHCR. Cash Based Interventions for WASH Programmes in Refugee Settings. 2016. http://www.unhcr.org/59fc35bd7.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Or whatever timeframe the kit has been designed for (depends on type e.g. disposable, reusable). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Or whatever timeframe the kit have been designed for (depends on type e.g. disposable, reusable). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)