

Safety, dignity, and access must come first

Experiences of cash and voucher assistance in the Central African Republic

Cash Barometer - March 2022

Executive summary

- **People say cash and vouchers help them meet their needs.** The people we interviewed feel such aid was helpful and delivered during a time of need. Many say it enables them, among other things, to eat regularly and to send their children to school.
- **Cash and voucher recipients appreciate their autonomy,** in terms of choosing what to buy, and feeling less dependent on others. Cash recipients in particular say the ability to use cash for income-generating activities lead to feelings of autonomy.
- **People generally feel safe when accessing aid, but not at other points of the process such as targeting and after distributions.** They told us that greater discretion during the selection process, measures to avoid crowding, and physical perimeters at distribution sites would make them feel safer. Long waits mean they stand amid crowds in harsh weather. They suggest holding distributions on different days in groups, providing staff, or partnering with community leaders to monitor distributions and inform people throughout the process.
- **Those receiving cash and voucher assistance feel the way agencies choose who gets assistance is unfair.** Top-down approaches and unclear communication of targeting probably contribute to this perception, which can affect people's relations with community members not selected for CVA. People express concerns about the role of community leaders in targeting, including allegations of corruption.
- **People are worried about delays** and irregular distribution schedules that impact their ability to plan for the future.
- **Cash and voucher recipients want more accountability for all stakeholders, including community leaders, vendors, and aid providers,** with whom they need more direct communication and easier ways to complain and give feedback. They raise concerns about humanitarian actors engaging primarily with community leaders, despite distrust among community members. Some also did not receive satisfactory responses to their complaints. Others complain about vendors increasing the price of goods exchanged for vouchers.

Aid organisations have increased cash and voucher assistance (CVA) in the Central African Republic (CAR) over the past two years, reaching 1.5 million people between January and September 2021, compared with 848,000 in 2020.¹

To support efforts to adapt programmes based on the views of recipients, [Ground Truth Solutions](#) (GTS) conducted 24 qualitative interviews and a survey with 922 CVA recipients to understand their views on the humanitarian response and their experiences of receiving aid.

The report also identifies protection risks at different stages of receiving cash and voucher assistance. We will discuss these risks with aid actors to improve existing mitigation measures.

¹ OCHA, Conern, WFP. 28 January 2022. "[Central African Republic: Cash-Based Interventions](#)".

Table of contents

Executive summary	1
Research scope	3
Findings	4
1. Targeting and selection	5
2. Distribution	7
3. Utilisation	9
4. Impact	10
5. Feedback and communication	11
Next steps	13
Methodology	14
Quantitative	14
Qualitative	16

The Cash Barometer is an independent accountability mechanism that combines standardised face-to-face surveys with qualitative approaches to enable CVA recipients to provide feedback and participate in decision-making.

For additional analysis and more information about our work in the Central African Republic, reach out to Eva Soltész (eva@groundtruthsolutions.org).

Supported by:



Research scope

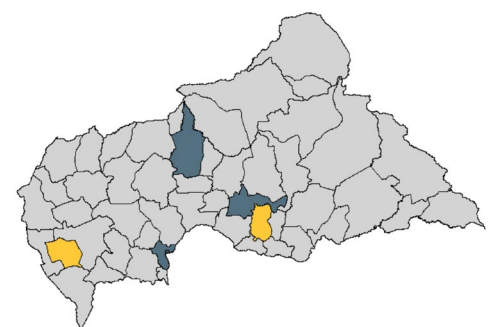
The rationale for using CVA rather than in-kind assistance has a growing body of evidence. CVA has long been praised as a more effective and efficient way of meeting people's needs.² It has the potential to make limited humanitarian budgets stretch further,³ and enable recipients to choose how to address their priorities. This benefit emerges clearly when comparing responses from our survey of people who have received CVA in the past six months with those who haven't.

The literature suggests that CVA needs greater understanding of protection risks⁴ for recipients.⁵ This was confirmed by aid actors who discussed previous feedback GTS collected in CAR. We found that looking at protection risks specifically for cash and voucher recipients would provide valuable findings on how to optimise the response. This report therefore used the four dimensions outlined in the Global Protection Cluster guidelines as a framework. In order to mainstream protection in humanitarian response, they make the following proposals:⁶

1. Prioritise safety and dignity, and avoid harm by preventing and minimising unintended negative consequences that increase physical and psychosocial risks to affected populations;
2. Arrange meaningful access to assistance and services;
3. Ensure accountability mechanisms;
4. Support the participation and empowerment of affected populations.

Questions inspired by these dimensions were discussed in one-on-one interviews with 24 CVA recipients in Bambari, Bangui, and Kaga Bandoro in October 2021. We aimed to understand people's entire experience of receiving aid, including unintended outcomes and protection risks.

We also surveyed 2,612 aid recipients, of which 922 were CVA recipients, between March and August 2021 in five subprefectures: Bangui, Bambari, Berbérati, Kaga Bandoro, and Alindao. We used the responses of CVA recipients to reveal trends in their views on different aspects of the humanitarian response. We compare them with the responses of aid recipients who have not received CVA where we found significant differences.



- Subprefectures covered by quantitative and qualitative study.
- Subprefectures covered by quantitative study only.

² Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP). 2018. [“The State of the World’s Cash Report”](#).

³ Overseas Development Institute. 2015. [“Doing cash differently: How cash transfers can transform humanitarian aid”](#).

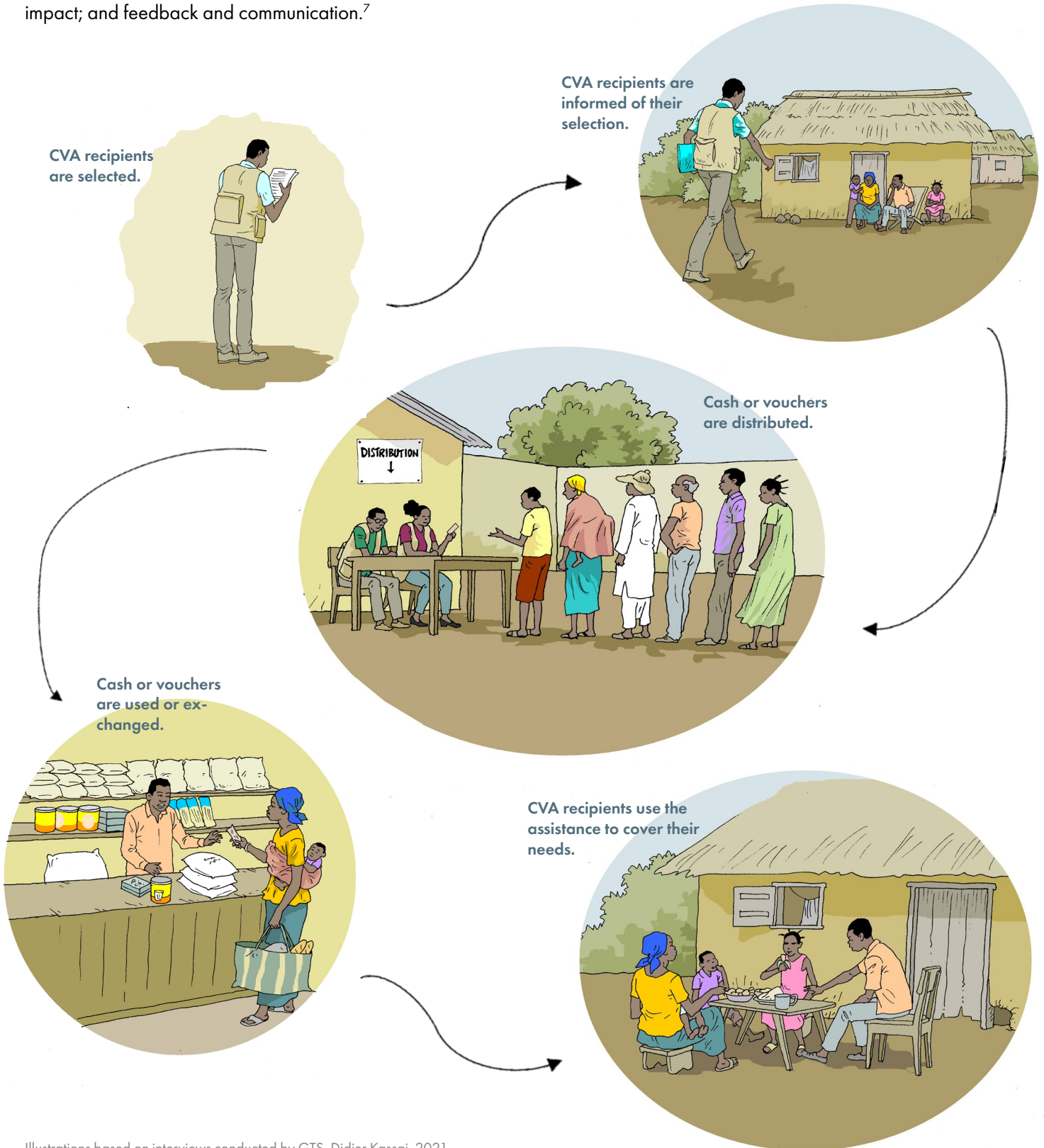
⁴ The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2016) defines protection as “all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual,” further elaborating, “Fundamentally, protection encompasses efforts pursued by humanitarian actors in all sectors to ensure that the rights of affected persons and the obligations of duty bearers under international law are understood, respected, protected and fulfilled without discrimination.”

⁵ Voir Berg, M. et Seferis, L. 2015. “Protection Outcomes in Cash Based Interventions: A Literature Review”; Freccero, J. et al. 2019. “Safer Cash in Conflict”; Vogel, B. et al. 2021. “The Social Meaning of Money”.

⁶ Global Protection Cluster. n.d. [“Brief on Protection Mainstreaming”](#), accessed 10 December 2021.

Findings

This report explores improvements to CVA in the Central African Republic and the implications it can have for recipients' protection and well-being. Drawing from our quantitative and qualitative data, people's experiences are broken down into five phases of receiving assistance: targeting and selection; distribution; utilisation; impact; and feedback and communication.⁷



Illustrations based on interviews conducted by GTS. Didier Kassai, 2021

⁷ We recognise that the phases of aid are not always clearly delineated or linear. We take these five phases for ease of reference between different CVA programmes. Distribution for cash recipients is defined as the phase of obtaining the money, such as at mobile money providers. For voucher recipients, distribution includes the receipt of the physical vouchers, while utilisation defines their use at the vendor.

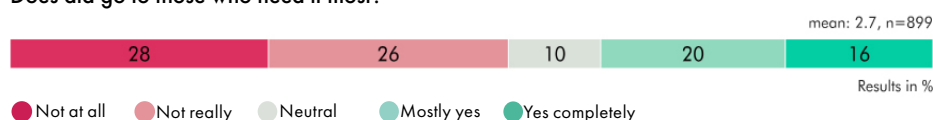
1. Targeting and selection

People do not trust or understand the targeting process

Experiences of being chosen to receive CVA vary among our interviewees.⁸ Some people report door-to-door registration for all community members or being selected from an existing database. Others were part of a pre-defined target population, such as older persons or parents of children with disabilities.

Once selected, people we interviewed feel relieved and hopeful. But they do not think aid goes to those who need it most, a sentiment echoed in our quantitative survey. Only 36% of CVA recipients feel that aid is distributed fairly.⁹

Does aid go to those who need it most?



It was great news, because during this period of precarity, the aid felt like billions.

- Man, IDP, Kaga Bandoro

Our qualitative interviews show that perceptions of vulnerability differ between affected populations and humanitarian organisations. Even people who were selected as recipients flag issues in the selection of the “most vulnerable.” When asked what about the programme did not work well, one interviewee answered, “The imprecision in the selection, which sometimes left out the vulnerable in favour of those more resilient.”¹⁰



Illustration based on interviews conducted by GTS. Didier Kassai, 2021

The targeting process is often poorly understood. Only 25% of CVA recipients understand why some people receive aid and some don't. There is a moderate statistical correlation¹¹ between people understanding targeting and feeling that aid goes to those who need it most.

Interviewees also link perceptions of fairness to an understanding of targeting criteria. When interviewees understood targeting criteria, they did not report a perception of partiality within the selection process. In other words, people who understand how aid is targeted tend to feel it is fairer.

Do you know how humanitarian organisations decide who receives aid and who does not?



⁸ We use the term “interviewee” to refer to participants in our qualitative interviews, while “respondent” refers to participants in our quantitative surveys.

⁹ Only 20% of non-CVA recipients feel that aid is distributed fairly.

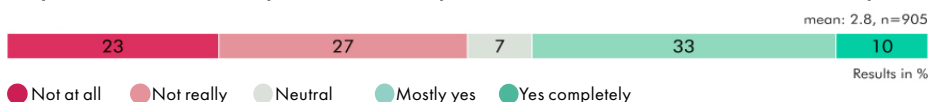
¹⁰ It is important to note the lack of follow-up regarding specific examples of unselected vulnerable people, about whom we were unable to inquire. Because our sample only considers the viewpoints of those selected for aid, it is difficult to draw conclusions about access difficulties in the selection process.

¹¹ Correlation coefficient: 0.22

According to the people we spoke to, trust in community leaders is limited.¹² When targeting criteria are unknown, feelings of injustice are linked to perceptions of nepotism and corruption when community leaders are involved in the selection. People claim that community leaders retain their family members in the list and receive bribes. In addition to the distrust of community leaders, some people note that community members might make it onto a list by simply having well-connected parents.

People scrutinise decisions made by aid organisations. One interviewee said, “the manner in which the [organisation] allocates the quota does not reflect the reality. It’s below the number of people in need.” Several others mention the need to increase the number of recipients. They also report limitations to access when the selection took place through a pre-existing database, which potentially excluded those not registered.

Do you think that community leaders share key information on humanitarian activities with you?



Communication of targeting causes rifts

Recipients were notified of their selection through various channels. For some, community leaders were responsible for informing them directly. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps were notified through camp coordinators. For others, the selection was public knowledge; for example, aid organisations published lists of names or made public announcements.

Even when the notification was given in private, neighbours or relatives were able to find out. An interviewee from Bangui said, “Yes, they know, because it’s not a secret when [an organisation] implements its activities in a zone. It will attract the attention of those curious, who will find out about what is going on.”

People report that some neighbours were happy for them, and others were not. Feelings of injustice at the selection seem shared by recipients and non-recipients alike. Several people note jealousy and discontent among community members.

Some people, particularly women, say that neighbours’ jealousy can feel threatening. Many IDPs say they feel unsafe, and others report choosing to stay discreet about the fact that they received assistance, in order to protect themselves.

Certain interviewees feel the selection created competition between community members, like a game: “The process seemed like a lottery. If your name is there, you’re saved. If that’s not the case, too bad for you. But this is shocking when you hope that you should [be selected] and you’re left out. You wouldn’t be happy at all for those who win and are happy.”



The selection should be transparent in order to limit any suspicion of community leaders.

- Woman, host community, Kaga Bandoro

Protection risks

- Confidentiality during recipient selection is not always respected by aid providers. This can put many at risk of stigmatisation by their neighbours and even threaten their sense of safety. Many preferred to stay discreet to avoid being stigmatised by their neighbours.
- Insufficient communication of targeting can create negative perceptions about both CVA recipients and those responsible for the selection (such as community leaders). When perceptions of corruption or nepotism exist regarding targeting processes, recipients risk being seen as complicit.
- IDPs located in host communities can be subject to jealousy and retaliation from members of the host community if only IDPs are selected for assistance. On the other hand, people appreciated it when both IDP and host community members were selected.

¹² Yet, on a national level, community leaders are the most trusted source for members to receive information (e.g., according to the MSNA 2021, 59% have this preference).

2. Distribution

Timing

People describe “losing hope” due to the length of time between being selected and receiving the first distribution. One recipient notes that the distribution took place after three months of waiting. Irregular frequencies also pose problems for recipients when rationing their aid and trying to plan for the future.



I ask [humanitarian organisations] to strictly respect the agreed frequency of aid delivery.

- Man, returnee, Kaga Bandoro

Getting to the distributions

Most people we interviewed think the communication of distribution details is effective. People report knowing where and when the distribution would happen. Recipients of mobile money transfers appreciate the notification of distribution by text due to the privacy it offered and the ability to plan in advance.



We travel long distances with empty stomachs.

- Woman, returnee, Bambari

But getting to distribution sites can be difficult. People cite traveling long distances and enduring insecurity on the road, especially along the busier routes of Bangui.

Several women report barriers to accessing distributions. This is especially true for single heads of household, as they have fewer options for childcare and have to leave children at home. Those with small children are worried for them while away.



My children are older already, so I don't need [someone to take care of them]. But if that wasn't the case, I wouldn't have had the means for it.

- Woman, IDP, Bangui

At the distribution site

Interviewees have encountered several difficulties at distribution sites. Almost everyone reports delays, which means they could spend all day waiting, even during extreme heat or rain. Often this was caused by poor planning, whereby all recipients were called to a distribution location at once. Some recipients had to wait multiple days before receiving their assistance. One mobile money recipient reports certain recipients bribing the agents to get ahead of the line.



Illustration based on interviews conducted by GTS. Didier Kassai, 2021

Several interviewees who report difficult distribution conditions link the experience to a lack of respect. They describe the process of receiving aid as “painful,” noting, “aid should not contribute to people’s suffering.”

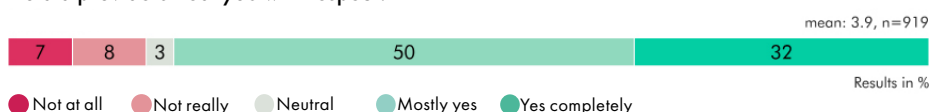
Although 82% of CVA recipients say that humanitarians treat them with respect, our qualitative data suggest that respect can be multifaceted and goes beyond interactions between humanitarian staff and recipients.



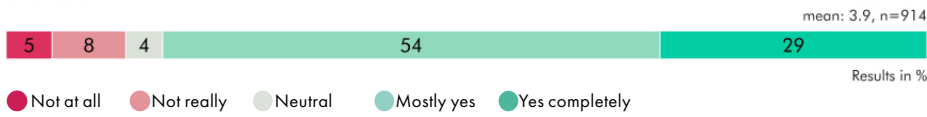
Because the [organisation] receives all of the selected neighbourhoods together, I find it very difficult to stand under the sun or rain for six or seven hours to be served.

- Man, returnee, Bambari

Do aid providers treat you with respect?



Do you feel safe when accessing aid or services?



People say they feel safe when distributions are clearly organised and have security measures in place. Some of these measures include alternating distributions between groups, local leaders organising young people to monitor the distributions, and humanitarian organisations clearly guiding recipients throughout the process. “Everything was well organised. [The organisation] placed its staff to monitor the process and orient the recipients if problems arose. When your name is called, you enter the secured distribution area. You receive your coupons and are marked off the list.”

Not all distribution sites feel as organised. People note a lack of security staff and the absence of a secure, closed site. In particular, mobile money recipients feel exposed to a risk of theft after withdrawing money.

Recipients’ sense of security is also influenced by the security context at large. Although people in Kaga Bandoro and Bambari note a general improvement in the security situation related to armed groups at the time of the interview, the risk of physical violence in the past was noted several times. Interviewees in Bangui mentioned crowding, theft, and road insecurity. These were greater concerns for older persons, of whom several reported the risk of theft by bandits as a safety concern.

Recipients sometimes encounter challenges related to the type of assistance they receive, such as a risk of physical vouchers being lost or mishandled, or technical problems with mobile money such as connection issues at the withdrawal points or finding that their accounts were empty after receiving the SMS notification of transfers.

Measures to increase accessibility by prioritising certain groups, such as pregnant women, older persons, and persons with disabilities, were helpful. People also say the presence of personnel or community leaders to aid the distribution is useful, because community leaders could help identify recipients when photo identification was questioned by the personnel, or help recipients count money.

Protection risks

- Irregular or delayed distribution frequencies can put recipients at risk by leaving them unable to plan adequately for the future.
- Unsecured and disorganised distributions can contribute to feelings of threat to personal safety and increase recipients’ risk of theft and even violence.
- People’s sense of personal safety is linked to the security context at large, such as road insecurity in urban areas or the presence of armed groups.
- Barriers for women and single heads of household include their ability to travel to distribution sites while leaving their household members alone.
- The common difficulty for all recipients was the long waiting times, often after traveling long distances and in poor weather. These conditions can be linked to feelings of not being respected by humanitarians and undignified access to aid.



I plead with humanitarian organisations to be punctual with distribution times. We consider their chronic lateness as a lack of respect or carelessness towards us.

- Man, returnee, Kaga Bandoro



It’s important to secure the perimeter of the distribution area to provide shelter for us.

- Woman, returnee, Bambari



I ask the [organisation] to make aid accessible so that it is done in dignity and with respect for all. The crowding threatens certain kinds of people.

- Woman, IDP, Bangui-Bimbo

3. Utilisation

People mostly describe making decisions over how to use CVA as unproblematic. Some interviewees made decisions jointly with their spouses, children, or other household members. Others made decisions by themselves.

For both cash and voucher recipients, the most significant use of aid is to purchase food and vary their nutrition. Many people mention investing cash in their children's education or income-generating activities.

For voucher recipients, things are more complex. In the process of exchanging vouchers at dedicated vendors, they encounter several challenges: the main one being pricing. Our interviewees report price gouging when presenting a voucher but not when purchasing the same good in cash. This was reported among all groups, regardless of migrant status, gender, or region.

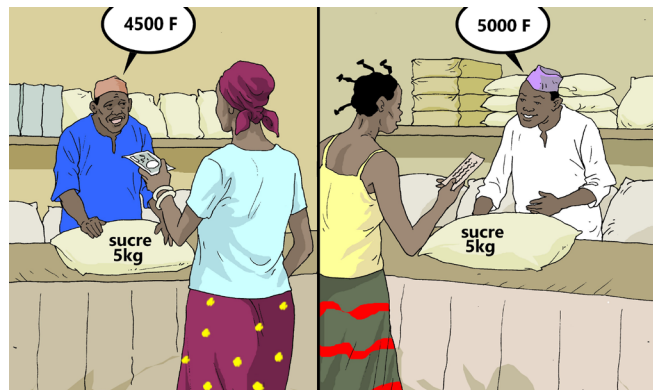


Illustration based on interviews conducted by GTS. Didier Kassai, 2021

People mention long waiting times at vendor outlets as well as poor-quality goods, such as spoiled food, and a lack of respect by certain vendors. Several people we interviewed note a lack of monitoring or follow-up of the vendors.

Some mention selling vouchers for cash, despite a reduced exchange value. Their primary reason was to buy goods not sold by the dedicated vendors, such as medication, or to invest the money in income-generating activities, such as gardening or small businesses.

Others, especially those with larger households, report being unable to transport the goods procured at the vendor back home.

Protection risks

- Specific protection risks exist for voucher recipients. The need to carry the goods obtained from the vendor back home can disadvantage certain groups of recipients, such as those with larger households.
- The lack of accountability for vendors after vouchers are distributed can pose several problems with accessing aid. The higher price of goods at vendors and spoiled goods can reduce voucher recipients' access to quality aid.



Goods prices are expensive and stop us getting what we need for a better life.

- Woman, IDP, Kaga Bandoro



We who are affected by the crisis also deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. So [the organisations] must be vigilant about the ethics of the vendors they contract.

- Man, IDP, Bambari

4. Impact

The people we spoke to generally think highly of aid delivered by cash or voucher, when distributed regularly. Cash and voucher recipients appreciate a sense of autonomy, related to both the choice of what to procure through CVA, and a reduced sense of dependence on others. For cash recipients in particular, the ability to use aid for income-generating activities is a major factor in their sense of autonomy. People note improvements in their daily lives, like accessing food and eating regularly.

However, it is critical to note that aid does not cover people's most important needs. Only 19% of people we surveyed are positive about aid's coverage of their basic needs, although this is a more common view than among recipients of other kinds of aid (11%).

Does the aid you receive cover your most important needs?



For cash recipients, unforeseen reductions in the amount of aid provided at each distribution were problematic. Many did not understand why the amount fell at each subsequent distribution. Certain voucher recipients also raised issues with the lack of freedom to buy what was needed and the high prices set by vendors.

People note complex changes in their relationships with neighbours. They report being careful to not change their behaviour around others because they feel behavioural changes would be "bad", out of a sense of consideration for those not receiving aid.

Others report more serious relational changes. One interviewee in Bangui notes a deterioration in their relationships with others in the community: "The others who have not received assistance don't want anything to do with us out of spite. And this situation brings a change in our relationships which previously existed." These findings echo the literature on protection risks for CVA recipients, which suggests that cash can promote feelings of dignity and stigma at the same time.¹³



Illustration based on interviews conducted by GTS. Didier Kassai, 2021

More so than people who received vouchers, cash recipients report increased levels of stigma and jealousy from neighbours.

Reports of certain community members protesting the CVA distribution are linked to discontent at not being selected. Others feel that the CVA programme contributed to community divisions.



Overcoming the lack of food in the house is a challenge that is felt by all members of the family.

- Woman, IDP, Bangui-Bimbo



I am empowered in my ability to decide important things.

- Man, IDP, Bambari



I am stigmatised by my neighbours because I receive humanitarian aid.

- Man, IDP, Bangui-Bimbo



I ask [humanitarian organisations] to do their targeting fairly and to provide assistance that will not divide the community or provoke hatred for others.

- Woman, returnee, Bambari

¹³ Berg, Michelle and Louisa Seferis. Protection Outcomes in Cash Based Interventions: A Literature Review. January 2015.

Changes in family dynamics were also noted by some. One female interviewee reports being questioned by her husband’s family on why she was targeted rather than her husband. While her husband was away, she was pressured to share the money with them.

Despite survey results that suggest CVA recipients are more likely to feel that aid makes them more resilient when compared to non-CVA recipients,¹⁴ people we interviewed express worry about the future and a sense of dependence on aid.

They wonder how they will pursue the further education of their children and whether aid will continue to be provided in the future. Such findings demonstrate the need to clearly communicate and adhere to distribution timelines, as well as having exit strategies in place, working with development and state actors to enable recipients to plan for the future.

Protection risks

- CVA programmes that select a limited number of recipients may impact community relations negatively, creating divisions and tensions that may escalate or cause lasting problems. These negative experiences can include feeling as if the selection was a “lottery game” in which one competes against other community members who might also be in need.
- A lack of clear communication makes it difficult for aid recipients to plan for their future.

5. Feedback and communication

Accountability through continuous feedback and communication is a key aspect for mainstreaming protection in humanitarian aid. We discuss feedback and communication here not as the final phase of aid, but as processes that should underlie each of the four phases previously discussed.

Only 31% of survey respondents say they know how to give feedback or file a complaint. Women are less likely to know than men. These results are echoed among our interviewees.

Do you know how to make suggestions or complaints about the aid/services you receive?



Some people who do know about feedback mechanisms (such as suggestion boxes) had trouble using them or never received a response to their question or complaint.

CVA recipients are less likely to believe that people in their community feel able to report instances of abuse or mistreatment by aid providers, when compared to other aid recipients. Aid providers should consider how their complaint mechanisms are communicated specifically to CVA recipients, and what access barriers might exist.



If ever aid is no longer given, what will we become?

- Man, IDP, Kaga Bandoro

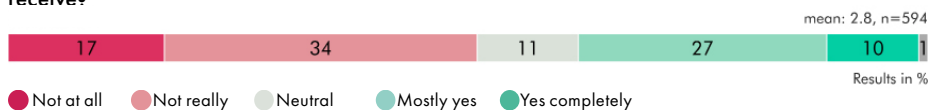


We complain, but who listens to us? Since there have not been any changes in their practice, this means that no corrective measures have been taken. Even the requests regarding technical problems have not returned any satisfactory response.

- Man, host community, Bangui-Bimbo

¹⁴ Although respondents feel generally negative about the following questions, in comparison, CVA recipients find aid more able to meet their most important needs, they feel it helps them improve their living conditions to a greater extent, and they feel it makes them more resilient compared to those who receive other forms of assistance.

Do you feel that your views are taken into account by aid providers about the assistance you receive?

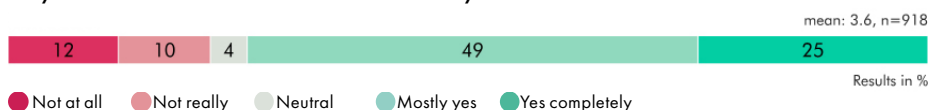


People we spoke to through our survey and our interviews generally said they feel informed about aid, such as when and where distributions takes place. However, many complained of the lack of direct communication between aid organisations and recipients. Encounters with aid organisations were limited to distributions or to awareness-raising sessions regarding the utilisation of aid, but people want more direct communication.



Illustration based on interviews conducted by GTS. Didier Kassai, 2021

Do you feel informed about the aid available to you?



Without knowing about complaint and feedback mechanisms, some people tried to find ways to communicate with humanitarian organisations, such as by complaining to community leaders about the selection and the price of goods at the vendor for voucher recipients.

However, without access to formal mechanisms, people were unsure of whether or not the leader actually passed on those complaints to the organisation in question.

Protection risks

- Recipients do not know how to provide feedback or access complaint mechanisms. Those who use such mechanisms do not always get a response. Feedback from aid recipients does not reach aid organisations or lead to meaningful change.
- People complain of a lack of direct communication between aid organisations and recipients.



We must not limit communication about projects only to community leaders. It is better to extend this communication to community members in order to mitigate cases of fraud during the selection.

- Man, host community, Bangui-Bimbo

Next steps

Through our quantitative and qualitative studies with CVA recipients, we received valuable insights into recipients' experiences and perceptions of aid provision, and the protection risks they face. Some of the main risks identified by interviewees included issues with how and with whom information is shared, recipient selection, access to CVA assistance, knowledge of accountability mechanisms, impacts on community dynamics, and safety concerns.

These findings can be used to improve CVA programmes, to review existing risk mitigation measures, and to identify issues which need concerted efforts to be addressed. GTS will conduct workshops with the Cash Working Group and humanitarian partners to plan actions based on CVA recipients' experiences and the concerns they have raised. In-depth exchanges with coordination and operational actors from different in-country cash programmes will help us make sense of the issues within CVA programming in CAR which can be the source of the protection risks identified in this report.

These exchanges provide a basis for in-country actors to identify needs within the CVA programming cycle and strengthen the overall process to reduce identified risks. The goal of these sessions is also to highlight the level at which changes need to take place within CVA programming to reduce protection risks – whether at organisational, coordination, donor, or strategic levels. Subsequently, this will provide the CAR Cash Working Group with clarity on which protection issues are more difficult to address in the short term and will require support at a strategic or advocacy level to create effective change.

Methodology

Quantitative

As part of round 3 of our quantitative perception surveys in CAR, we asked a total of 2,612 aid recipients in five subprefectures – Alindao, Bangui, Bambari, Berbérati, and Kaga Bandoro – about their views on their relationship with aid providers, the quality of the assistance provided, resilience, information and communication, and protection. These anonymous surveys were conducted face-to-face by trained enumerators, based on a standardised questionnaire, between March and August 2021.

922 respondents, 35% of the total, said that they or a member of their family received monetary assistance over the course of the last six months. Selected data was featured to triangulate findings from the qualitative interviews.

The findings from the perception surveys are outlined more comprehensively and in more detail in a separate report that will be available on our [website](#).

Sampling

The sampling strategy covers the affected populations in the Central African Republic (CAR) targeted by the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan and receiving humanitarian assistance. We selected the sub-prefectures of Alindao (Basse-Kotto), Bambari (Ouaka), Bangui (Bangui), Berbérati (Mambéré-Kadei), and Kaga Bandoro (Nana-Grébizi) based on the following criteria: 1) the level of humanitarian assistance (number of humanitarian actors on the ground), 2) the size of the affected population (returnees, IDPs, and host communities), and 3) access to the sites of affected populations (security and logistical risk).

The overall sample size defined is 500 individuals per sub-prefecture. Returnees (from CAR and abroad), internally displaced persons (IDPs), and members of host communities receiving humanitarian assistance are the target groups for the survey. At the level of each sub-prefecture, the sample is stratified proportionally to the size of the affected populations in each population category. For the host community, a maximum threshold of 20% of the total sample was set for proportional stratification at the sub-prefecture level.

Given the security context and the significant population movements in the targeted sub-prefectures, the selection of sites was finalised in consultation with humanitarian actors on the ground. Depending on the local context (e.g., high population movement, security risk, homogeneous humanitarian assistance), sites were selected randomly or arbitrarily, so the selection of sites may vary by sub-prefecture.

The sample selected consenting adults over the age of 18 who had received humanitarian aid in the last six months and aimed for a 50:50 gender split (male/female).

Data was collected from March to August 2021. The survey was administered using tablets and smartphones and made available in English and French. The French questionnaire was translated into Sango on the spot by the enumerators.

Sample

Total: 922 people

Subprefectures

Kaga Bandoro: 274 (30%)

Bangui: 217 (23%)

Bambari: 156 (17%)

Berbérati: 149 (16%)

Alindao: 126 (14%)

Gender

Women: 561 (61%)

Men: 361 (39%)

Status

Returnees: 364 (40%)

IDPs on site: 200 (22%)

IDPs off site: 198 (21%)

Host community: 158 (17%)

Age

31–50: 471 (51%)

18–30: 249 (27%)

51–100: 201 (22%)

Disability

Without disability: 810 (88%)

With disability: 112 (12%)

Probabilistic analysis

Some of the findings presented in this report are based on probabilistic index models. The results indicate the probability that a member of one group (in this case, CVA recipients) gives a higher score on the relevant indicator than a member of another group (aid recipients who do not receive CVA). The models control for status, gender, age, and location.

Indicator	Significance difference between CVA and non-CVA recipients	PIM (probabilistic index = probability of giving a higher score)
Aid relevance	Yes	0.59
Fairness	Yes	0.65
Living conditions	Yes	0.58
Participation	Yes	0.58
Resilience	Yes	0.56
Timeliness	Yes	0.65
Leaders share	Yes	0.45
Report abuse	Yes	0.38
Informed	No	-
Respect	No	-
Safe aid	No	-
Safe daily	No	-

Limitations

Security: The volatile security situation in the Central African Republic influenced our ability to speak to aid recipients. Sites in areas categorized as "red" by humanitarian actors were excluded from the final sample, and the timing of data collection needed to be adjusted to the security situation.

Questionnaire translation: The nature of Sango as a spoken rather than written language in CAR posed certain difficulties. We provided the questionnaire to enumerators in French, who then translated it into Sango on the spot to interviewees. During the enumerator training, we emphasised the meaning of each question to enumerators to ensure they had a good understanding. Nevertheless, we cannot ensure that questions were translated identically to all interviewees.

Perceptions of adults only: Our surveys were conducted with adults only because of the content of the questionnaire (e.g., the assistance that affected people receive in general, the relationship with humanitarian actors, mechanisms for managing complaints/suggestions) was oriented towards adults/heads of household. A survey with young people and children requires in-depth expertise to ensure the protection of the child being surveyed and those around them, expertise that we do not currently possess.

Perception data: GTS collects perceptual data from aid recipients to assess the ongoing humanitarian response through their views and opinions. While the principles of accountability and community participation are increasingly integrated into the humanitarian programme cycle, the voices of affected people receiving aid are often omitted. Collecting perception data from affected populations should therefore be seen as part of a systemic change in humanitarian response. It is a crucial first step in enabling affected people to be more fully integrated into the humanitarian decision-making process. Nevertheless, it is clear that perception data alone may not be sufficient to assess the state of the humanitarian system and should therefore not be interpreted in isolation, but as a complement to other data-monitoring and evaluation approaches.

Qualitative

Objective

This report aimed to identify protection risks from the perspectives of aid recipients during the different phases of assistance and ways to mitigate them. We will use the results to engage in advocacy with humanitarian actors to improve CVA programming (project development/adaptation and strategic planning) in order to reduce protection risks for aid recipients.

A qualitative approach was used for an in-depth inquiry into the complex experiences of CVA recipients. Qualitative research does not aim to be representative but to understand a phenomenon. Because protection is fundamentally defined as encompassing any unintended negative consequences, such a method allows participants to communicate a perspective that we might not have anticipated, in their own words.

Research questions

1. How is the process of receiving CVA experienced by recipients, from the time they are targeted to the time they spend the aid?
 - What are the friction points?
 - What points seem to work well?
 - What are the particular challenges of the process?
 - How do recipients feel about the process?
2. What are the perceived protection risks when receiving CVA?
 - Are they related to particular moments in the process?
 - What factors contribute to recipients' perceptions of these particular points as risks?
 - How do aid recipients think these risks could be mitigated by humanitarian actors?
 - Do perceived risks differ by gender or status?

All research questions were addressed through semi-structured face-to-face interviews with CVA recipients, which allowed participants to critically reflect on their experiences, perceptions, and recommendations. The interview guide was elaborated in collaboration with members of the Cash Working Group (CWG).

3. What threats to safety and well-being have recipients actually experienced (or heard about) that they attribute to or associate with being a CVA recipient?

- Are they more frequent at certain points in the process?
- How do aid recipients think these risks could be mitigated by humanitarian actors?

Sampling

The sampling strategy was based on profiles of individuals whose selection criteria have been determined with members of the Cash Working Group and other partners, based on the research questions. Interviews were conducted with a total of 24 recipients. The final sample was:

No.	Subprefecture	Gender	Modality	Status
1	Bangui-Bimbo	Woman	Voucher	Host community
2	Bangui-Bimbo	Woman	Voucher	IDP
3	Bangui-Bimbo	Woman	Cash	Returnee
4	Bangui-Bimbo	Woman	Cash	IDP
5	Bangui-Bimbo	Man	Voucher	IDP
6	Bangui-Bimbo	Man	Voucher	Host community
7	Bangui-Bimbo	Man	Cash	Host community
8	Bangui-Bimbo	Man	Cash	Host community
9	Kaga Bandoro	Woman	Voucher	IDP
10	Kaga Bandoro	Woman	Voucher	IDP
11	Kaga Bandoro	Woman	Cash	Host community
12	Kaga Bandoro	Woman	Cash	Returnee
13	Kaga Bandoro	Man	Voucher	IDP
14	Kaga Bandoro	Man	Voucher	IDP
15	Kaga Bandoro	Man	Cash	Returnee
16	Kaga Bandoro	Man	Cash	Returnee
17	Bambari	Woman	Voucher	IDP
18	Bambari	Woman	Voucher	Returnee
19	Bambari	Woman	Cash	IDP
20	Bambari	Woman	Cash	Returnee
21	Bambari	Man	Voucher	IDP
22	Bambari	Man	Voucher	Returnee
23	Bambari	Man	Cash	IDP
24	Bambari	Man	Cash	IDP

We sampled for equal representation of gender, status group, geographic location and modality, and aimed at speaking to aid recipients from different organizations. The targeted subprefecture (Bangui-Bimbo, Bambari, and Kaga Bandoro) were selected based on the priorities of the humanitarian response and the ongoing CVA programmes of partner organizations. These areas are among the five subprefectures most targeted by CVA in CAR.

Interviews

Interviewees were identified by GTS consultants on the spot, in collaboration with local authorities and in accordance with the sampling criteria. Interviews were conducted face-to-face by GTS consultants based on an interview guide that was made available both in French and Sango following a two-way translation process. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were audio-recorded for translation and transcription from Sango to French.

Interviewees remained anonymous, and double informed consent was sought from the interviewee before and after the recording.

Analysis

The transcribed interviews were coded with the MaxQDA qualitative analysis software, utilising both an inductive and deductive method. Transcripts were systematically coded and organised into themes.

A joint analysis session was held with the members of the Cash Working Group, in which five selected transcripts were discussed, based on the following questions: What positive aspects were mentioned? What negative aspects were mentioned? Were protection risks mentioned? What are recommendations to humanitarians to address some of these issues?

Limitations

Although a qualitative approach has many advantages, there are also limitations to our study. First, our sample is non-randomised, making it difficult to state that our results are representative of all CVA recipients or of their respective genders, migrant status, or form of aid. This does not make our findings circumstantial, but rather that conceptual saturation was reached only for pre-defined categories. For example, our sample tended to lean older, which may have influenced results.

Secondly, processes of translation and transcription are inherently imperfect. Although we tried to obtain as accurate a transcription as possible, we also recognise that not all meaning can be fully captured between multiple languages.

Finally, because our sample consisted of people from multiple programmes, delivery mechanisms, and contexts, it is difficult to clearly account for all such differences in our findings. Rather, our results demonstrate aspects that CVA programmes can consider (or re-consider) to improve the experience of receiving aid.