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EVALUATION REPORT

CONSULTANCY: FINAL EVALUATION

Project: “Cash Response Readiness Programming in Latin America”

Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Dominican Republic
Agreement No. 720FDA18CA00028

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ACRONYMS

ADESS	Social Subsidies Administrator (<i>Administradora de Subsidios Sociales</i>)
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
CENISS	Beneficiary Registry System (<i>Sistema de Registro de Beneficiarios</i>)
CONRED	National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (<i>Coordinadora Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres</i>)
COPECO	Permanent Contingencies Commission (<i>Comisión Permanente de Contingencias</i>)
CODEL	Local Emergency Committee (<i>Comité de Emergencia Local</i>)
CODEM	Municipal Emergency Committee (<i>Comité de Emergencia Municipal</i>)
CTP	Cash Transfer Programming
CWG	Cash Working Groups
DGPC	General Directorate of Civil Protection (<i>Dirección General de Protección Civil</i>)
EMMA	Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis
FSP	Financial Service Provider
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
MEB	Minimum Economic Basket
MIDES	Ministry of Social Development (<i>Ministerio de Desarrollo Social</i>)
NDRMS	National Disaster Risk Management Systems
OEDC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OCR	Organizational Capacity Readiness
OCRT	Organizational Capacity Readiness Tool
PCMA	Pre-crisis Market Analysis
RAM	Rapid Assessment for Markets
SEDESOL	Secretariat of Development and Social Inclusion (<i>Secretaría de Desarrollo e Inclusión Social</i>)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN	United Nations System
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The "Cash Response Readiness Programming in Latin America: Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras" project was funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) from 2018 to 2022. The main objective was to increase the operational capacities of the National Disaster Risk Management Systems (NDRMS) stakeholders to roll out quality, timely, cash-based response interventions in the event of emergencies/disasters in the targeted countries. To achieve this, two sectors were prioritized: i) Humanitarian coordination and information management; and ii) Risk management policy and practice.

As part of the project's closing actions, this final evaluation was carried out between December 2022 and March 2023 in order to assess compliance with the results based on the criteria of relevance, coherence, efficacy, efficiency, and sustainability, as well as to gather the main lessons learned, identifying lessons learned, good practices and strategic recommendations that may guide similar initiatives in the future.

The evaluation used a quantitative approach based on the programmatic performance of the results framework and a qualitative approach to ascertain the stakeholders' perceptions of the project's implementation for a triangulated vision through other approaches and data analysis. In this sense, there were three main tools used: a) the review of available secondary information corresponding to more than thirty documents, including reports, protocols, and work plans, among others; b) the findings of a participatory evaluation workshop conducted under the most significant change technique; and c) interviews with more than 30 key informants within the project team, cash transfer groups, humanitarian teams, members of NDRMS, leaders or managers of social protection programs and other strategic allies.

The evaluation had a participatory approach, however, there were some limitations, including i) the qualitative findings cannot be generalized to all actors involved in the project, given that the universe of actors was not consulted; and ii) the restructuring of the governments and entities hindered the possibility of contacting certain actors that were very knowledgeable about the project. Nonetheless, triangulating qualitative information gathered through the interviews, with the secondary data provided by the project and the consultative workshops conducted,¹ allowed for obtaining a complete overview of the technical criteria analyzed by the evaluation. Considering these aspects, the main conclusions on the findings per evaluation criteria and recommendations for the project are presented below.

- **Relevance.** The project was relevant for several reasons: i) it was based on the knowledge management of previously developed cash transfer programs; ii) the project's intervention logic and programmatic structure had a causal correspondence between the objectives, results, and interventions proposed; and iii) the strategy designed to strengthen preparedness capacities allowed the achievement of the expected results. Regarding this last aspect, strengthening was achieved through three mechanisms: the training process, the exchange of experiences, and the generation of technical inputs within the framework of the efforts, ongoing processes, and main needs identified by both the cash transfer working groups and the social protection systems' key actors.

¹ The consultative workshops are related to two specific spaces, the first of which refers to a space managed directly by the project, which was held in December 2022 to assess its performance, as well as to identify good practices and challenges. The second area refers to an internal assessment exercise developed as part of the project's evaluation process in January 2022, focused on assessing results achieved and lessons learned, including reflections on the management of challenges and recommendations.

Among the factors that limited the project's actions was the personnel turnover in different institutions, which resulted in a more substantial and sustained effort by the project to ensure compliance with the capacity-building objective. As an internal factor, some actors resisted articulating with the government, specifically with the social protection sector. However, the project managed this with different strategies, including constant follow-up and communication with the participating actors, a commitment to linking with the strategic levels of the organizations and identifying work schemes that corresponded to the institutions' particular needs in each country.

- ***Coherence.*** The project relied on monitoring information, the humanitarian actors' feedback, and the different stakeholders' needs to adapt it. The common definition of work plans evidenced this, as well as the working sessions carried out under a knowledge management logic and training processes designed and adapted to the pandemic context, which advanced in some instances to developing capacity development plans that constituted customized training processes. The consulted actors widely and positively recognized all these factors regarding coherence and adaptation.
- ***Efficacy.*** The project's performance in relation to the established indicators was optimal, considering that 85% of these met the initially set goal. The limitations in achieving the targets occurred in sector two, regarding the skills and knowledge retention rate and the leadership of the risk management systems in adopting strategic changes using cash transfers. These aspects were due to contextual factors such as staff turnover in the organizations that affected follow-up and regulatory limitations for risk management systems to lead changes.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the various interviewees perceive that the project has contributed to establishing necessary preconditions for new cash transfer initiatives. They widely reported having improved their coordination capacities, as well as their knowledge of cash transfers. However, they pointed out the need to continue strengthening the cash working groups (CWG) and to extend these processes to other government entities at the national and local levels.

Finally, regarding unexpected results, the coordinated effort with the municipalities succeeded in improving local governments' capacities thanks to the training processes and instruments created to facilitate cash transfer adoption. It's worth mentioning that the stakeholders consulted did not report any adverse effects generated by the project's interventions.

- ***Efficiency.*** The different tools developed to analyze cash transfer adoption and to improve coordination, such as: organizational readiness assessments, resilience analyses, market monitoring, market studies, risk analyses, and financial service providers (FSP) analyses, among others, allowed for improved efficiency in articulating stakeholders, guiding resource allocation and strategic communication to advance towards achieving the project's objectives.

The project also promoted efficiency through the work carried out in the CWG. Different participating actors noted the duplication of efforts in the field. As a result of this critical reflection, they focused on developing complementary actions or initiatives that would generate added value in their institutions and communities. Similarly, incorporating the governing bodies of disaster risk management and social protection systems into the CWG has contributed to coordination efficiency.

- ***Sustainability.*** The project improved coordination capacities, i.e., those associated with the degree of knowledge of the participating actors. These capacities feed the continuity of the CWG.

However, several stakeholders expressed concerns regarding the sustainability of progress due to: i) the workload in their institutions, ii) the need to continue strengthening the interaction between the social protection and civil protection sectors, and iii) the need to continue involving new actors such as local governments and the private sector to continue promoting cash-based response adoption.

Considering the project's achievements, the following strategic recommendations will help to enhance them:

1. Assess the degree of commitment of the organizations facilitating the CWG to ensure sustainability. Although the groups continue to operate following the project's closure, the interviewees stated that their success depends in part on the dedication of the lead and co-lead organizations. Therefore, creating a space prior to the handover and a transition protocol can contribute to selecting the right organizations facilitating the role to play. In addition, the stakeholders cautioned that without an entity with the experience and dedication that GOAL has in accompanying the CWG, there is a risk that the achievements attained will fade away. Thus, the importance of establishing innovative mechanisms to guide leadership change, an example of this is an Expression of Interest. This document shows the added value each interested entity can contribute to the group.
2. Strengthen public policy advocacy to improve social and civil protection coordination. Difficulties persist in outlining the responsibilities of each sector. Therefore, strengthening the advocacy line is necessary to work on modifying or adapting regulatory or normative frameworks that support intersectoral articulation and cash transfer program adoption.
3. Design and implement cash transfer programs and not projects. The project showed that adopting transfers is subject to an enabling legislative environment. As is well known, these processes are long-term and require a significant effort to place them on the public agenda. Future initiatives should consider a program perspective rather than a project so that progress, in terms of results, can be scaled up through different phases.
4. Give a more prominent role to other actors, such as local governments, emphasizing working with the private sector and assessing the feasibility of integrating local actors in cash transfer delivery. The project was able to incorporate some municipalities and private sector entities, however, the various stakeholders concluded that it is important to strengthen relations with local governments as they are the first line to respond to emergencies; with the private sector because their participation can facilitate cash transfer delivery; and with new actors such as rural village banks in order to improve adoption and also strengthen community processes.
5. Increase emphasis on the scientific evidence generated around cash transfers. The project focused on creating technical tools to improve coordination and preparedness among actors. However, the stakeholders expressed the need to delve deeper into the impacts generated by these initiatives to improve the mechanism and as input for advocacy work. It is necessary to continue strengthening the analysis tools to reach this point to move towards creating a single beneficiary system as a tool for impact evaluation exercises.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION REPORT

This document presents the results of the final external evaluation for the "**Cash Response Readiness Programming in Latin America**" project, which concentrated its interventions in four countries: Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic. The project was implemented from 2018 to 2022 and funded by the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The project's main objective was to increase the operational capacities of the stakeholders that make up the National Disaster Risk Management Systems (NDRMS) to implement timely and high-quality cash transfer-based response interventions in the event of emergencies or disasters in the priority countries. Based on its interventions and as part of the project's closing actions, a final evaluation was proposed to assess the results and the lessons learned, good practices, and strategic recommendations resulting from implementation that could guide similar initiatives in the future.

The evaluation was promoted as an opportunity for learning and ongoing improvement by the implementing entity (GOAL) based on its institutional commitment to results-based management, enabling information gathering and analysis to support decision-making in project design and implementation that can consolidate cash transfer programming (CTP) in emergency situations in the future. Consequently, these are the five technical criteria: relevance, coherence, efficacy, efficiency, and sustainability, based on the approaches suggested by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In line with these criteria, research questions were defined to address relevant aspects to guide the data collection and inference process, aligned with the project objectives and results. The evaluation considered a quantitative approach to the programmatic performance achieved according to the results framework and a qualitative approach based on the perceptions of the different actors involved in project implementation, expanding the possibilities of triangulating information to strengthen the evaluation findings.

In response to this approach, this report is structured into six sections: the first section briefly describes the context of the evaluated project, emphasizing key aspects such as its proposed objective, programmatic structure, and theory of change; the second section summarizes the evaluation methodology, specifying elements such as the methodological approach, the operational design, and technical limitations; the third section presents the evaluation findings, evidencing the key aspects addressed according to the technical criteria for the evaluation exercise; the fourth section lists the best practices identified during the project's implementation, and the fifth section lists the main lessons learned through the programmatic interventions. Finally, the sixth section presents strategic recommendations derived from the analysis based on the information gathered and triangulated to guide similar interventions in the future.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATED PROJECT

The project aimed to increase the operational capacities of entities that are part of the NDRMS in the four priority countries, with a particular interest in implementing initiatives based on cash transfers in the event of emergencies. In addition, it sought to assess the capacities of social protection programs to respond during emergencies, considering the progress they've made by adopting cash transfers. To this end, a series of actions focused on strengthening the capacities of different entities, starting with training and planning exercises to prepare and coordinate programming based on cash transfers, seeking to influence the political will and the strategic change required for the proper adoption of this type of initiative.

The implementation was carried out in collaboration with the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP), building on the experience accumulated by GOAL in implementing these programs in the Latin American region, such as the cash-based initiative implemented to support families located in the Honduran Dry Corridor between 2016 and 2017. Additionally, the project was designed to dovetail with an initiative previously executed by GOAL in the same countries between 2017 and 2018. This initiative included the completion of the Organizational Cash Readiness (OCR) assessments, as well as developing tools related to the initial training programs on Cash Transfer Programming (CTP) and specialized analyses on Emergency Market Mapping (EMMA) or Pre-Crisis Markets (PCMA).

From this perspective, the evaluated project built on the progress and knowledge generated by these initiatives, allowing them to inform their annual work plans and strategic objectives in a timely manner and provide descriptions of required support to adopt CTP in the four targeted countries.

1.1 Project objectives

The project's main objective was to increase the preparedness and coordination capacities of the institutional actors that make up the NDRMS to implement cash-based interventions in emergencies, ensuring that they respond to the principles of timeliness and quality. To meet this objective, the project specifically proposed to achieve the following programmatic aspects:

- Organize and develop the capacity of working groups for cash-based programming.
- Improve the sustainability and functioning of existing working groups to influence the adoption of CTP.
- Assess the capacities of NDRMS regarding CTP.
- Assess the capacities of social protection programs to react during emergencies.
- Increase the capacities of NDRMS through training in CTP.
- Increase the capacities of NDRMS to implement timely and quality CTP.

1.2 Project's programmatic structure

The programmatic structure encompasses all interventions in two sectors, which are divided into three sub-sectors. The first sector has focused on addressing actions related to humanitarian coordination and information management. The second sector focused on addressing actions associated with advocacy and risk management practice. Under this structure, the project has set out a set of six core activities, including a compendium of thirteen indicators, as shown below.

Table 1. Summary of the project's programmatic structure

GENERAL OBJECTIVE
Increase the preparedness and coordination capacities of the institutional actors that are part of the national risk management systems to implement cash transfer interventions in emergency situations, ensuring that they respond to the

principles of timeliness and quality.					
PROGRAMMATIC SECTORS					
Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management			Risk Management Policy and Practice		
SUBSECTORS					
Coordination		Capacity Building and Training		Policy and Planning	
CENTRAL ACTIVITIES					
Strengthen the capacities of existing working groups and key actors in national risk management systems.	Facilitate annual work plan preparation of the existing working groups.	Assess organizational capacity readiness, identifying gaps and challenges for cash transfer programming and adjustment of social protection programs.	Analyze the resilience of social protection programs.	Provide training in cash transfer programming and emergency market mapping and analysis.	Provide technical assistance to facilitate policy and planning changes related to cash transfer programming.
1 result indicator and 3 output indicators, four indicators in total under the first sector		3 result indicators and 6 output indicators, nine indicators in total under the second sector			

1.3 Project alignment with the context of cash transfers in emergencies

In line with its programmatic structure, the project is also a response to the region's current context of cash-based response adoption. In this regard, it's important to note that the inclusion of CTP, whether through social protection, humanitarian response, or a combination of both, is beginning to gain momentum. Several governments in Latin America and the Caribbean have long been successfully using cash transfer programming in social protection programs. However, the use of such programs in large-scale humanitarian responses is much more recent (CaLP, 2022)².

Under this scenario, a challenge that limits the use of cash-based programs in crisis response in the region is linked to the fact that governments still prioritize responses based on in-kind assistance, and few have considered explicitly linking social protection under a humanitarian approach as a response option to future emergencies. At the global level, the humanitarian response has shifted in favor of cash transfer programs, which are the most widely used mechanism for humanitarian and social protection programs due to all the advantages they offer in terms of efficacy and efficiency. In this regard, although this challenge persists, it's worth noting that after the pandemic, some governments in countries such as Honduras and Guatemala have taken a more structured approach to emergency response through the cash transfer modality, which opens the possibility of moving more quickly towards the adoption of cash-based programs.

Other factors that hinder the use of these programs in emergency response are the limited spaces for coordination between social protection and humanitarian action and the regulatory frameworks that sometimes limit the options for governments in the region to use cash transfers in emergencies in a sustained manner. However, there are good examples, such as the case of the Dominican Republic.

²<https://www.calpnetwork.org/es/publication/cash-voucher-assistance-within-social-protection-preparedness-in-central-america-mexico-and-the-dominican-republic/>

Recent experiences in the region related to the impact of the pandemic, the effects of hurricanes Eta and Iota, and the Volcano of Fuego eruption have highlighted the challenges presented by social protection systems and humanitarian response mechanisms, reinforcing the importance of integrated actions using CTP. Considering this, many governments in the region have shown willingness to experiment using CTP in humanitarian action, as well as to collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations System (UN) in the use of existing programs, including requesting technical support and learning from CWG when designing new programs (CALP, 2022)³.

II. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was summative and formative, aiming at systematically assessing the project's programmatic and operational performance, considering these five technical criteria: relevance, coherence, efficacy, efficiency, and sustainability. As a result, the evaluation team carried out a quantitative analysis of the performance achieved according to the results framework and a qualitative analysis based on the perceptions of the different actors involved in project implementation, facilitating information triangulation to strengthen the objectivity of the evaluation.

2.1 Scope and objectives

The main objective was to systematically assess the project's performance, with special emphasis on increasing the capacities of the institutional actors that are part of the NDRMS to implement cash transfers in emergencies, evaluating aspects such as learning, good practices, and competencies developed. The evaluation was guided by the following specific objectives:

- Assess the relevance and coherence of the project's proposed programmatic approach to achieve its main purpose.
- Assess efficacy and efficiency according to the results achieved through project implementation and its contribution to capacity building.
- Identify opportunities and the most relevant programmatic actions to generate sustainability conditions for the implemented initiatives.
- Document good practices and lessons learned that could be extracted from the project experience to apply them in new initiatives.
- Provide recommendations to improve future design and implementation of similar initiatives, seeking to advance cash transfer implementation in emergencies.

2.2 Methodological approaches and principles

The evaluation exercise incorporated three methodological approaches. The first is based on one of the principles of **participatory action research**, which states that knowledge stems from the participants' experience, thus, their individual and collective reflections constitute the basis for the learning under analysis. Based on this approach, key actors were the protagonists of the evaluation, guaranteeing the independence and objectivity of the analysis, and granting them empowered participation in the whole process.

The second approach focused on the **results-based management** perspective, which implies that all the actors who contributed to the project's results ensured that their processes, actions, or services favored achieving these results. Based on this approach, emphasis was placed on evidence to assess the main results achieved according to the project's planned objectives and theory of change. In

³<https://www.calpnetwork.org/es/publication/en-construccion-una-revision-de-las-formas-de-coordinacion-entre-los-grupos-de-transferencias-monetarias-gtm-y-los-sistemas-de-proteccion-social-en-las-americas/>

addition, it facilitated reflection on the project's adaptability to meet the expected results.

The third approach focused on using **mixed methods**, which in evaluation exercises are necessary and effective in providing objective strategic information. Therefore, quantitative and qualitative research elements, including triangulating information to ensure the reconciliation of data and perspectives, were proposed under this approach to develop a robust summative and formative evaluation.

In addition, the team considered ethical principles at all evaluation stages, including independence, impartiality, credibility, accountability, honesty, and integrity. And maintaining solid respect for the dignity and diversity of the people prioritized to participate in the evaluation. In addition, the right to anonymity of the perceptions or contributions provided by the different stakeholders consulted was protected, including the request for informed consent when primary information was collected. This way, the evaluation ensured that it complied with GOAL's procedures and ethical standards, especially regarding research, data collection, and analysis.

2.3 Evaluation process operational design

In line with the methodological approaches, the evaluation was designed under the cluster perspective, considering that it was better adjusted to the project's programmatic structure and better responded to operational variables that are key to a successful evaluation exercise, these being the distribution of interventions in the four countries and the diversity of actors involved in the implementation in each country. Clusters were organized according to project sectors and subsectors, indicating the variables under which the analysis would be carried out in each component, respecting both the technical criteria and the established evaluation objectives. Under this logic, the operational design of the exercise is summarized below.

Table 2. Cluster-based operational design of the evaluation

SELECTED CLUSTERS		
Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management Intervention focus: increasing preparedness and coordination capabilities for cash transfer programs	Risk Management Policy and Practice Intervention focus: improving capacities and skills to adopt CTP in response to emergencies.	
MAIN AXES OF ANALYSIS		
Coordination	Capacity Building and Training	Policy and Planning
DETERMINANT VARIABLES FOR ANALYSIS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparedness and coordination capacities • Coordination at the level of humanitarian organizations • Coordination at the level of governmental entities • Participation in coordination mechanisms • Participation in inter-agency actions • Allocation of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacities and skills resulting from training processes • Prevalence of skills and knowledge • Participation or leadership in change processes • Changes in normative or regulatory frameworks • Participation in cash transfer programming • Development and implementation of plans, strategies, and policies • National or local risk assessments • Changes in national risk management systems • Adapted or adjusted social protection programs 	

Based on the proposed operational design, the evaluation matrix was structured, establishing the scheme under which each technical criterion would be addressed (relevance, coherence, efficacy, efficiency, and sustainability). Thus, for each criterion, evaluation questions were defined that included the determining variables of analysis and were aligned with the sectors and sub-sectors of

the project's programmatic structure, thus integrating the evaluation matrix that can be consulted in Annex A.

2.3.1 Main analysis tools

Three main tools were used in the evaluation process, making it possible to meet both the demand for information and the level of analysis established in the evaluation matrix. The first tool refers to compiling all available secondary information to develop an appropriate state of the art on the project's implementation. Under this line of action, more than thirty documents were reviewed, including progress reports, work protocols, and work plans, as can be seen in the list shown in Annex B below.

The second tool is linked to a rapid assessment workshop based on the most significant change technique. This virtual workshop followed a three-step sequence: 1) setting the domains of change to be examined, 2) narrative presentation according to the domains of change, and 3) participatory feedback on the narratives of change. GOAL convened the meeting, in which 14 people participated, including members of the project's technical team and representatives of partner organizations.

The third tool is the application of more than thirty interviews with key informants, developed according to a set of stakeholders organized based on a sample. The evaluation team conducted the interviews between January 30 and February 17, 2023. GOAL convened each selected person according to dates agreed with the consulting team; the approach modality was face-to-face or virtual, depending on the convenience of the person consulted. The team developed interview guides for each group that can be consulted in Annex C.

2.3.2 Main stakeholders consulted

The stakeholders consulted were selected based on a non-probabilistic sampling design, specifically convenience sampling, under which the stakeholders were organized into groups. The individuals in each group were selected based on their knowledge of or direct experience with the project. A participation quota was defined for groups in each country, and the research instruments (interviews) were applied only to the individuals selected for each group. Following this approach, the structured sample design was as follows:

Table 3. Proposed sample design for the evaluation

Organized stakeholder groups	Estimated participation share of key stakeholders per country				Total
	Honduras	Guatemala	El Salvador	Dominican Republic	
1. Project team, including the different levels	6	1	1	1	9
2. Members of the cash working groups	2	2	2	Not applicable ⁴	6
3. Members of the humanitarian country team	3	1	2	1	7
4. Members of the national risk systems	1	1	1	Not applicable ⁵	3
5. Social protection program leaders or managers	1	1	1	2	5
6. Other strategic allies or stakeholders	2	1	2	2	7
Total number of persons to be consulted (two additional persons not linked to a country were added)					39

⁴ In the country, a CWG was not implemented. However, for the purposes of the evaluation, the adaptive social protection table was consulted, a figure with which the project collaborated.

⁵ During project implementation, the country's civil defense did not show a genuine interest in the CTP; therefore, during the evaluation process, no consultations were held.

The evaluation team interviewed 79% of the stakeholders⁶ from the defined sample. The main reason for not complying with the sample was the lack of response from some stakeholders to the interview request. GOAL made several efforts to confirm the interviews with these stakeholders, including extending the period of primary information collection by one week from what was initially planned. Under this scenario, the stakeholder details can be seen in Annex D.

2.4 Technical limitations of the evaluation process

The evaluation exercise was structured to respond to the previously stated objectives. However, there were some technical limitations derived from aspects beyond the consulting team's control. The first limitation was that information obtained through the tools applied can't be generalized to all stakeholders directly or indirectly linked to the project because only a specific group of stakeholders selected under a non-probabilistic sampling method were consulted. However, this limitation is reduced to the extent that the project generated sufficient secondary information for all the stakeholders involved, which made it possible to obtain a complete picture of the project's results and the assessment of the technical criteria that were the object of analysis in the evaluation exercise.

The second limitation lies in the changes made by the governments of some countries. These changes led to modifications in the institutional structures or the composition of the technical or managerial teams with which the project was articulated, limiting the historical memory these actors had regarding to the project in some areas considered essential for the evaluation. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation exercise reinforced the process of triangulating information, especially from all the secondary information provided, through which it was possible to recreate the project's contributions despite the changes experienced. In addition, a constant review and validation of the key informants selected in conjunction with GOAL were maintained, including the possibility of on-site replacement as needed, to ensure the collection of all the required information for the evaluation.

III. EVALUATION FINDINGS PER CRITERIA ANALYZED

Based on the methodology described above, this section presents the results of the analysis carried out considering all the information obtained, and throughout the triangulation of sources, it was possible to present findings based on evidence, thus complying with the objectives and scope of the evaluation exercise. These findings are based on the five technical criteria: relevance, coherence, efficacy, efficiency, and sustainability. In turn, each criterion addresses the research questions proposed for this exercise.

3.1 Relevance

Finding 1. *The project design, based on the knowledge management of experiences such as the CTP in the dry corridor of Honduras and the project's first phase regarding capacity building of NDRMS, was relevant to continue adopting the CTP.*

The main lesson learned from the intervention in the Honduran Dry Corridor was the need to form working groups to improve the coordination of actions. This was implemented during the project's first phase through Cash Working Groups (CWG) in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras⁷. In turn, this stage pointed out the need to integrate two new elements during 2018 to 2022: a) the participation of social protection systems⁸ and b) the promotion of normative or regulatory changes. This resulted

⁶ The total number of people consulted during the evaluation process was 31, of which 16 were men and 15 were women.

⁷ In the Dominican Republic, the group was not implemented due to the existence of the Adaptive Social Protection Table.

⁸ Social protection systems comprise the bodies responsible for mitigating and preventing situations of poverty and vulnerability.

in the definition of two strategies: 1) the strengthening of a network of actors coordinated and prepared to implement cash transfers and 2) the creation of an enabling environment through capacity building, as well as the improvement of regulatory instruments specific to cash transfers⁹.

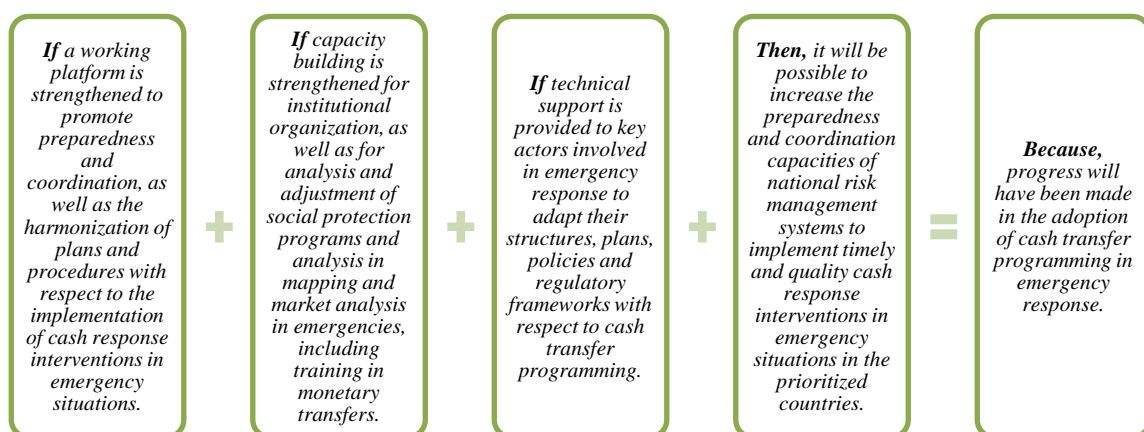
The adaptation of both aspects proved relevant. Regarding the participation of social protection systems in conjunction with the humanitarian sector, having organizations with a greater degree of experience in adoption, such as the World Food Program (WFP) or the Red Cross, was significant to the extent that these lessons were used to strengthen the capacities of organizations with incipient information on the operation of cash transfers. Regarding promoting normative or regulatory changes, identifying progress and gaps was relevant, considering that this analysis indicated that adoption is affected by the NDRMS's limited institutional faculties in comparison with those available to the social protection sector and that, therefore, the role of the former must necessarily be articulated with the latter.

"[...] I was at a meeting, and I remember a question from one organization; they asked me: where do we manage cash transfer projects? There was no basic knowledge of what cash transfers meant [...]" Member of the CWG, El Salvador.

Finding 2. *The project's intervention logic and programmatic structure adequately responded to the problems identified and the needs observed for adopting cash transfers, i.e., there was a causal correspondence between the objectives, the results, and the interventions proposed.*

As mentioned above, the project was based on knowledge management of similar experiences. This contributed to designing a causal scheme in line with the needs of the context on CTP adoption. The analysis of the programmatic structure allowed the evaluation team to infer that the project's implementation strategy implicitly presents a relevant and robust theory of change thanks to the alignment of its objectives and expected results. That is, the project design responded adequately to the particular conditions of each country for preparedness and coordination of cash-based response interventions in emergencies and to the timeliness of adopting the programming. The theory of change approach is shown below.

Illustration 1. Proposed project theory of change diagram



⁹ This learning is particularly the result of Guatemala's experience in the management of the *Volcán de Fuego* emergency, where one of the main difficulties was the limited knowledge of the institutions in terms of damage assessment and needs analysis.

Although, in general terms, the project's intervention logic is robust and responds to the countries' conditions, there is a need and/or opportunity to place greater emphasis on monitoring the countries' normative or regulatory frameworks. The project contributed to increasing knowledge of these frameworks. In the case of the Dominican Republic, it was able to provide technical support in guiding the draft bill under discussion. However, one reason why it wasn't possible to achieve full adoption of cash transfers by the governing bodies of the risk management systems was due to the leadership faculties granted to social protection systems and not to risk management systems¹⁰, which correspond to other regulatory frameworks - specific to public administration - that exceeded the scope of the project but that should be considered in future scenarios to facilitate the interaction between these actors.

"We were able to observe that Guatemala lacks legislation that typifies the roles in the event of an emergency. The capacity to respond is not preventive but reactive. Through the exchange with other countries, we noticed that they have a preventive system for any emergency. However, Guatemala has this deficit, and we were able to understand that much of the lack of response is due to Guatemalan legislation and the structure of the Ministry of Social Development [...]". Member of the CWG, Guatemala.

Finding 3. *The advocacy strategy with governments worked to ensure participation in the definition and execution of cash transfers, which was relevant to achieve its positioning. Initially, the project's approach focused more on the leadership of humanitarian groups; however, the shift toward the government promoted coordination.*

The pandemic was a driving force behind CTP adoption in the participating countries, given the need for governments to deliver goods or services without establishing direct contact with the beneficiary populations. At the same time, the health crisis represented a challenge due to the limited participation of organizations in the humanitarian sector or the participation of actors without decision-making power in virtual spaces, making it challenging to generate synergies. Therefore, the project aimed at strengthening the articulation with the government as a window of opportunity to open spaces and position the CWG, turning them into technical instances. This last aspect and a permanent dialogue and communication strategy with the stakeholders involved allowed the project to overcome staff turnover in government institutions and reduce tensions due to government participation.

The dialogue strategy with governments included several elements: an exhaustive mapping of the network of actors in the social protection system, including a legal analysis of the attributions of the different entities to select those with which interaction was essential, i.e., organizations that exercised leadership in the systems; and a diagnosis to delve into training needs to offer personalized responses targeted at each organization. It also included presentations of successful experiences of appropriate cash transfers in different formats, such as field visits and invitations to learn about success stories in the CWG or private meetings. All these elements together motivated the participation of social protection sector government entities.

"I believe that this project is precisely that, to identify the needs or areas of strength and what we need to enhance in the government sector, to identify them and have a response plan for that. The project helped us identify and sensitize and opened doors with the government sector so that we can work together with them [...]". Member of the CWG, Guatemala.

¹⁰ It should be noted that in Honduras and Guatemala, COPECO and SE-CONRED were able to lead strategic changes through the delivery protocols for emergency response and participation in the MIDES coordination table that belongs to the risk management unit.

This decision was relevant to the extent that it allowed the cash transfer groups to be at the center of discussions around cash-based adoption and to offer their expertise to strengthen this assistance mechanism. It was also relevant because the scale of the projects forced the different key actors of the NDRMS to specialize in one or another thematic area to produce public policy inputs and to generate closer working relationships with organizations with which they would not otherwise have connected. The challenge is to ensure that the mechanism is not an instrument for political proselytism that affects the welfare of the most vulnerable populations and the reputation of the humanitarian organizations that have achieved legitimacy with them.

Finding 4. *The strengthening of preparedness and coordination capacities was relevant and achieved mainly through three mechanisms: 1) the training process; 2) the exchange of experiences; and 3) the generation of technical inputs, the latter two within the framework of the efforts of the CWG and the social protection systems.*

At the beginning of the project, the participating actors evidenced disarticulation among the members of the humanitarian, social and civil protection sectors, as well as limited interaction among these actors. Aspects reflected in the lack of knowledge of the objectives of each participating entity and the duplicity of responses to the same populations. In contrast, at the end of the project, the actors reported progress in their preparation and coordination capacities, knowledge of the interventions and the populations served by the different participating organizations in the CWG, the coordination of joint actions in the field, and the mutual technical assistance provided in the case of cash transfers. It's worth mentioning that most of the stakeholders interviewed, based on their narratives, do not seem to make clear distinctions between preparedness and coordination capacities. However, when delving deeper into practical aspects, it becomes clear that they not only manage to establish the differences but also the complementarities that must exist between these two critical elements of CTP.

These capacities were strengthened through training processes, exchange of experiences, and generation of technical inputs. With regard to training, several characteristics were relevant for capacity building, such as the following: a) the articulation with the CaLP generated greater interest among participants both for the recognition of this organization and for the incentive of receiving a certification; b) the training process functioned as a propaedeutic through which basic knowledge on CTP was leveled; and c) the specialized courses generated adherence from the entities because they responded to their specific needs. Among the aspects to be improved, some stakeholders stated that future experiences in virtual environments should include new pedagogical elements that add dynamism to the workshops.

Mechanisms for exchanging experiences and generating technical inputs arose within the framework of the CWGs for Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador and the adaptive social protection roundtable in the Dominican Republic. These groups were enriched by the experiences occurring in the region through participation in case presentations, which motivated the groups and the roundtable to provide feedback and participate in developing CTP initiatives. In addition, the tools developed by the CWG, such as process standardization for defining cash transfer amounts and market studies in emergencies, among others, strengthened technical capacities in cash-based responses and thus improved coordination among actors.

Finding 5. *The approach based on articulating the social protection, civil protection, and humanitarian sectors, as well as the cash transfer groups' training and role, effectively strengthened the capacities of the institutions with which the project worked.*

The project's contribution to consolidating the CWG and the emphasis on ensuring closer ties between

the different sectors improved inter-institutional coordination. Although the inclusion of social protection and civil protection sector institutions in the groups was considered a reputational risk due to citizens' distrust in the management and use of funds allocated to cash transfers because of the risk of "clientelism," in general, the interviewees expressed the need to work with these sectors mainly for two reasons, the first resides in the legislative power they have to promote this type of transfers and the second, in that their scope, in terms of coverage, is broader compared to that achieved by NGOs.

"SEDESOL is an economically strong institution; COPECO does not manage cash, it manages inputs, kits, but SEDESOL manages cash, therefore, COPECO provides the mapping, the form, obtains the information and SEDESOL the monetary part, and we see how we complement each other [...]" Member of the NDRMS, Honduras.

With regard to capacities, the various stakeholders consulted expressed that the training and capacity-building processes were relevant. They all stated that knowledge and capabilities were strengthened due to the training processes, spaces for exchange, and creation of policy instruments and technical inputs within the framework of the CWG, with market analysis being the most important. However, one factor that worked against the project was related to staff turnover in the institutions, which affected the progress achieved in the interaction between institutions. The rotation affected fulfilling indicators associated with following up on skill retention, given the difficulty of re-contacting the participants. The project resolved this aspect through dialogue and restructuring relations with the organizations that underwent transitions.

"[...] then, due to work arrangements and circumstances, they changed people, today we go with one person and tomorrow we go with another, so there was no continuity. There was no willingness perhaps on the part of the decision-makers to say: yes, we are interested, and I am going to establish a reference point with this person [...]" Member of the project leadership team, Honduras.

"I believe that there was an important strengthening of the teams' technical capacities, especially in risk management, which isn't necessarily a topic we had as a strong point in the institution. I also think it was positive to extend good practices or positive methodologies such as the one ADDES has in the Dominican Republic to other countries that do not necessarily have such a mature social protection system..." Representative of social protection programs, Dominican Republic.

3.2 Coherence

Finding 6. *The designed activities included the needs of humanitarian, social, and civil protection actors, reflected in the joint definition of work plans and the increased participation of these actors in the initiatives carried out concerning cash transfers.*

The CWG work plans for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras show evidence that capacity building for CTP was adapted to the particularities of each country. El Salvador focused on information exchange, capacity building for governmental and non-governmental actors, and implementing a communication and awareness-raising strategy aimed at the general public. In the case of Guatemala, the emphasis was on procedures for operation, coordination, and information exchange among actors, as well as on training processes. Finally, the work plan in Honduras included harmonizing criteria for establishing the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), market monitoring, and capacity building in fundamentals and cash-based modalities.

The project had a strong emphasis on knowledge management, evidenced by the fact that the CWG meetings addressed issues like the relevance of "petit committees" and analyzed the difficulties of implementing cash transfers in the field, that is, analyzing the implications of this mechanism in the life and context of the cash transfer beneficiaries.

In terms of capacity building for NDRMS through training in CTP, the project was able to adapt to the context and the needs of the actors in this sector. Regarding the context, mobility restrictions due to the pandemic made it necessary to modify the training planned under a face-to-face methodology and move towards a virtual one. Regarding the second aspect, the project was able to involve the institutions that play the role of coordinating the NDRMS in transfer experiences and designing training plans adjusted to their needs. This type of strategy was extended to other actors with which the project was able to generate synergies to adapt specialized training, such as MIDES in Guatemala and ADESS and SUPÉRATE in the Dominican Republic.

In addition to the above, the organizations learned about various modalities for implementing cash transfers that are applicable in emergency contexts and that serve to make the transfer more efficient and secure. In addition, through exchanging experiences, they identified private actors (telecommunications and financial sector) that could support the initiatives. Although the participation of the private sector was seen as a factor to be strengthened due to the fact that a broad commitment was not achieved, in those initiatives where their articulation was achieved, it was possible to demonstrate improvements in the process, as occurred in the case of the Dominican Republic after the exchange sessions with the process carried out by Honduras..

"I remember that in one of the exchanges we had as part of the project, specifically the one we had in Honduras, an initiative that had CTP via SMS linked to the country's telecommunications entities was presented. Months after that experience, we were hit by a hurricane, and some of the families we responded to were through the SMS mechanism. In other words, it was very interesting to learn about that experience, that mechanism, because we were able to adopt that practice, and it was really effective..." Representative of social protection programs, Dominican Republic.

3.3 Efficacy

Finding 7. *The project's programmatic performance was optimal, considering that 85% of the indicators met the targets established in the results framework. Under this compliance scenario, it is possible to infer that the project quantitatively met the programmatic aspirations defined in its objectives.*

The information provided through reports and verification means shows that the proposed goal was met in most of the indicators (85%). The difference is related to the progress recorded in two of the project's indicators for the second sector: i) percentage of people trained who retain skills and knowledge after two months, and ii) number of NRMS that have led changes to provide humanitarian assistance using cash transfers. In the first case, according to the perception of those consulted, achieving the target was affected mainly by the degree of personnel turnover and by the diversity of responsibilities assigned by their entities to the personnel who received the training, creating conditions for the knowledge acquired to be diluted more quickly because it was not constantly reinforced by practice.

In the second case, according to the interviewees, compliance was affected by the purpose of the NDRMS. As part of the civil protection structure, they do not have sufficient resources to lead strategic

changes regarding adopting cash transfers. However, in three of the four NDRMS, important changes were achieved concerning the use of cash transfers in emergencies. Under this scenario, it's possible to affirm that the project achieved the objectives and results established, considering that the interventions developed contributed to improving the operational capacities of the entities that are part of the NDRMS to implement initiatives based on monetary transfers.

Table 4. Programmatic performance versus compliance with indicators

No.	Indicators	General target	Final achievement	% compliance
Sector 1: Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management				
1	Number of humanitarian organizations actively coordinating	60	116	193%
2	Number of humanitarian organizations actively participating in the Inter-Agency coordination mechanisms (e.g., Humanitarian Country Team, clusters, etc.)	60	102	170%
3	3.1 Number of humanitarian agencies participating in joint inter-agency assessments	42	42	100%
	3.1 Percentage of humanitarian agencies participating in joint inter-agency assessments	100%	100%	
4	Number of key stakeholders among the NDRMS and humanitarian community allocate resources (funds, Human resources, logistics, etc.) to roll out Cash Transfer Programming.	5	19	380%
Sector 2: Risk Management Policy and Practice				
5	Number of people trained in disaster preparedness, mitigation, and management, by sex	175	517*	295%
6	Number of people passing final exams or receiving certificates, by sex	108	402**	372%
7	Percentage of people trained who retain skills and knowledge after two months	70%	39%	56%
8	Percentage of people trained leading and/or involved in the process of strategic changes and/or coordination or roll out of Cash Transfer Programming	50%	97%	194%
9	Number of hazard risk reduction plans, strategies, policies, disaster preparedness, and contingency plans developed and in place	6	6	100%
10	Number of people participating in discussions regarding national risk reduction strategies as a result of the program, by sex	175	462***	264%
11	National and local risk assessment, hazards data and vulnerability information is available within targeted areas (Y/N)	Si	Si	N/A
12	Number of National Disaster Risk Management Systems that have led strategic changes to deliver humanitarian assistance using cash transfer programming.	4	3	75%
13	% of social protection programs adapted to and/or in process to increase social assistance vertically (increase the amount of the transfers) or horizontally (increased number of target population).	50%	50/%	100%

* 244 women y 273 men

** 199 women y 203 men

*** 227 women y 235 men

Finding 8. *The recognized contributions of the project are the improved knowledge and conceptualization concerning the contributions of cash transfers in emergencies, the level of government empowerment, and the increased willingness towards inter-institutional articulation for an adequate cash-based response management.*

The action focused on improving knowledge and conceptualization of what cash transfers are, and their positive effects on humanitarian assistance in emergencies are well appreciated by both governmental entities and NGOs involved in the project's implementation. Recognizing the progress made in positioning the discussion on cash-based interventions at different levels, making it possible

for most national governments to seek empowerment and ownership of the discussions in order to assess structural changes regarding humanitarian assistance in the field of social protection and civil protection, which has resulted in an increased willingness towards inter-institutional articulation for adequate coordination regarding cash-based response management in emergency contexts. This willingness involves governmental and non-governmental entities, including international cooperation related to humanitarian country teams (HCT).

"I believe that [the project] has contributed precisely to improve the knowledge and understanding of what cash transfers are, on the one hand. On the other hand, it has helped to promote discussion not only at the level of international cooperation organizations, but also at the level of governments, empowering them and giving them ownership [...], promoting greater inter-institutional coordination to better manage these cash transfer programs". Member of the humanitarian country team, Honduras.

A scenario in which the project's contribution is recognized, not only for positioning CTP on the national authorities' agenda or the interest generated in improving inter-institutional coordination but also for generating tools such as market analyses that lead to strengthening cash-based responses. This also includes recognition of contributions made in terms of new knowledge through technical assistance and training, allowing, in some cases, to support reform processes as was the case of the Dominican Republic within the framework of the revision of Law 147-02, which seeks to achieve better coordination between social protection and civil protection from the risk management perspective.

"The project participated in the exercise of advocacy and revision of the law [147-02]. First, it was only the project, then the adaptive social protection roundtable and the risk prevention forum were integrated [...], all of whom joined with the knowledge they had acquired through training. We all had a voice to achieve the integration of social protection within this law, that is, in what will be the risk management policy." Member of the project leadership team, Dominican Republic

Finding 9. *The mechanism based on the structuring and functioning of CWG has facilitated conditions for increasing coordination and preparedness capacities to move towards the adoption of cash-based interventions in emergency situations.*

The group of organizations interested in working or strengthening their current work on cash-based interventions has structured spaces that promote information analysis and coordination of initiatives, as well as the preparation of actions for adopting cash-based responses in emergencies. These spaces were promoted and managed by the project mainly in the countries that are part of the Central American Northern Triangle¹¹, and are called "Cash Working Groups", which have facilitated articulation between organizations that commonly did not communicate or did not relate to each other to intervene in emergency situations in a coordinated manner, especially from the cash transfer approach. Therefore, within the framework of these spaces, the project's contribution in creating conditions that increase coordination and preparedness capacities in this area is recognized, making it possible for more than one hundred organizations to participate directly (102) but also to actively articulate actions (116) under this mechanism.

In this regard, it should be noted that this mechanism, based on its terms of reference, has managed to establish its work dynamics in the structure of the HCTs, which has allowed it to generate a condition

¹¹ These countries are: Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. In the particular case of the Dominican Republic, the project worked with the Adaptive Social Protection Roundtable, an institutional space that had already been established.

of sustainability, which, although not fully consolidated, is relevant to continue providing contributions that enable progress towards the adoption of cash-based responses in emergency situations. However, according to the information gathered, the CWG still need to reinforce five elements: 1) Promote common positions on CTP; 2) Promote the development of cash-based response strategies; 3) Reinforce common standards and approaches to ensure proper implementation of cash transfers; 4) Strengthen capacities in this area through technical support; and 5) Promote the empowered participation of governments. These aspects are essential to strengthen their positioning and sustainability, but the progress they have made in the following actions is also recognized:

- To harmonize and standardize tools to promote and guide the use of cash transfers.
- To establish standards and criteria for handling, managing, and disseminating information.
- Generate information to support cash transfer adoption based mainly on market studies.

Chart 1. The dynamics, progress, and challenge of the CWG

"The dynamics of the groups have been established, especially in the humanitarian teams, but this has been stronger in Honduras and Guatemala. We have worked with the adaptive table [...] in the Dominican Republic. In the case of El Salvador, it has been challenging, we have tried to make the group the technical reference on the subject [...], but there were many changes in the government institution structure, so I say that it has been the slowest work, but efforts were made even to link the Ministry of Social Development and the Presidency" Member of the project leader team, Honduras.

"In our case, when we started in the leadership, there were 22 organizations. Part of our work has been to energize the group, achieving the articulation between organizations that commonly did not communicate [...]. We also have standardized protocols to guide transfers and information-sharing criteria [...] Now we are 30 organizations that seek to strengthen the coordination of initiatives in times of emergency" Member of the CWG, Guatemala.

"We have the path, and we have the space in the humanitarian team, with the advances in terms of protocols and research on issues such as market mapping, we are already generating and sharing information [...], there are still challenges that we must overcome such as promoting common positions, advancing in concrete strategies and supporting the capacities of both our members and other organizations [...] In the end, we must also link the government if we want to achieve a humanitarian response approach within the social protection systems". Member of the CWG, Honduras.

In addition to the above, another key aspect to highlight regarding the CWG is their focus on humanitarian organizations¹², from which the project, based on its initial strategy, sought to establish a core of pressure on national governments to bring about the necessary changes to advance the adoption of CTP in emergency situations. However, in practice, such pressure was not possible since governmental entities were not included in the CWG. The project adjusted its strategy and based on the perceived interest of governments, took advantage of the maturity demonstrated by the entities responsible for risk management systems and social protection programs to have a direct impact. Thus, although the CWG are contributing to creating conditions for increasing coordination and preparedness capacities for a cash-based response, their contribution is focused for now on the context

¹² These organizations include: UN Agencies, International Non-Governmental Organizations and National Non-Governmental Organizations.

of humanitarian organizations leading the project to move forward under a different line of work with governments. However, it is important to recognize that in the short term, this aspect could change, considering that in countries such as Honduras and Guatemala, there are specific efforts to incorporate the governing institutions of the social protection systems into the CWG.

"The project was designed with the vision of creating transfer groups to influence governments [...] In reality, it was the opposite, the project had to perceive the interest of governments, who showed more maturity in interpreting and using these tools [...] So the project went from being a project for humanitarian organizations to a project for governments". Member of the project leadership team, Honduras.

Finding 10. *There is recognition that the capacities of NDRMS and social protection programs have increased and that they now have the knowledge and tools that enable them to have a basis from which to advance toward using CTP in emergencies.*

Capacity building through training and technical assistance programs is a recognized project contribution, with more than 400 people (402) completing the training process and receiving their respective certifications. The knowledge acquired has made it possible to advance goals and technical processes considered strategic to expand the use of CTP in emergencies, contributing to strengthening institutional technical capacity in entities responsible for NDRMS and entities leading social protection programs. It has also facilitated creating protocols and methodologies that constitute a solid basis for promoting experience sharing and exchanging good practices among countries, thus enabling a more coordinated regional development of CTP with a humanitarian approach that better articulates civil protection and social protection.

"The truth is that after having carried out these trainings [...] we have had significant progress in cash transfers in all its processes, thus favoring our goals and internal technical processes [...] there was a lot of strengthening at the institutional technical level". Representative of social protection programs, Guatemala

"I believe that there was an important strengthening of technical capacities, especially in risk management, which is not necessarily a topic that we were strong in [...] I also believe that we can continue extending good practices and methodologies to other countries [...] it is positive to have better regional development in terms of cash transfers". Representative of social protection programs, Dominican Republic.

Three aspects have been key to the progress made in capacity building. The first is related to defining capacity-building plans in most countries, enabling a more organized process aligned with the training and technical assistance needs identified by the entities, and promoting a scenario of formality regarding institutional strengthening actions. The second aspect is linked to establishing alliances with regional actors recognized for their knowledge and experience, such as CaLP, facilitating the certification of the entire training process, and validating contents and a sustained approach with the entities to advance in technical assistance¹³. The third aspect is associated with the experience exchanges between countries, creating opportunities to share not only knowledge but also different ways and methodologies of working in the area of cash transfers, laying the foundations for more effective humanitarian assistance.

¹³ Another interesting alliance has been with CASHCAP, where, towards the end of the project, a specialist was brought in to improve coordination between the humanitarian sector and the Ministry of Social Development of Guatemala (MIDES).

However, under this same line of analysis, it should be noted that the percentage of people who reported retention of skills and knowledge after the training processes is low (39%), which implies the need to evaluate possible adjustments to the strategies employed. The replication scheme under the trainer-of-trainers approach could be considered among the available options. It would generate conditions for knowledge and skills not only to be practiced until they are consolidated but also to extend them to more people and increase the possibilities of installing capacities in the entities despite the inherent processes of personnel turnover, especially at the governmental level. Despite this situation, the knowledge and skills that are still retained are related to the following elements:

- Better respond to people's needs based on proper knowledge of transfer modalities.
- Targeting families with the greatest needs, considering that being in the same emergency zone does not mean all have the same needs.
- Prepare mechanisms and services within an alliance and coordination framework with other organizations.
- Acting with local leadership, local authorities' role and knowledge is vital to accelerating timely and quality responses.

"Knowing and putting into practice what we now know about modalities has been very good for us, as it opens up the possibility of thinking in terms of people's needs. Also, the issue of targeting the families most in need has been important [...] The question of how to prepare the mechanisms and services with other organizations is another issue that we are implementing [...], without forgetting the work with local leadership to be more effective in the humanitarian responses we seek to provide, these entities must participate". Member of the humanitarian country team, El Salvador.

Finding 11. *The project has contributed to establishing the necessary preconditions to implement CTP. In the short to medium term could lead to the effective adoption by NDRMS and social protection programs in emergencies.*

The analysis of the extent to which it has been possible to implement the CTP or its effective adoption in emergency contexts shows opposing positions among the actors involved in the project. However, one element on which these positions converge is the recognition of the contribution to establish preconditions so that this objective can become more significant in the short or medium term. This perspective does not seek to minimize the fact that a good percentage of the NDRMS supported (75%) are making strategic changes to incorporate cash transfers or that a good percentage (50%) of the assisted social protection programs are carrying out initiatives focused on integrating the humanitarian approach. Progress has been based precisely on established preconditions, focused mainly on three lines of action: 1) review and impact on regulatory frameworks; 2) review and impact on technical tools; and 3) review and impact on initiatives considered pilot projects.

For the first line, the actions in the countries were not directed towards defining proposals for adjustments or presenting new regulatory frameworks since the project was strategically aligned with the initiatives or efforts underway, generating evidence to promote the changes required in each of the countries. Therefore, the focus of the interventions was to carry out comprehensive reviews of the normative or regulatory frameworks. As a result, these reviews demonstrated to the entities that the current instruments did not limit the use of cash transfers in emergencies, raising awareness among authorities to generate technical tools or establish pilot initiatives. However, in some specific cases, there was progress in advocacy actions, such as the process of incorporating social protection in the draft bill of the new law on risk management in the Dominican Republic or the exercise of positioning the new law on the creation of an Emergency Fund in Honduras, to which the national risk

management system can have access. Actions in which the project's contribution is recognized.

"We did not influence the regulatory framework. We simply took the regulatory framework, looked to see if there were any obstacles to carrying out cash transfers [...] we demonstrated that there were no obstacles and that perhaps the organizations or institutions only need a bylaw [...] Then we sensitized the authorities". Member of the project leadership team, Honduras.

"I believe that one of the most important processes or impacts that has taken place was raising awareness among national authorities on cash transfers [...] before, it was very difficult to hear a civil protection director talk about cash transfers as an alternative when responding to an emergency". Member of the CWG, El Salvador.

The second line of action, which refers to technical tools, highlights the project's contribution through several concrete interventions. In the case of the Dominican Republic, the contribution provided to the basic emergency guide or the operating manual for executing the emergency voucher, initiatives from which other national social protection system documents were generated. In the case of Guatemala, the project provided support to prepare a protocol to execute single assistance voucher, as well as an analysis to calculate the MEB. In the case of Honduras, there was support for structuring a protocol for assistance in the context of the pandemic, a protocol for drought assistance, and a protocol for monetary transfers under the single voucher initiative. In addition, the project collaborated on the proposal of a single form for cash transfers for future emergencies in coordination with the Permanent Contingencies Commission (COPECO) and the Secretariat of Development and Social Inclusion (SEDESOL). Tools that help strengthen institutional capacities to implement cash transfers.

"Regarding cash transfer adoption, the functions that I would say were most noteworthy were the revisions carried out with tools, including guides, protocols or manuals [...] I believe that a central contribution was in this line". Member of the project leadership team, Dominican Republic.

"To say that transfers have already been taken as a tool is difficult, but undoubtedly basic conditions have been left to achieve this purpose [...], working with tools is one of these conditions that have been left, there are good advances around this point, but the work must be continued". Member of the humanitarian country group, Honduras.

And for the third line of action linked to pilot initiatives, the progress achieved is recognized as a result of the tools developed and the technical assistance the project provided. The main modality under which these initiatives were developed is through single or emergency vouchers, highlighting the experience of the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Honduras. The purpose has focused on improving coordination and preparedness capacities using CTP under a humanitarian approach, considering a close collaboration between different organizations. They also seek to illustrate, in practice, how governments can overcome the challenges posed by using cash transfers to improve their preparedness and response measures in emergency contexts. Consequently, these initiatives point the way to defining mechanisms that can be translated into tools for governments and humanitarian teams to respond in a timely manner to any emergency.

Chart 2. The single emergency voucher initiative, instruments for change

"An achievement in the institutionalization of the emergency voucher, which although it is not only the project's, its something in which we all participated [...] The emergency

voucher was created by decree, so it is a government instrument to respond to emergencies [...], there is already a mechanism, it can be used for any emergency"
Member of the project leadership team, Dominican Republic.

"[the voucher] can improve preparedness measures through the use of humanitarian cash transfer programs [...] It also illustrates how governments can learn to overcome the challenges of using cash transfer programs to improve their preparedness measures for future emergency responses" Case study, Honduras.

"The experience of other countries is guiding us, for example, the voucher [...] Although it was not a direct part of the project, with the knowledge we acquired, we are trying to develop our own initiative [...] We are establishing alliances with financial entities to operate cash transfers in emergency cases, currently through our advocacy, we have managed to get "Banrural" to create a product through a credential so that people can receive cash transfers". Member of the money transfer group, Guatemala.

In the context of these action lines and their contribution to establishing preconditions to implement CTP or its effective adoption in emergency contexts, the contribution they made to strengthen the nexus between humanitarian assistance and development was also recognized, considering that cash-based responses, among many purposes, seek to reactivate markets after an emergency to facilitate a better-organized transition to development. This perspective is known as a resilient system, which, among other aspects, aims to reactivate employment and income generation opportunities so as not to build the economic fabric from scratch in emergencies. However, despite these advances, to overcome the preconditions and achieve the effective implementation or adoption of CTP in emergency contexts, it's necessary to address or overcome the following challenges, which guide the path that still needs to be followed in the countries:

- Standardize processes, protocols, and regulations regarding cash transfers at the regional level.
- Structure and implement multi-year programs to sustain the resources required to promote structural changes, such as regulatory frameworks.
- Strengthen current coordination mechanisms under a system principle that links the humanitarian sector, civil protection, and social protection.
- Accelerate the technical upgrading of processes, especially those related to databases, information systems, and user records.
- Strengthen the link with the financial system, especially regarding access, product creation, and user banking.
- Generate evidence on the effects of cash transfers, including measuring program impacts.

Finding 12. *Within the framework of the interventions carried out, the project achieved some effects or results not initially foreseen, mainly related localizing CTP under a coordinated effort with municipalities, positioning the importance of better preparedness to respond to emergencies.*

The project's intervention strategy incorporated a local perspective, which, although not initially foreseen, made it possible to include a localization approach to CTP. This perspective responded to the project's adaptability, which, in the context of government transition, found it necessary to explore new approaches to advance in fulfilling its objectives and results. This approach was developed in coordination with municipalities and municipality associations, addressing lines such as training and technical assistance processes to incorporate cash-based responses in emergencies, creating drought response protocols in the dry corridor of Honduras. These actions positioned the importance and the need for local governments to be better prepared to act in emergencies. These actions were mainly

carried out in Honduras, with some tests or approaches in El Salvador.

"The project strategy focused on the communities or municipalities, thus introducing a localized approach to cash transfer programs [...] The contribution was felt, for example, by defining protocols to provide drought response." Representative of project partners, Honduras.

3.4 Efficiency

Finding 13. *The project's planning and financial execution structure prioritized investment in programmatic lines over operational lines, with 67% of the financial resources oriented towards ensuring the necessary inputs to achieve objectives and expected results while maintaining a basic operational structure.*

From the financial information provided, it is possible to observe that the project executed all of the resources (1,719,829 USD). Most of the financial resources were concentrated on securing the necessary inputs for the lines of work defined in the project design proposal. Thus, program expenses represented 67%, and operating expenses 33% of the total budget. In terms of compliance with the approved budget, there is no information on adjustments or movements between key sections of the budget. Fifteen percent of the resources were invested in the first sector related to humanitarian coordination and information management, and 52% in the second sector related to policy advocacy and risk management practices, where most of the project's interventions were concentrated. Based on this behavior and compliance, the evaluation infers that financial resources were efficiently managed.

Table 5. Project budget execution

Total financed value: USD 1,719,829		
Budget section	Total executed budget USD	
	Value	%
Programmatic expenditures, humanitarian coordination, and information management sector	250,023	15%
Programmatic expenditures, risk management policy, and practice sector	886,444	52%
Operating costs	583,362	33%
Total	1,719,829	100%

Finding 14. *The programmatic implementation was based on tools that contributed to improving the interventions' efficiency, among which the OCR Assessments, the Resilience Analyses on Cash Transfer Programs and the specialized analyses on Emergency Market Mapping stand out.*

The analysis of Organizational Cash Readiness¹⁴ and Resilience of Cash Transfer Programs¹⁵ boosted the project's efficiency and adaptability. Within the framework of these analyses, the project established coordination and alliances with different actors, even guiding the allocation of resources and strategic communication to advance toward fulfilling the project's objectives. In addition, they made it possible to position actions at the level of national authorities and transcendental information for making informed decisions regarding cash-based response in emergencies. This generated knowledge to guide coordination and preparedness among civil and social protection entities in the CTP and their link with humanitarian organizations in the countries. This knowledge was appropriate for managing the transition processes of new governments based on the information generated.

¹⁴ According to the information shared, these analyses were conducted in El Salvador, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic.

¹⁵ According to the information shared, these analyses were conducted in Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republic.

"The diagnoses or analyses favored coordination and alliances with stakeholders [...], they also guided us in allocating resources for training processes, for field days and the evaluation process [...] They were key to better coordination and communication at the local and regional levels, all of which facilitated efficiency". Member of the project leadership team, Honduras.

"These analyses supported positioning topics with national authorities and provided information to improve the government's response capacity [...] With this information, the governments can incorporate the different sectors and institutions that work with social and civil protection issues and see the link that can be generated with the [humanitarian] entities working with cash transfers". Member of the CWG, El Salvador.

The implementation based on EMMA or PCMA analyses and Rapid Assessment for Markets (RAM) were also tools that contributed to improving the project's efficiency, including exercises developed on MEB in Honduras and Guatemala. These analyses provided information on product and price dynamics in emergency contexts, generating knowledge on key elements linked to CTP, like the description of transfer amounts or product lists that respond to food and health needs according to people's preferences. In addition, beyond knowledge, they contributed to understanding the link between the response and the market, which was not necessarily clear among social protection and civil protection actors. They also helped to leave installed capacity for analytical and methodological implementation through training processes, generating conditions for more efficient work in emergency response.

In addition to the tools, incorporating the governing bodies of the disaster risk management and social protection systems in cash transfer groups and in small committees made it possible to i) qualify the wealth of analyses, resulting from incorporating multiple perspectives on the scope and limitations of the tools, identifying gaps in institutional interaction and the effects on the populations served; and ii) strengthen the CWG in their role as technical advisors due to their participation in initiatives promoted by the social protection sector. Aspects that together contributed to coordination efficiency.

"The implementation of these methodologies or tools, beyond the hands-on part of training the technical teams, helped us to identify something that was not necessarily foreseen. When there is an emergency, many organizations focus on the affected population, but not necessarily on the market" Representative of social protection programs, Dominican Republic.

The project also supported other tools focused on improving the efficiency of cash-based interventions. One example is the analysis of security risks due to gangs in El Salvador, generating a document with recommendations to address the different risks in implementing cash-based responses in emergencies. Another example is mapping FSP, mainly in Honduras and Guatemala, providing information on service descriptions and user satisfaction levels, and generating initial conditions to establish agreements or present proposals to promote the financial sector's participation in emergency cash-based responses. Although these actions were incipient, a path has been traced on which work can continue to strengthen the efficiency of the responses, an aspect to which the project's contribution is acknowledged.

"We conducted a risk analysis on security issues related to gangs [...] we analyzed implementation modalities, we made a presentation on the risks from the perspective of

CTP in humanitarian response, and a document was generated with advice on how to address the risks for implementation" Project leader, Honduras.

"The financial service providers mapping was done to understand what type of services the providers were offering and what the level of satisfaction was [...] now I think they are at the stage of trying to generate some framework agreements [...] In Guatemala, an analysis was done with the Bank Superintendence to present a regulation proposal so that people who have lost their identification documents during emergencies can access humanitarian response services through cash transfer programs" Member of the project's lead team, Honduras.

Finding 15. *The project also promoted efficiency during implementation through practices based on the principle of not duplicating efforts and influencing decision-makers, as well as the proposal to share information and formalize collaborative relationships, facilitating challenge management.*

The intervention process avoided duplicating efforts that would result in inefficient use of resources, keeping in line with the time and financial resources available for the project. Therefore, the project concentrated efforts on actions or initiatives to which it could complement or add value without losing sight of its objectives and results. An example of this is the work carried out with the adaptive social protection roundtable in the Dominican Republic, with whom the project advanced all the work that should have been carried out in the framework of the CWG, but since a coordination mechanism already existed in the country, it did not promote a new space but instead chose to strengthen the existing one. In addition, the project sought to establish a working environment that would allow it to have an impact at the decision-making and technical levels, especially in government entities, concentrating on strategic areas that facilitated positioning and advocacy on central issues. These practices strengthened the project's results-based management.

"The project supported what was already in place, we had the protection roundtable, and we worked with it [...] We were able to build on the knowledge that the roundtable already had on social protection issues, and we worked on adopting emergency programs. This action facilitated the implementation of the emergency voucher" Representative of social protection programs, Dominican Republic.

Along the same lines, within the CWG framework, the project promoted information sharing as a collaborative action among the organizations. This practice facilitated communication and coordination, exchanging information on the population assisted in emergencies, an example of which is the response provided during hurricanes Eta and Iota, reducing the possibility of duplicating beneficiaries. The project also encouraged organizations to see each other as allies, making progress in implementing a more efficient emergency response. In addition, the project advanced in formalizing inter-institutional agreements through which it sought to link governmental organizations, NGOs, and international cooperation organizations working in cash transfers to promote the exchange of experiences, and the establishment of work plans will lead to cash-based response initiatives in emergencies.

"The information exchange is important [...] there are organizations that said if you are in my area, I will collaborate with you. This exchange of information took place in Eta and Iota's response, especially the information on beneficiaries so that they would not be duplicated [...] This part was critical, because the organizations saw each other as allies." Member of the project leadership team, Honduras

Finding 16. *The project developed adequate planning and monitoring tools that responded to the follow-up needs of the results framework, establishing a feedback dynamic based on recommendations that were focused on guiding timely adjustments to the programmatic proposal of the interventions.*

The intervention was guided by duly structured planning and monitoring instruments, including instruments for measuring and verifying compliance with goals and objectives, providing the opportunity to identify possible deviations in order to establish corrective actions, as well as to provide objective information to argue for changes in strategies or requests for amendments to the framework agreement signed with the donor. These instruments were based on guidelines and protocols that responded to data security principles, social safeguards, and timely feedback mechanisms, generating and sharing information on project performance at both the managerial and technical levels, disaggregated by country for better intervention management. However, due to the issues addressed by the project, these instruments should be part of a continuous improvement exercise to respond to the context dynamics in the countries.

"Planning and monitoring were key activities at all times, as we had to be responsive to a context that was changing a lot in the countries [...] We managed to have all the protocols, data security tools, all the safeguards and feedback mechanisms. This is a continuous process of construction" Project leader, Honduras.

3.5 Sustainability

Finding 17. *The sustainability of capacities for cash transfer adoption is subject to the permanence of trained actors in the organizations that exercise leadership in emergency assistance and social protection systems. However, this aspect depends directly on the governments in office.*

The interviewees stated that the project established capacities within the participating organizations during implementation. They also noted that staff turnover is one of the risks in developing cash-based initiatives that affect the capacities already installed in the organizations participating in the project, without ignoring the fact that these can be used in the new sector in which the staff members work.

However, this risk - which is part of what the project has defined as a "political environment" - is cyclical. In this sense, its mitigation includes creating mechanisms that generate stability for adopting cash transfers regardless of the government in power. The actors interviewed mentioned the following proposals: 1) advocate for the courses to become mandatory in government entities so that any public official will be able to position this issue; 2) design a free access platform where civil society organizations and NGOs can, at their own pace, be trained in cash transfers; 3) continue the partnership with the CaLP, given its degree of knowledge on the subject; 4) continue advocating for the adoption of harmonized policies that facilitate the implementation of cash transfers in the countries; and 5) advance in a regional deployment of CASHCAP to improve the linkages and technical assistance of the social protection and humanitarian systems and the governing bodies of the risk management systems, as was done by the project in the case of Guatemala.

Finding 18. *The CWG continues to meet even though the project has ended. They have defined work plans and are applying tools to facilitate the implementation of cash transfers as a sign that they will be maintained over time. However, they point out that their sustainability depends on the articulating role played by the group's coordination.*

After the end of the project, members of the CWG report that they continue to hold regular meetings and link work plans for cash transfer adoption. However, they state that their responsibilities in their

organizations exceed their participation in the working groups, affecting their availability to attend to the duties arising from the meetings and exchanges. In this sense, they expressed that the work of the project as an articulator continues to be necessary in order to trigger and follow up on the different initiatives, as well as its advocacy role in attracting new actors to strengthen the CWG and re-establish new relationships with those organizations that, due to restructuring, change leadership and technical teams.

"I believe that the most important and relevant thing we could say is that the CWG is still alive, we have a meeting next week, we are still working on annual action plans, so I believe that at the level of articulation and coordination within the humanitarian communities, this is a growing child and I hope it will become an adolescent and will be maintained over time" Member of the CWG, El Salvador.

Finding 19. *The capacity of NDRMS to carry out timely and quality CTP in emergencies is tied to the relationship with the social protection sector. It will be enhanced to the extent that the regulatory environment grants greater financial powers to these systems.*

Experience has shown that the leadership of cash transfers comes from the social protection sector since it receives the most significant amount of resources to implement programs. Unlike the risk management sector, which, for example, in the case of Honduras, does not have the financial resources to enable it to adopt cash transfers independently. In this sense, unless synergies between these two sectors continue, as occurred during the project, there is a risk that the capacities of NDRMS for programming cash transfers will be weakened. This means that there is still a need for an organization to build bridges to forge more stable relationships between the social protection and civil protection sectors and to promote regulatory changes that will require significant advocacy work in the medium and long term.

From the stakeholders' perspective, to improve the impact on public policies, it is necessary to carry out strong technical work to generate evidence through the monitoring and evaluation of the cash-based initiatives in order to determine the impact on people's lives and thus demonstrate the importance of this type of tool for human welfare and, consequently, for progress towards the development of the countries. It is also necessary to strengthen the private sector's participation, specifically telecommunications companies and banks, through social responsibility policies that allow for better coordination of the delivery of transfers and ensure transparency in the delivery of funds. Finally, to ensure that the transfers generate development in the communities, some stakeholders considered it appropriate to value synergies with rural village banks and consider strategies to strengthen emerging local rural markets.

IV. BEST PRACTICES IDENTIFIED

Below is a set of good practices highlighted by most of the stakeholders consulted that respond to the CWG functioning, the approaches used in project development, and the strategies implemented to strengthen preparedness and coordination capacities.

- **Promoting democratic leadership to strengthen the cash transfer groups.** The leaders and co-leaders of the CWG are democratically elected (among the group's members) to serve for one year. This strategy favors horizontal relationships and trust among its members and, at the same time, allows all organizations to have the possibility of exercising leadership. Externally, it represents the possibility of connecting with more networks and positioning the group as a pluralistic space.

- ***Capacity and relationship building through small committees to strengthen the governance of CWG.*** These groups were subdivided into petit committees, contributing to generating closer relationships among their members and obtaining various technical products that the governments have positively valued. It also facilitated the governance of the groups, an aspect that is often a bottleneck in interinstitutional coordination.
- ***The experience exchange is an enabler for innovation.*** The exchange of experiences was a cross-cutting theme in the project. International experiences and those of the participating organizations were shared in the training process and within the CWG. This methodology motivated the different countries to implement new transfer modalities. In turn, this led to technical exchanges between those familiar with the experience and those who wished to implement it in order to incorporate the mechanisms in the best possible way. This allowed the adoption of cash transfers and strengthened the implementation of transfers and relations between organizations.
- ***Including social protection, civil protection (risk management systems), and humanitarian sector organizations under the same project favor the efficiency of monetary transfers.*** The organizations of the social protection, civil protection, and humanitarian sectors identified that they generally carried out their work in the same populations and under the same modalities, which, in addition to affecting efficiency, generated dynamics in the communities that limited their own development. Uniting these sectors and the network made it possible not only to achieve a critical reflection of their own work but also to identify points of complementarity and start working on them. Aspects translate into progress toward an integrated response for vulnerable populations.
- ***Design customized and certified training processes with a recognized institution in the field.*** The project incorporated the CaLP as part of the training process, a recognized organization in the field. Its recognition motivated broad participation to such an extent that the number of applicants exceeded expectations. In addition, rigorous selection processes and follow-up mechanisms regarding participation in the training process and its results were a practice that encouraged the participants' commitment. Likewise, capacity development plans in response to each organization's particular needs were valued for their contribution to organizational strengthening, as well as exchange exercises at the level of technical institutions strengthening areas such as institutional preparedness, an example of which was an exchange promoted by Guatemala's cash transfer group.

V. LESSONS LEARNED IDENTIFIED

Similarly, the evaluation identified a set of lessons learned, emphasizing certain aspects of the relationship with various stakeholders that, if strengthened, could further facilitate achieving results and generate evidence that can be used both for decision-making and as a tool for advocacy in the countries.

- ***Adopting CTP requires building relationships with the strategic level of the participating entities.*** Initially, the project engaged with the technical level of the organizations under the premise that the cash transfer groups would be technical bodies that would help promote the transfers. However, during implementation, participation at this level was intermittent due to the rotation of participants in the groups and the restructuring of the organizations. This forced the project to change its strategy, which involved maintaining relations with the strategic levels of the organizations, an aspect that made it possible to generate conditions for the stability of the groups

and to advance in the coordination and preparation of the cash transfers.

- ***The adoption of cash transfers must be based on a firm commitment to coordination with the government.*** To avoid the risk of politicizing the spaces, the project decided to have technical profiles in the CWG. However, the success of the groups was tied to decision-making in the organizations. Therefore, the project decided to establish relations with the hierarchical level of the social protection and civil protection sector. This aspect caused tensions precisely because of the reputational risk that government involvement could imply. However, this decision was the one that allowed the groups to position themselves, given that decisions, redundancy aside, regarding transfers occur mainly in this sector. In this sense, the lesson learned is that it is necessary to work hand in hand with the government regarding cash transfers.
- ***Future initiatives to adopt cash transfers should continue to strengthen relations with the government sector.*** The different stakeholders consulted stated that the relationship with the government is an indispensable condition for the success of cash transfers, given that it is the actor that mobilizes the most resources to assist vulnerable people, which is explained by its responsibility to comply with the State's duty to protect. In this sense, although there may be reputational, clientelism, and corruption risks, strategies such as the participation of CWG in defining and implementing cash-based responses and the oversight mechanisms promoted during the project are tools that help to address these risks.
- ***Cash transfer initiatives should seek to increase the participation of local governments.*** The project mainly adopted a "top-down" approach to implementing transfers and made some efforts under a "bottom-up" perspective, specifically through the training process it developed with municipalities. However, based on the view of the stakeholders consulted, the relationship with this actor should have been expanded for three main reasons: 1) the positive results achieved in terms of building capacities and raising awareness on the subject; 2) because under continuous monitoring mechanisms, the risk of politicization of the transfers is controlled; and 3) because it is the local governments who are in the front line for emergency response.
- ***A customized management model is required for inter-country cash transfer projects.*** Project management was carried out from Honduras, which required significant efforts to build relationships, follow up on the functioning of the CWG and the training processes and attend to the logistical and administrative aspects behind each task. From the perspective of the actors consulted, although the project was able to effectively connect to the adaptive table in the Dominican Republic and create the CWG in the rest of the countries, relations would have been facilitated, and the processes would have been more agile if each country had had not only a Country Coordinator but also a working team to deal with the particularities of Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Honduras.
- ***The banking and telecommunications sectors are critical allies in facilitating cash delivery.*** Although their participation was not widespread, where it was possible to link these actors, it was possible to implement new ways of delivering transfers that facilitated the work of all those involved. However, the different actors mentioned that in addition to the awareness-raising work that was promoted, it was possible to consider agreements to create unified rates with the banks and thus regulate one of the elements of the emergency market.
- ***Generating evidence on the impacts of the transfers is a factor to consider in future project design.*** The initiative had a strong emphasis on analysis from a qualitative perspective. However, no impact assessments were identified during the process, which can be explained by the atomized

and disjointed context of cash transfer initiatives in which the project was created, as well as the differentiated interests or mandates presented by the key actors that are part of the NDRMS. However, the different actors consulted stated that it's necessary to start measuring the potential of this mechanism with scientific evidence as another strategy for advocacy, decision-making, and continuous improvement of this mechanism.

VI. PROPOSED STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, based on good practices and lessons learned, recommendations are presented for the sustainability of the CWG, the results achieved so far, and the future of cash-based initiatives.

- ***Assess the degree of dedication of the organization facilitating the CWG to ensure its sustainability.*** Those consulted stated that although the CWG has continued since the project ended, their sustainability depends mainly on the time that the organizations that lead and co-lead the groups can devote to building new relationships, following up on the deliverables of the petit committees, and fulfilling the group's work plan. Therefore, it's advisable to analyze whether the organizations can make up for these aspects on their own to prevent the achievements made so far in terms of increased coordination from fading away. One way of doing this could be creating a space before the handover, accompanied by a transition protocol that contributes to selecting the appropriate facilitating organizations to perform the role. It is also advisable to establish innovative mechanisms to guide the change of leadership, an example of such mechanisms being the structuring of expressions of interest, a document showing the added value each interested entity can contribute to the group.
- ***Future experiences should mainstream knowledge management from the design stage, as occurred in the project.*** This project used lessons from previous experiences, such as the dry corridor in Honduras, and continuously assessed the adaptation initiative's progress or setbacks. The consulted stakeholders positively valued this element. Therefore, future phases of this initiative or new projects should include pauses for reflection, continuous analysis of the theory of change, and exchanges of experiences as tools favoring adaptation
- ***Continue strengthening the relationship between the social protection and civil protection sectors (NRDMS).*** Thanks to the project, these two sectors were able to identify points where they converge and where they can build complementary relationships. In addition to continuing to strengthen these convergence points, it is also necessary to analyze those aspects that hinder or affect their relationship. For example, regulatory frameworks where responsibilities or scopes are not entirely clear so that legislation allows for an enabling environment to create completely harmonious relations between these two sectors.

It is worth emphasizing that the stakeholders consulted stated that the subsequent phases of this initiative or future projects in this area should be able to clearly delineate the responsibilities of the social protection and civil protection sectors, answering the following questions: In an emergency, at what point does the social protection sector intervene and how should it do so; in protection initiatives, at what point and how should the risk management system intervene?

- ***Strengthen public policy to improve coordination between the social and civil protection sectors (risk management).*** Different stakeholders acknowledged the project's role in legislative advocacy in the case of the Dominican Republic. However, they pointed out the difficulties in distinguishing each sector's responsibilities. In this sense, in line with the previous recommendation, future initiatives should include advocacy actions to modify or adopt regulations

that strengthen intersectoral coordination.

- ***Design and implement cash transfer programs and not projects.*** The project showed that cash transfer adoption is subject to an enabling legislative environment. As is well known, these processes are long-term and require a significant effort to place them on the public agenda. In this sense, future initiatives should be designed as a program rather than a project so progress, in terms of results, can be scaled up through different phases.
- ***The virtual training processes have been adequate. However, they can be enhanced through three aspects: 1) include with greater emphasis pedagogical tools that facilitate the acceptance of different audiences; 2) advocate its adoption as a mandatory course for government entities; and 3) promote mixed groups, i.e., integrated by different organizations to generate a wealth of knowledge¹⁶.*** Although from the perspective of the stakeholders consulted, the contents were appropriate, it is advisable that future initiatives place greater emphasis on the pedagogical design in order to achieve greater engagement through the training provided and that it can be understood by all types of stakeholders regardless of their educational level, especially considering a possible scaling up to the local and rural level. Likewise, to broaden the government's general capacities, some consulted stakeholders stated that promoting this topic as a mandatory course is valuable. Finally, promoting mixed groups will enrich discussions and strengthen the content.
- ***Giving a more prominent role to local governments.*** The local government's involvement emerged as an adaptation measure of the project. However, the different stakeholders stated that there is a whole architecture in place at the local level to deal with emergencies that could be strengthened through cash-based intervention. This process should be carried out parallel, targeted, and gradually.

“Parallel” refers to strengthening government agencies (social protection and risk management sectors) and the humanitarian sector, while at the local level, the Local Emergency Committee (CODEL) and the Municipal Emergency Committee (CODEM) should also begin to be trained and extend their knowledge to the communities. Likewise, while market analyses are carried out at the national level, the local level analyzes how to ensure the necessary infrastructure for its development.

On the other hand, "targeted" refers to selecting municipalities with a certain degree of engagement of the population with the cash transfers to use the lessons learned to strengthen the mechanism. Finally, "gradual" refers to gradually expanding cash transfer adoption at the departmental level while analyzing market distortions and the effects generated at the local level in the process.

- ***Multi-country initiatives based on articulating sectors require permanent teams in the field to expedite the work.*** In future initiatives, each country should have a group of people who can devote full time to specific functions in each country, namely: advocacy, liaison, and technical follow-up to the CWG. In addition, this way of working will allow the project to take even more significant advantage of the opportunities that arise with the humanitarian, national, and local government actors.
- ***Work towards creating agreements with the private sector and assess the feasibility of integrating local actors in the cash transfer delivery.*** Agreements with the banking and

¹⁶ Under a systemic approach, the project has sought to organize training processes with mixed groups; however, this proposal should be further strengthened to achieve multidisciplinary and intersectoral groups that add value to the generation of knowledge.

telecommunications sectors can improve people's access to cash transfers, while fixed rates for delivery can reduce the risk of speculation. However, banking and telecommunications are not the only ones that can contribute to delivering this type of transfer; according to some stakeholders consulted, rural village banks can become a mechanism that can strengthen local development.

- ***Greater emphasis on scientific evidence generated around cash transfers.*** It's necessary to continue strengthening the cash transfer analysis tools that feed into decision-making and strengthen the assignment and delivery efficiency. One of the difficulties encountered is that there are no single databases to record the delivery to each beneficiary of the transfer, through which it is possible to show their progress or setbacks in terms of welfare. In this sense, creating a single registry base is a pending task. Likewise, once this is achieved, it's necessary to generate robust evidence on the effects of transfers at two levels: 1) on people's welfare; and 2) on the effects on local markets, which can be used to promote or reorient how transfers are allocated and implemented.
- ***Greater emphasis on the gender approach based on the perspective of vulnerable groups.*** The gender approach was developed to a certain degree within the CWG training spaces and discussions to identify differentiated impacts on men and women. However, for future projects, it's recommended that gender analysis be made more explicit in the theory of change, and is discussed with greater emphasis in the CWG and that protocols and tools that promote equality in access to transfers from an intersectional perspective be considered. This action could be framed within the proposals that are being put forward by different actors to attend to groups in human mobility or groups in vulnerable situations subject to special protection.