



Global Shelter Cluster
ShelterCluster.org
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter

**CASH BASED PROGRAMMES FOR SHELTER AND NFI -
IMPLICATIONS UPON SHELTER CLUSTER INFORMATION
MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

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EMESE CSETÉ

ACRONYMS

CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
CfW	Cash for Work
CWG	Cash Working Group
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department
FSL	Food Security & Livelihoods
GSC	Global Shelter Cluster
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MIRA	Multi-sector Initial Rapid Assessment
MPG	Multi-Purpose Cash Grants
NFI	Non-Food Item
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SCT	Shelter Coordination Team
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the increased use of cash based approaches to address shelter and non-food-item needs, there is a requirement to review the impact of this shift in modality upon existing approaches to information management, which historically has focussed rather towards the provision of in-kind goods. Approaches taken by country-level Shelter Coordination Teams (SCTs) for the reporting of cash based activities were reviewed to identify key challenges and considerations with recommendations being made and suggestions which may support leveraging the most from such data.

These recommendations are made within the context of the requirements of the cluster information management function, to support coordination (strategic and technical) through the measurement of progress, impact and the identification of gaps and overlaps in coverage.

Recommendations are:

- **Reporting systems should be aligned with strategic objectives and their activities from the outset.** Partner activity reporting should thereby capture different intervention outputs according to the same system of classifying activities commonly used with the strategic objectives. This requires an alignment of strategy (outlining objectives and activities aimed at addressing the objective), technical guidance (defining standards) and information management systems within the SCT. This is particularly pertinent for cash based activities, for which there could be significant variation in terms of the needs that cash assistance is intended to address, and therefore the objectives towards which they will contribute.
- **Modality of the activity is treated as an independent factor than those use to classify outputs against objectives.** As well as allowing conditions and restrictions upon usage within cash programmes to be taking into consideration in analysis, it will also accommodate shifts in modality (for instance as a result of marked based programming), and the use of a mix of modalities, increasingly seen within shelter programming.
- **Multi-Purpose Cash Grants (MPCG),** being multi-sectoral, present their own specific challenges in terms of SCT information management therefore have their own recommendations. These involve close engagement with coordination of MPCGs, particularly around the design and harmonisation of post distribution PDM processes, which will facilitate the integration of the shelter and NFI outputs and outcomes from MPCGs with other sectoral data.
- The **systematic collection and storage of details related to the overarching programmes** through which activities are being undertaken is recommended. Whilst this presents technical challenges as it involves a move to a **relational model** within the data, it also would allow the collection of a greater number of details about programmes, which would be too cumbersome to collect following the standard approach. For cash programmes, this will allow for the collection of a wider range of details about programmes, which could be of use for the whole of the SCT.
- Given the shift towards the use of market based approaches¹ as opposed to strictly cash based approaches, it is recommended that **the SCT engages in the gathering and dissemination of market based information.** Engagement in multi-sector assessment coordination is encouraged, as Inclusion of measures of initial market access, functionality and key sectoral commodities may be feasible within initial rapid assessments. For shelter specific commodities and their supply chain, it is recommended that the SCT advocates for and coordinates a joint shelter market

¹ where agencies take into consideration market factors throughout the course of a programme and switch modalities to best suit market conditions

assessment, and that the SCT monitors the cost and availability of key commodities related to shelter programming.

2. BACKGROUND

Cash based programmes are now increasingly being considered as a way to respond to non- food item (NFI) and shelter (emergency and recovery) needs through numerous channels and programme designs. The arguments regarding the added advantages that cash approaches can offer have resulted in agencies increasingly having to justify why in-kind assistance is required as opposed to cash modalities. Whilst partners undertaking shelter and NFI activities have been using cash as a modality for some time, the modality has not been well documented and theorised within the sector in order to provide specific guidance².

The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) during its annual meeting in Geneva in October 2015, identified a number of goals for 2016, to ensure that the GSC is better prepared to respond to the needs of the field. These have included:

- A cash and shelter position paper to inform the ongoing interagency, inter-sector and inter-cluster discussions on cash³
- A literature review of existing tools and guidelines on cash based programming¹
- A Cash and Shelter Guidance Note to complement existing generic cash tools (which is currently being drafted)

This report forms part of this process, focussing specifically on the implications of increased cash /market based programming upon information management/M&E approaches within the Shelter Cluster Coordination Team (SCT). Central to the services provided by the SCT is the ability to report progress of cluster partners against overarching shelter and NFI objectives of the response, and to identify gaps and overlaps in provision. In the last few years, there have been several examples of challenges to this process specifically relating to cash based programming. At the same time, the dialogue around cash has generated increased pressure on the IASC Clusters to be able to provide data and analysis specifically around modalities of support, as a means of gathering an evidence base towards the contribution of cash based approaches towards their specific cluster and overall objectives.

Historic approaches to partner reporting and gap analysis were developed around the principle of programmes focused predominantly on in-kind provision. As the sector has widened in its use of modalities including cash and vouchers with various conditionalities, there is a need to review current approaches to reporting in order to ensure that existing templates and tools are suitable to support informed decision-making.

This report identifies some of the key considerations in terms of partner activity reporting, and makes recommendations in terms of approaches to information gathering in future responses. It also examines the way in which the GSC can support partners through the gathering and sharing of market assessment information. It has been informed through a review of current approaches taken by country-level Shelter cluster teams, consultations with key informants from country shelter cluster coordination teams, other clusters (FSL, WASH) and with other key actors participating in humanitarian cash coordination (OCHA, CALP) to identify current obstacles/challenges.

² https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/literature_review_of_cash_in_shelter.pdf

³

https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/gsc_position_paper_cash_and_markets_in_the_shelter_sector.pdf

3. CLUSTER INFORMATION MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS AND OVERALL CHALLENGES

The following section provides a summary of the coordination activities that a cluster information management system is required to support, and highlights some overall key challenges inherent to cluster information management. This serves as the background for the recommendations outlined in Section 5.

3.1 Requirements of Cluster Information Management

Cluster information management services (and therefore systems and processes) have the purpose of supporting coordination, and as such there are a number of requirements that they must meet in order to be effective. Table 1 briefly outlines some of the key requirements – this list is not exhaustive, but serves as reminder of the key activities that information systems and processes need to support.

Requirement	Activity	Details
Support strategic coordination	Measurement of progress against objectives	Includes the definition of indicators. Likely to require frequent updated reporting as part of common appeals processes.
	Identify gaps or overlaps in coverage	Probable geographical gaps in coverage against sectoral objectives should be identified in a timely manner, so as to allow the possibility of redressing these through coordination.
	Measure the impact of activities (accountability)	Includes the definition of indicators and the establishment of a baseline through the process of needs assessment.
Support operational coordination	Manage and disseminate information about partner activities and contact details	Support local operational coordination by the provision of up to date information on which agencies are undertaking what activities and where, including their contact details.
Support technical coordination	Systematic recording of technical details to support harmonisation	Ability to identify partners on the basis of technical aspects of their response (for instance to identify all partners using cash voucher approaches), allowing technical coordination to be targeted to appropriate partners. Can also include analysis of technical details, in order to provide an indication of trends or differences in approach which can be used to support discussions around harmonisation.

Table 1. Requirements of a cluster information management service

3.2 Selecting appropriate indicators

The measurement of progress and of impact both require the selection of appropriate indicators – however, these are different concepts and therefore require different indicators to measure them effectively. Within any programme, there are objectives in terms of improving the situation for beneficiaries; the programme design will aim to meet those objectives through a process of using **inputs** (resources) to undertake **activities**, the **outputs** of which are intended to have the desired **outcome** and eventual longer term positive impact for beneficiaries.

This process is generally outlined within a programme's logical framework, laying out the assumptions of how the inputs, activities and outputs will lead to outcomes and impact. It is around this that the programme's monitoring and evaluation processes will have been designed around

measurable aspects, the differences between which can reveal issues in the process of turning one into the other. This takes into account that a failure to meet the objective may be the result of issues at each of these stages of the process. It can help to answer questions such as:

- Are programme inputs resulting in the expected activities?
- Are activities resulting in the expected outputs?
- Are the outputs resulting in the predicted outcome?
- Did the outcome result in a positive impact?

By measuring different aspects of the programme, it can provide a better indication of **which** part of the process may be an issue. Furthermore, since impact measurement logically cannot take place until after the programme is complete, measuring the progress can also provide an early indication of issues that have the potential to negatively influence final impact. Therefore, allowing the possibility to **modify** aspects of the programme during implementation in order to mitigate against the possibility that objectives will not be met.

The same principle can be applied across the sectoral response as a whole; the logical process of the response can be mapped out, and a framework established for monitoring different measurable aspects which can help to identify issues in underlying processes that could affect whether impacts are likely to be achieved, i.e. whether objectives are likely to be met (see Figure 1).

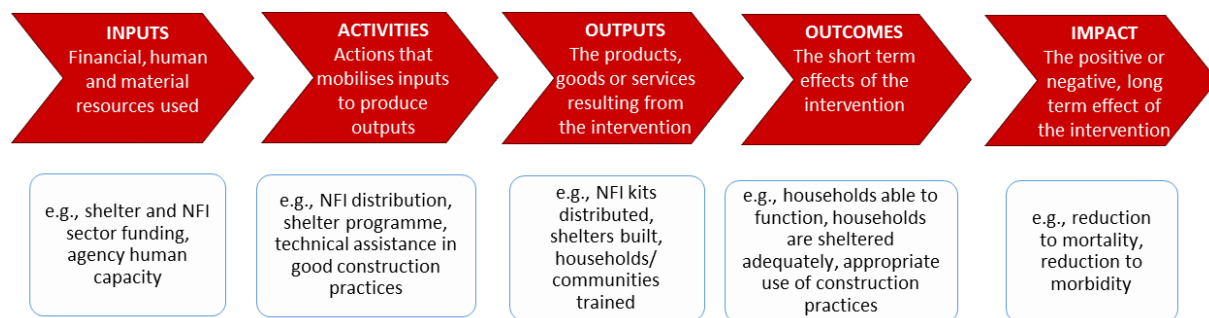


Figure 1. Example of a framework for monitoring the objectives of a shelter and NFI response

The challenge is in reducing this to a small number of indicators that provide an **accurate measurement which can be used to support effective decision making**.

A measure of **progress** is a key requirement – this could theoretically be measured in a number of ways; progress in terms of resource mobilisation (measured through input level), progress in terms of turning these into activities (measured by inputs relative to activities), progress in terms of those activities turning into the intended outputs (measured by outputs relative to activities), etc. The standard measure for progress for humanitarian responses is to use a measure of **outputs** to represent progress, **measured relative to targets** set within the response framework (as opposed, for instance, to measuring outputs relative to inputs, a potential measure of value for money which is not a requirement for the SCT). This is done as a matter of course within a response, through the collection of ‘Who, What, Where, When’ (4W) data from partners, providing information on activities and their outputs, broken down by location.

The greatest challenge in terms of measurement is to find an appropriate measure for **outcomes and impacts**. Too often, the difficulty of defining and of collecting this information has meant that output measures have been used interchangeably as both progress AND outcome indicators. This assumes

that the activities *will* have the intended outcome, i.e. assuming that because the SCT can state that 300,000 households have received emergency shelter support (outputs), that this means that they are sheltered adequately (outcome) regardless of what that emergency shelter support is.

An example of where this causal relationship breaks down, for instance, is if a beneficiary receives an output but sells it to meet a more urgent need, therefore resulting in a failure of the output to have the intended outcome. Similarly, a beneficiary could receive remittances from family members, or support from the local community, resulting in them meeting the outcome yet not as a result of an agency's activity – this is particularly pertinent, as the 4W records the activities of humanitarian agencies, but often poorly represents government, private sector and self-recovery efforts to assist affected families. Using an output indicator as a measure of impact fails to take into account that cause and effect between outputs and their outcomes is not guaranteed, and may be influenced by other factors outside of the realms of existing information sources, such as the extent to which self-recovery is contributing to the outcomes of the affected population.

Outcome or impact indicators are inherently harder to measure. **Outcomes** must be defined precisely; following the previous example, a desired outcome would relate to whether the person was adequately sheltered or not. The definition of what constitutes adequate emergency shelter is not straightforward, and may involve aspects of the quality and durability of the materials provided, the correct utilisation of the items, or perhaps even the safety of the site on which the emergency shelter is located. Defining an indicator which is SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound), and gaining the consensus from cluster partners upon it in a timely manner towards the early stages of a response, is therefore a great challenge.

Impact, the longer term effect of the activity, is likely at least for the early emergency response to be defined in terms of life saving/health preservation, i.e. a reduction in morbidity and mortality. This would require a baseline to be established, and for indicators to be tracked over time. Ascertaining the exclusive impact of shelter and NFI activities towards this change, however, is very difficult as beneficiaries of shelter support are likely to have also received assistance for other sectoral needs (i.e. WASH, food, health).

Furthermore, the SCT undertakes household and community level assessments periodically, providing a means of collecting standardized outcome indicators across the whole response. These similarly have limitations:

- They only provide a snapshot at one point in time.
- The currency of the data will be impacted by the speed with which the data can be collected, analysed and reported.
- The sampling methodology will determine the extent to which data can be usefully disaggregated. This is due to the fact that random sampling must be applied to each sub-group, and sufficiently large sample sizes selected to ensure that the resulting calculation is statistically representative (i.e., how confident can we be that what we observed in the sample can be applied across the whole of the sub-group). This may limit, for instance, the ability to compare across different geographical areas, unless sampling has been designed to be representative within each of those geographical area – a decision which however also has strong cost and time implications.

Whilst the assessment can be repeated periodically to provide trends over time, cost and time implications will be a consideration.

IM Implications :

The challenge in terms of working with these indicators is selecting the most appropriate ones, and ensuring a common understanding of what they are each measuring. Reporting requirements against common appeal processes place demands upon the SCT for indicators that can indicate both progress and outcome/impact, and which are as clear and succinct as possible in order to communicate effectively to a wide range of stakeholders. Often, output indicators are selected as primary indicators for both progress and outcome as a consequence of their frequent collection cycle and tangibility, despite the fact that these fail to take into account the possible disconnects that could occur between outputs and outcomes. In such cases, outcome indicators may end up being collected but overlooked in terms of analysis and reporting, failing to leverage the full potential from this data.

Whilst using an output indicator as an outcome indicator places assumptions that the output WILL result in the outcome, the assessment process provides a mechanism for periodically validating that assumption. If output and outcome indicators are analysed jointly, the relationship between outputs and outcomes can be established and described; this can provide the evidence base for the assumption, establishing the extent to which the output indicator can be seen as a proxy indicator of outcome. This may allow the outputs to be used to estimate **probable** outcomes during intervals between direct outcome measurements, though it will be key to communicate effectively the level of certainty of those outcomes bearing in mind that they have not been measured directly.

3.3 *Quality assurance and technical assistance*

As agencies continue to increase their flexibility of approaches towards meeting shelter and NFI objectives, one of the key concerns highlighted is how to ensure sufficient quality, i.e. meeting minimum standards. For NFI, quality relates mostly to the quality of the item, but for shelter, the quality of the final solution will relate to the quality of the materials, the correct application of construction techniques, plus other factors related to the site such as exposure to hazards or access to other services.

Quality assurance is of greater concern with regards to shelter than NFI due to the increased liability associated with an unsafe shelter. In programmes where agencies undertake the construction or repair of a shelter, it can be assumed that if agencies are programming responsibly, that technical assistance is in-built within the activity. The shift in recent years towards owner driven repair/reconstruction approaches, acknowledging the critical role that beneficiaries can and should play in their own recovery, has also highlighted the importance of technical assistance. For example in the Philippines' Typhoon Haiyan response, an owner driven recovery strategy was selected, with the key activity of the provision of materials - particularly corrugated galvanised iron roofing (CGI). Given the high exposure of the Philippines to tropical storms, technical standards for hurricane resistance were defined by the response to mitigate impacts of future storms – however these technical standards required the application of construction approaches not commonly applied within the context (such as the use of hurricane straps). One solution to this skill gap was addressed

by the training of carpenters in safe building practices by TESDA⁴, complementing the activities of other agencies providing materials, as a means of increasing the likely quality of the resulting shelter.

The result of increased owner driven approaches has been a decoupling of the provision of materials, either through in-kind or cash based interventions, with the provision of technical assistance. Within the context of a programme, material distributions and technical assistance might be undertaken as separate activities with a different targeting approach, for instance household level material distributions along with community level technical trainings. Additionally, an agency could provide technical assistance as a standalone activity, to complement the activities of other agencies. These activities are increasingly being recognised as critical not only to the current response, but also having the potential to increase preparedness and mitigate the impacts of future hazards:

‘Trainings should target the beneficiaries and, when possible, the local skilled and unskilled labor, in view of improving local capacities and promoting improved construction practices.’
ECHO Afghanistan

Cash based interventions are often used as part of owner driven approaches, either to provide materials (for instance through cash vouchers or cash grants), and/or to cover construction costs. As well as facing the risk faced by all owner driven reconstruction due to the possible lack of oversight of the construction process, these cash based approaches face an additional potential risk from the lack of oversight of the appropriateness and quality of materials selected. This can potentially be addressed within programme design – for instance, in the response to cyclone Winston, the Fijian Government are implementing a voucher scheme for construction materials, which has restrictions specifically related to item quality. Unless such mitigation measures are taken in programme design however, cash based interventions may exacerbate the need for adequate technical assistance to ensure that **minimum shelter standards are met**.

The identification of gaps in coverage must also take into account the quality of the response as without it, beneficiary needs cannot be classified as being met. In the context of the increasing use of cash based interventions as part of owner driven repair approaches, understanding the extent to which adequate technical assistance has been provided is therefore a pre-requisite to an effective gap analysis. This places an increasing requirement on the SCT to be able to gather and analyse information related to technical assistance being provided by agencies.

IM implications:

The increased use of cash based programming and approaches such as owner driven repair has highlighted the need for adequate technical assistance to ensure minimum standards are met, however SCT strategies, and therefore SCT reporting systems, have historically been more focussed towards the recording of distributions and shelter construction activities, and are therefore less evolved in terms of the recording and analysis of technical assistance. There is no commonly accepted framework at present for determining the relative contribution of various technical assistance activities towards typical shelter objectives – for instance, how can the relative contributions of activities such as the distribution of IEC materials, a one day household training, or a one week carpenter training be compared in terms of their contribution they are estimated to make towards a shelter reconstruction objective?

⁴ Technical Education & Skills Development Agency

For such an analysis to be useful in terms of guiding the response, it should have its own clear objective against which its impact can be measured, and a target against which progress can be measured. This requires the issue of technical assistance to be fully integrated as part of the cluster's strategy, adequately defined within the cluster's technical guidelines, and appropriately collected and analysed according to these definitions through the cluster's IM systems.

3.4 Market based approaches

Whilst there is an increasing interest in CTP approaches across the sector, the selection of modality should always be based upon appropriateness at that particular point in time, taking into account a number of factors including but not limited to: market functionality and capacity, item availability, item quality, item price stability, labour availability and cost, transportation issues, protection implications. Therefore, a market based programming approach is increasingly being recognised as the most appropriate approach, to ensure the ongoing evaluation of modality appropriateness:

'Should prices inflate in the course of the action, in particular for key items (e.g. labour, cooked bricks, wood...), the partner should be able to mitigate the impact on the beneficiaries' capacity to complete their shelter, e.g. by facilitating supplies from another market, providing skilled labor at affordable wages...' Cash for Shelter Guidelines, ECHO Afghanistan⁵

Such market based approaches require an initial assessment of feasibility (for example, a feasibility study on cash/market based approaches was undertaken by IFRC for the Cyclone Pam response in Vanuatu) for modality selection:

'Rural areas that are not in proximity to major markets will benefit more effectively from in-kind assistance in the relief stages, even so opportunities to support people with cash transfers to assist with burden of household expenses in the recovery phase should be considered. This will vary by location, and may not be feasible in some locations where the markets are not functioning'

Additionally, they should incorporate ongoing market monitoring to ensure that the chosen modality continues to be appropriate, taking into consideration possible changes to markets – item availability, market access, price inflation etc.

IM implications:

The implication that this has upon activity reporting is that reporting systems must be able to accommodate changes to the modality used by the partner during the course of their programme. The undesirable consequence would be for a change of reported modality used by a partner to result in a significant shift in indicator levels or coverage analysis, since a change of modality should not theoretically lead to a significantly different outcome for the beneficiary. This relates to the **analysis framework** of how activities in the database are classified as contributing towards various objectives, and calculated as contributing to the various targets.

In past responses, activities have often been classified according to a description of the activity (e.g. kitchen set distribution, transitional shelter construction programme, voucher distribution), and this activity classification has been used as the basis for attributing activities as contributing to an objective (e.g. emergency shelter, NFI, recovery). Activity descriptions have often included or been based upon modality, for instance with 'cash distribution' used as one of the categories.

A cash distribution could refer to an activity aimed at meeting either emergency, NFI or recovery

⁵ http://sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/echo_afghanistan_-_cash-for-shelter_guidelines_-_final.pdf

needs, depending upon the aims of the programme and the value in question. In certain responses, this ambiguity has been resolved through knowledge of all existing projects that has allowed the activity to be correctly classified. In the early months of the Nepal response, cash distributions were being undertaken but were known to be addressing emergency shelter needs, so the activity was classified against that objective. This became problematic later in the response though, when cash distributions started to be undertaken with the objective of winterisation of existing shelters – a different objective. This required the application of a new classification system that could distinguish between these two activities, allowing their relative contributions towards different objectives to be calculated.

If activities are classified as contributing towards fulfilling objectives according to their modality, this could result in unforeseen issues if an agency changes the modality of their activity during the course of the programme. For instance, if an agency initially reporting a cash distribution later switches to an in-kind response as a result of following a market based approach, this could result in the activity perhaps being reclassified as a CGI distribution. This might then, depending on the analysis framework, result in it being classified as contributing to a different objective than had previously been anticipated for that activity.

This is part of a wider IM challenge, which is how to leverage the most from existing data in situations where the cluster strategy (and technical standards) may be evolving over time, as is often the case for recovery strategies; essentially, how to future-proof reporting approaches so that they can accommodate strategy refinement. It is particularly pertinent for cash based activities however, given current advocacy towards the use of market based approaches for determining appropriate modality. SCT information systems and analysis frameworks will need to be designed to take into consideration the impacts of changes of modality during a programme's course.

Finally, thought will need to be given to the representation of activities that involve a mix of modalities (for instance, a mixture of in-kind materials plus a cash grant). Recording the activity according to only one of its modalities would reduce the accuracy of the data. An alternative of splitting this into two activities may lead to potential difficulties further down the line when it is necessary to consider the whole package that beneficiaries received in order to understand whether their needs are likely to have been met, to avoid double counting and be able to assess the 'gap'.

3.5 Conditions around usage of cash based interventions

Cash-based programming may be undertaken using a number of different modalities that can range greatly in terms of the restrictions or conditions placed upon them, for example:

- Cash without restrictions
- Vouchers restricted to specific suppliers, specific items, and/or a set value.
- Cash grant to support shelter reconstruction, with tranches of money being released upon completion of each stage of the build
- Cash grants provided as rental support, with a pre-condition of the existence of a rental contract

Whilst some activities may restrict how the cash is spent (the first three examples above), others may have conditions which relate to a pre-condition for qualifying for the programme (example 4 above). The significance of these variations in methodology is that restrictions to spend could potentially provide greater assurance that the activity has had the desired outcome. For instance, if a beneficiary is provided with cash in order to buy materials to repair their shelter, restricting spending by using a voucher system may be seen to reduce the likelihood that the cash will be used towards something else.

IM Implications:

The issue of restrictions on cash usage and its implication upon information management is best understood in terms of how these may affect the underlying process of a response, and therefore may affect resulting measurements. Restrictions address a concern that programme outputs (i.e. cash) might NOT result in the desired outcome (i.e., being adequately sheltered). Whilst this is a conceivable possibility in all interventions, the inherent fungibility of cash is seen as a greater risk factor in terms of the intervention meeting its objectives. Figure 2 shows this in terms of where the risk lies relative to measurements – the assumed process between outputs and outcomes in this case is that a beneficiary will purchase the intended items, that they will be used as intended, and that the quality of the items and how they have been used will be sufficient to result in the outcome of being adequately sheltered. If any one of these assumptions ends up being incorrect, it could interfere with the intended outcome. The fungibility of cash has been identified as a particular risk within the process, so by restricting the usage of the cash, programmes aim to increase the likelihood of the desired outcome.

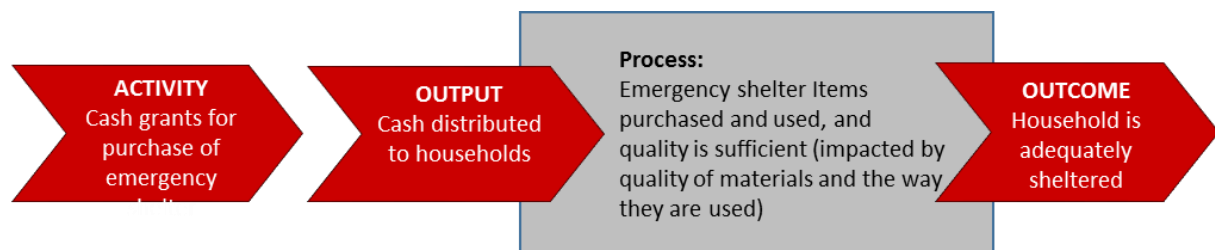


Figure 2. Example of the underlying process behind the transformation of outputs to outcome

If no restriction is applied for cash usage, this could result in a reduction of outcomes relative to outputs. Outputs are the most predominantly reported indicator in a response, and are often assumed to convert directly to outcomes, therefore any factor affecting this causal relationship is of key concern to understand. The significance placed upon the restriction of usage of cash has resulted in cash based activities often being classified according to the presence or absence of conditions, as this information is seen as essential in helping to interpret whether it is probable that beneficiary needs are likely to have been met.

For unrestricted cash programmes, this uncertainty is likely to be addressed at the programme level through post distribution monitoring (PDM) processes that can measure the relationship between output and outcome, i.e. 80% of cash disbursed resulted in the desired outcome. If this information is shared with the SCT, it could be used to improve the accuracy of coverage estimates based on output data. Since PDM processes by design are carried out with a time lag from the activity that they are monitoring, this still leaves the SCT with the issue of how to report the outputs until outcomes have been validated. By systematically recording and classifying conditions associated with cash programmes, analysis can be disaggregated by these factors, allowing estimates of probable outcomes to be interpreted with the appropriate caveats indicating where data is as yet unvalidated.

For this to be effective, a shared vocabulary and common understanding of terminology around cash based activities is essential. Currently, the terminology of restricted and conditional are often used somewhat interchangeably, often with the assumption that conditions relate to how the cash is spent – however, the activity might have a pre-qualifying condition but place no restrictions upon usage (for example, cash for rent payments in the Palestine response have a condition that beneficiaries must have a rental agreement to qualify for support). Since it is restrictions rather than conditions per se that have the greatest potential influence on the relationship between an output and an outcome, categorising according to restriction rather than conditions would be of more pertinence for outcome estimates.

3.6 Multi-Purpose Cash Grants

Increasingly, multi-purpose assistance is being used as a mechanism to rapidly respond to immediate needs:

‘Multi-purpose assistance covers both cash and vouchers that are provided to individuals, households or communities as emergency relief and which contribute to meeting their basic needs or to assisting them in protecting or re-establishing their livelihoods.’ (ECHO, 2015)

These approaches require significant coordination to ensure harmonisation of approaches, including but not limited to: common needs assessments; potential linkages to government social protection schemes; beneficiary targeting; establishment of common platforms; selection of common indicators.

‘The effective and appropriate use of CTP requires strong intra and inter-agency coordination and communication between various actors across sectoral divisions, which poses particular challenges as well as opportunities for aid coordination efforts.’ (CALP, 2015)

IM Challenges:

The key issue from an information management perspective is understanding the extent to which MPGs may have contributed towards sectoral objectives.

Guidance developed recently, such as the Operational Guidance and Toolkit for Multi-Purpose Cash Grants (CALP, 2015), recognises the importance of information management, stressing the need to integrate into mainstream information management systems, to harmonise monitoring templates, and to design a common monitoring strategy including indicators and processes. However, challenges raised by country level clusters indicate that the issue comes from operationalising this guidance. For instance, in both the Ukraine⁶ and Nepal⁷ responses, constraints were identified in terms of utilising post-distribution monitoring data as a result of a lack of harmonisation in PDM methodologies and indicators.

As MPG programmes are relatively new, the challenges in terms of effective coordination are still being discovered and understood. Given their requirement for multi-sector coordination, these programmes do not sit naturally within one specific cluster, and have in several instances been coordinated by ad hoc Cash Working Groups (CWG). Whilst this has its advantages in terms of sitting outside of any one cluster, it also faces a disadvantage that CWGs are unlikely to have dedicated information management capacity – a specific constraint cited for the Nepal SCT.

Furthermore, a recent scoping study undertaken by CALP on monitoring, evaluation & accountability guidance needs in cash based programming, a gap area was identified in terms of guidance for M&E of multi-purpose cash grants. In particular, it highlighted the need for continued engagement with global clusters in a discussion of the need for minimum and/or joint outcome indicators. A minimum indicator approach would measure the outcomes relative to a set of minimum outcome indicators compiled from each of the sectors covered by the MPG, whilst a joint outcome indicator would aim to bring this all together under a measure of overall welfare or well-being. The challenge for SCT information management will be to integrate this data into the cluster’s analysis of shelter and NFI coverage, and will depend on the approach selected for MPG monitoring.

⁶ http://sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/pdm_report_2nd_ed_printing_order.pdf

⁷ Reported by the Nepal SCT

4. CURRENT APPROACHES TO REPORTING CASH IN SHELTER AND NFI

This section outlines current approaches to the reporting of cash based activities and some of the challenges encountered by country level SCTs, which along with the previous section provide the context for the recommendations outlined in section 5.

Since this relates to the collection, storage and analysis of activity data, differences of IM approach generally relate to:

- What information has been collected about each activity
- How activities have been categorised
- How the outputs of those activities have been classified as contributing towards various sectoral objectives

The first two points can be determined through examination of the country SCT reporting template by examining fields (columns) to determine what information is being collected, and by examining any categorisation of activities applied through drop-down menus in the form. Generally, the additional information found to be collected regarding cash based activities related to **conditions** related to the programme, and the cash value disbursed. Activity categorisation is summarised in section 4.1, and output categorisation against objectives is covered in section 4.2.

4.1 *Cash based activity categories in current country level SCTs*

Categorisation of activities is critical in terms of allowing efficient and meaningful analysis - however it requires a common understanding of categories across the response in order for these to be applied correctly. This is a challenge, since terminology around CTP has revolved mostly around Food Security and Livelihoods perspective as these sectors have been the driving force behind CTP.⁸ The result of this is a classification of cash based activities that may not be ideally adapted to meaningfully describe the use of cash in shelter and NFI programming.

In recognition of the need for a common terminology for cash based activities in shelter and NFI, Table 2 summarises the main different categories of cash based activity applied by active country level clusters and some of the challenges to reporting these activities.

⁸ https://iwww.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/literature_review_of_cash_in_shelter.pdf

Table 2. Current approaches to cash in the shelter and NFI sector

Activity	Description	Conditionality	Information Management Challenges
Cash Voucher	Voucher exchangeable for locally procured goods or services, either with specific suppliers or on the open market.	Could be supplier or item specific, or could be value specific for an open market. (The latter approach is taken in DRC, where multi-sector humanitarian needs of newly displaced populations are addressed through voucher fayres, where beneficiaries receive a set of vouchers for a set value, broken down into smaller denominations, allowing them to choose from across a range of vendors with pre-agreed price levels for key commodities.⁹)	- Voucher conditions may need to be recorded in order to be able to determine whether activities are comparable. - Variable voucher values between agencies may also need to be recorded. - Voucher values may vary across beneficiaries – for example, in the Fiji cyclone Winston response, value is determined according to level of housing damage. - If vouchers are provided as part of a multi-sectoral response, such as in DRC, the proportion attributable to shelter and NFI will need to be determined either through needs assessment or by post distribution monitoring.
Cash for emergency shelter/NFI	Unrestricted cash provided to address emergency shelter and/or NFI needs (This is distinct from MPGs, which are aimed at addressing needs wider than just shelter and NFI)	The lack of restriction may be by design (to allow fungibility of funds in addressing needs), or may be the result of a need for a rapid response (since restrictions may take longer to put into place).	- Challenge of determining the extent to which the output has contributed towards objectives - Lack of restrictions may result in some of the cash being spent on non-shelter or NFI items, and therefore have a consequence in the terms of outcome - Self-selection of items mean that outcome may be affected by the use of sub-standard materials, or their incorrect usage
Cash grant for repair/reconstruction	Cash provided to enable construction of part or all of the shelter.	Can vary according to restrictions placed upon the usage – for instance, with instalments payable depending upon completion of a phase of construction, or with neighbourhood approaches where payment instalments are dependent upon a group of beneficiaries all meeting a certain building construction stage.	- Challenge of determining the extent to which the output has contributed towards objectives - Restrictions on grant usage may play a factor in influencing the outcome, therefore will need to be collected and factored in to calculations - Quality assurance will be key if beneficiaries are undertaking construction themselves, and/or selecting materials themselves, as poor quality or poorly used materials could result in a failure of the output to meet the technical standards considered by the response as an adequate outcome. - This will require the SCT to systematically record and analyse information on technical assistance, requiring a common terminology and a common understanding regarding the relative contributions of technical assistance activities.

⁹ www.alnap.org/pool/files/calp-drc-case-study-forweb-1.pdf

Activity	Description	Conditionality	Information Management Challenges
Multi-purpose cash grants	Used to meet beneficiary basic needs across a range of sectors	Generally unconditional/unrestricted by design to allow full fungibility of funds.	- Challenge to understanding the extent to which the activity has contributed towards sectoral objectives. - The MPG may be designed to meet not just recurring needs (through the establishment of a Minimum Expenditure basket or MEB ¹⁰), but also one-off sector specific needs such as the requirement for emergency shelter - These are a relatively new response approach therefore operational experience of MPG coordination is still somewhat limited. Some of the issues that have occurred in the past are: - Confusion from agencies regarding which cluster they should report the activity to - Lack of information available regarding the estimated proportion of the grant attributable to various sectoral expenditure (this should be determined by the assessment) - Lack of harmonisation of tools and methods for post-distribution monitoring, limiting the ability to consolidate and analyse data
Cash for Work (CfW)	Provision of cash to beneficiaries for their labour on debris clearance, shelter construction or other community focussed infrastructure projects which contributes towards shelter objectives.	Conditions may relate to qualification to participate in the programme, or to work being completed/periodically monitored before payments are released	- Determining the contribution of work undertaken towards shelter objectives. Historically, SCT objective setting, and therefore SCT reporting, has been largely focussed on the delivery of goods at the household level, whilst CfW activities may represent the delivery of a service at a community level. - Measuring the impact of these activities will require the elaboration of clear objectives, and the establishment of appropriate indicators.
Cash for Labour	Provision of cash to beneficiaries for labour towards their shelter repair/reconstruction. This might be to cover the costs of their own time labouring on their shelter, or could be used	Generally provided without restrictions, designed to use the fungibility of cash to allow beneficiaries to choose whether they carry out the work themselves, or pay for labour.	'Cash for labour' is not a widely used terminology, but helps to differentiate from cash for work, as these may contribute towards different sectoral objectives - It is likely that there will be challenges when asking agencies to report correctly against cash for work and cash for labour categories unless a common understanding of this differentiation is established during a response. - The activity might include an element of training as a means of introducing new skills into the community which may also contribute towards the technical assurance of

¹⁰Defined as 'what a household requires in order to meet basic needs – on a regular or seasonal basis – and its average cost.' [CALP \(2015\), Operational Toolkit for Multi-Purpose Cash Grants.](#)

Activity	Description	Conditionality	Information Management Challenges
	to pay for semi-skilled or skilled labour, such as masons or carpenters. ¹¹		other programmes.
Rental subsidy (Cash for Rent)	Cash grant provided towards rental payments.	Conditions may relate to qualification into the programme (e.g. the existence of a rental agreement) or to adherence to a protocol (e.g. payments upon provision of a receipt)	• Conditions may vary in terms of their likely impact upon the outcome of the activity, therefore will need to be recorded within activity reporting, and taken into consideration in analysis • Conditions relate to restrictions upon usage of the cash may have a different influence upon outcome to conditions related to criteria for beneficiary selection, requiring a clear differentiation between these conditions in order for each to be analysed appropriately. This will require a clear terminology to be used regarding conditions.
Cash for increased housing stock	The provision of cash to potential landlord in order to complete work upon an unfinished building,	Conditions may be associated with release of funds (e.g. payment in instalments upon the completion of phases of the work) and/or relate to a contribution from the recipient (e.g. the provision of a rent-free period for beneficiaries after the completion of work)	• This is a relatively new activity within shelter responses, being used as part of the shelter response in Palestine. As a result, challenges have not as yet been identified

¹¹ An example of this was in the Philippines Haiyan response, where households were provided with cash to cover some of the cost of labouring on their own shelter, in recognition of the fact that this would divert time from income generating activities.

4.2 Approaches to classifying outputs against objectives

Fundamental to the ability to accurately report progress against various sectoral objectives is the classification of **outputs** according to their contributions towards those **objectives**. In the absence of a direct measurement of outcome, outputs are often also used to infer **probable outcome** therefore the way in which activities and their outputs are classified will also have a significant effect on estimates of overall coverage relative to those outcomes. Coverage analysis also requires standardised units of measurement of outputs; generally in the context of shelter and NFI this is the number of households benefitting from the intervention, and relates to the baseline of damaged/affected houses against which objectives and targets have been set. For some activities however, it may be appropriate to use a different measure of output – for instance, for training activities, a more pertinent output unit would be the number of people trained.

Approaches to classification of outputs and of cash based activities was examined across 18 country-level SCTs identified as gathering information related to cash-based Shelter and NFI activities, some of these clusters still being active, others having ended. Two overarching approaches to the overall classification of outputs to objectives were observed, which also provides the framework under which cash based outputs are classified.

The first is to classify **activities** to objectives, then allocate their corresponding outputs to that objective. The second is to separate the reporting of outputs across different fields according to the type of output, and classify each **output type** against its relevant objectives. Figures 3a and 3b provide an example of the difference in reporting structure for these two approaches, and illustrates how this is applied to allocate outputs to objectives. The advantages and disadvantages of these two approaches are summarized in Table 3.

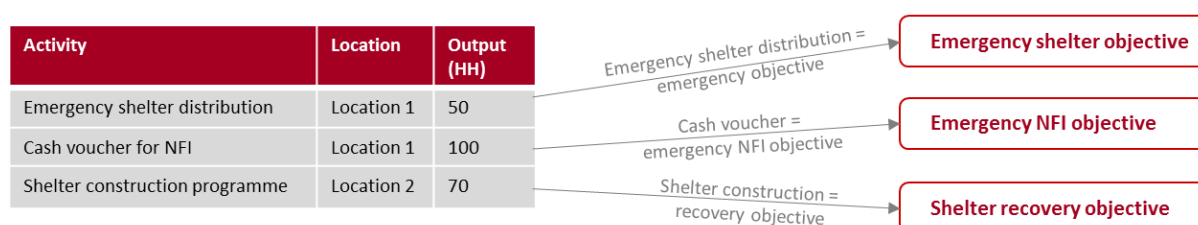


Figure 3a. Example classification of outputs according to activity categories.

Contribution of output towards objectives is determined on the basis of the activity type, with each activity type being classified as contributing to a specific objective.

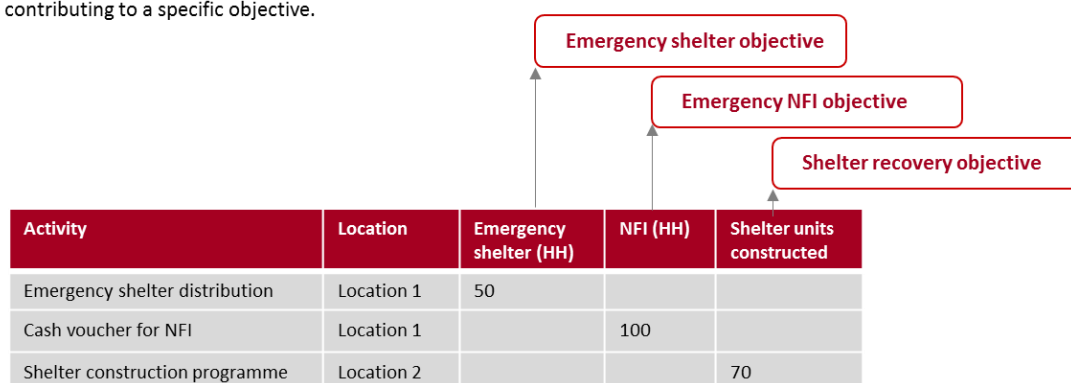


Figure 3b. Example classification of outputs according to output categories.

Contribution of outputs towards objectives is determined by separating output reporting into categories of output, each of which is classified as contributing to a specific objective.

	Advantage	Disadvantage
Activities classified according to objectives	• Compact way of structuring the reporting form • Aligns with most standard 4W approaches • All outputs are stored in a single field, allowing a great deal of flexibility in terms of how data can be disaggregated and analysed	• This requires the categories of activity type to be designed so that all outputs of one activity type can be assumed to contribute to the same objective. This limitation can be overcome by using categories and subcategories when activity type alone is ambiguous as to the type of output. • Where an activity involves two concurrent outputs (for instance, a distribution of cash and of materials), this must be reported as two separate activities, therefore limiting the ability to identify that the same beneficiaries were the recipients of both outputs - this can lead to double counting towards targets. • Whilst outputs are all in one field, they may have different units of reporting, e.g. household, individual or community – therefore analysis calculations will need to take into account the potential differences in unit across the categories of output.
Outputs classified according to objectives	• Allows the reporting of different outputs within one activity, allowing a better representation of beneficiaries receiving multiple forms of support • Reduces the extent to which agencies must repeat lines of information across multiple rows to break activities down by output type • The use of separate field for each output means that outputs can also be separated by unit of output (e.g., household or community), resulting in a database structured in a more robust way	• Results in a reporting form with many more fields and generally of increased complexity • As this is a deviation from the usual approach to 4W, reporting this data to OCHA often requires reworking of the data into the 'normal' structure, placing additional demands on time during an emergency response. • Deviation from usual approach can result in misinterpretation from partners.

Table 3. Advantages and disadvantages of main SCT approaches to classification against objectives

Classifying outputs by objective is the more robust way of storing data, both in terms of separating outputs by unit and allowing the identification of recipients of multiple different types of output. This last point may be of high significance in a response where the **outcome** for beneficiaries is expected to be achieved through the receipt of multiple outputs (e.g. they must receive materials and technical assistance). Despite this, it is not frequently used – currently, it is an approach being used in Iraq and Myanmar and it was also used for part of the Philippines Haiyan response.

The most common approach was the more standard 4W approach of using just one field for all outputs, with activity categories used to differentiate between outputs. Several clusters highlighted the process of assigning these activities to specific objectives as a key challenge, sometimes leading to modification of approach at a later stage in a response, in order to better facilitate reporting against objectives (Iraq, Palestine, Nepal).

The particular challenge of this approach specifically relative to cash based activities is that an output unit of 'household receiving cash' is inherently more ambiguous in terms of knowing to which

objective this has contributed, than outputs such as 'household receiving NFI' or 'household receiving shelter kit'.

Four main solutions were identified for how this was dealt with by country SCTs:

- 1) Recording of the cash value of the intervention, and assigning to an objective on the basis of value. Technical guidelines for the response may have outlined a cost-equivalent for certain levels of support, which may provide the basis for the assumption of which objectives were met according to the value of the cash activity
- 2) Assignment of cash activities to objectives based on knowledge of all existing cash programmes in the response. For example, in the Nepal earthquake response, cash based shelter and NFI activities were limited to emergency support, and therefore could be correctly assigned as contributing towards those objectives.
- 3) Categorisation of cash activities according to their intended output rather than by the use of cash. For instance, for a cash voucher programme for NFI, recording this under the category of NFI distribution since this is the intended outcome of the cash output. When this approach was used, in some cases a separate field was used to indicate that the modality of cash had been used, allowing for later disaggregation of cash based activities.
- 4) Application of a two or sometimes even three tier hierarchy of categories and subcategories to classify activities, allowing similar activities to exist within more than one category, depending on the type of output that the activity will have.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE REPORTING

This section of the report presents recommendations regarding the recording of cash based activities which may facilitate the structuring of data so as to support meaningful analysis, and are made in the context of the overarching IM challenges outlined within Section 3, and current country level approaches to the reporting of cash based activities outlined in Section 4. The following points should be taken into consideration when considering the recommendations:

There is no 'one size fits all' approach. Due to the inherent challenges of information management in emergencies, pragmatism must always be applied in order to get the best possible data, both in terms of timeliness and accuracy, whilst managing the reporting requirements upon agencies. This means that there is no single approach to reporting that can be applied as a perfect fit in every response. By taking into consideration these recommendations, however, information managers and other SCT team members may be able to avoid analysis challenges later in a response by designing reporting systems to accommodate future reporting requirements.

Recommendations are not technology specific. Technologies used for the collection of agency activity data varies considerably from response to response. In many, Excel templates are used, having the advantage of being a format that many agencies are familiar with, having high flexibility and providing a system that can easily be handed over to national counterparts. In others, web based tools such as ActivityInfo are used, having the advantage of automatically aggregating data, and potentially also having functionality to allow visualisation of the data and automated report generation.

Since choice of tool/technology can vary so much across responses, the following recommendations are not technology-specific, but are principles that could be applied across a range of technologies. Where these technologies are used, they may place limitations upon how the data is structured – however, the choice and definition of categories of activities and outputs, and the principles upon which they are aggregated and analysed, is nonetheless defined by the clusters in such cases. As a result, consideration of these points is particularly important in such cases so that appropriate mitigation measures can be taken to ensure that the outputs from online systems can align coherently to SCT objectives.

5.1 Alignment of activity class categorization with objectives

It is strongly recommended that reporting systems are designed from the outset to facilitate calculations of progress against strategic objectives. Whilst still remaining primarily a database of output indicators rather than outcome indicators, the alignment of outputs to objectives on the basis of their **probable** outcomes will allow for a more robust basis for inferring progress towards sectoral objectives. Some key issues to consider in terms of achieving this are outlined below

Alignment of strategy, technical guidelines and reporting systems

The cluster's strategy will be agreed amongst the cluster in the early stages of a response, and will outline cluster objectives as well as recommended activities or outputs that, given the context, are considered as contributing towards those objectives. The technical details for each output are then articulated within technical guidelines, defining the technical standards that those outputs are expected to meet. Together, these documents should provide the basis upon which information systems are designed;

- the strategy will provide the framework of which outputs contribute to which objectives
- the technical guidance will provide definitions of outputs that will form the basis for reporting

This highlights the importance of having a defined strategy and technical guidance at the earliest stages of a response in order for reporting systems to be designed around them (Figure 4)

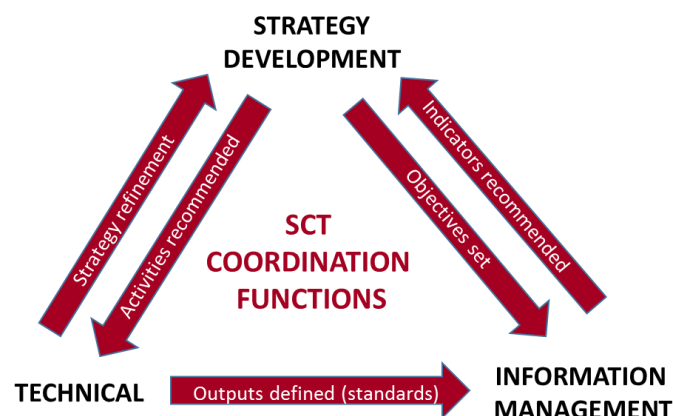


Figure 4. Inter-relationship between strategy development, technical and information management functions within information management system design

Selection of appropriate activity categories and sub categories

Since the majority of country SCTs use an approach of storing all output data in one field and assigning outputs to objectives on the basis of **categories of activity**, the choice of categories is the most significant factor in ensuring a coherent analysis.

Often, the modality of the activity is included within these categories, for instance through the inclusion of categories such as 'cash voucher'. However, this has become more challenging due to an increasing range of modalities being used, though sometimes to achieve different ends. As an example, a cash voucher might be provided for the purchase of a tarpaulin, or equally might be provided for CGI sheeting; the former would contribute towards emergency shelter objectives, and the latter perhaps towards objectives of owner driven repair/recovery shelter, or perhaps even to both objectives. If categories are used where the outputs are ambiguous, then this category cannot be assigned accurately as contributing to specific objectives.

Eliminating this ambiguity can be done in one of two ways:

- 1) Select categories that align to the output of the activity, as opposed to the methods taken to deliver the output. For the previous example, for instance, recording the cash voucher activity according to the intended output (i.e. tarpaulin, CGI) would ensure that cash voucher activity outputs can be assigned appropriately according to what that intervention is intending to achieve. Modality of the activity can, if required, be recorded in a separate field and used within analysis (see section 5.2)
- 2) Apply sub-categories within activity categories which separate similar activities according to their outputs. Using the previous example again, this could be done using the initial category of 'cash voucher' followed by the category 'Tarpaulin' or 'CGI', or vice versa with the activity first defined by intended output, 'Tarpaulin' or 'CGI', then by modality 'cash voucher'.

Most country level SCTs already apply some form of sub-categories within activity types within their reporting templates, though there is significant variation in terms of how this has been implemented. Categories may have been designed in order to support the allocation of outputs to objectives, though in some cases it appears that design was focused upon rather than user-friendliness and intuitiveness of categories. Whilst this is an important consideration, a well thought through categorization can potentially both support analysis AND be user-friendly.

The recommended approach is to categorize first by the objective that the activity falls within, then use sub categories to differentiate between by output types. If necessary, a further level of sub categories can also be used to group similar themed activities, supporting user-friendliness by reducing the length of lists of activities from which agencies will have to select. Using this approach, an activity type can be repeated under different objectives, accounting for the fact that the same activity type could be used to meet different objectives. For instance, the activity of a distribution of shelter materials could be undertaken to meet emergency shelter objectives OR recovery shelter objectives.

Establishing an activity classification which starts with the objective, however, requires strategic discussions to have moved forwards sufficiently to have defined these objectives. Whilst this is usually a fairly rapid process, in the initial days of a response this is unlikely to yet be agreed. During these early stages of the response, shelter and NFI activities are likely to be contributing primarily to emergency shelter and NFI objectives, therefore an initial generic classification of activities under two high level objectives of emergency and recovery could be applied in the interim until more specific objectives have been established.

Table 4 shows a suggested generic classification for activity type, using three levels of classifications. The first is by generic objective, the second level groups outputs into thematic areas (supporting user friendliness) and the third splits activities into categories of different output. This approach follows the principle of separating modality out completely from the classification of outputs, though it is recommended that modality is nonetheless recorded in a separate field – this is covered in section 5.2. This could be applied during the early stages of a response, refining the sub-categories of activity by objective once strategic and technical discussions have been able to articulate objectives and technically define appropriate outputs. In any particular response, there may be many categories that are not applicable in that context, therefore can be immediately removed from initial reporting templates (for instance, sealing off kits).

Level 1 - Objectives	Level 2 – Thematic grouping	Level 3 – output types	Details
Emergency objective	Emergency Shelter	Plastic sheeting/tarps & fixings	
		Tents	
		Construction materials	May require a technical definition of what is considered a sufficient package of materials to be recorded in the category, avoiding the challenge of tracking every individual type of material.
		Multipurpose Cash Grant	See section 5.3
		Sealing off kits	
	Technical assistance	Household Training	Categories of technical assistance are provided as an example, however at present there is no common understanding/framework of what these should encompass, and how they contribute towards the response. To allow analysis, types of output should be defined within technical guidelines, and their contribution towards the response outlined within the strategy.
		Community Training	
		IEC materials	
	NFI	Kitchen Sets	
		Household NFI	This encompasses both blankets and sleeping mats, as these are generally distributed together
		Multipurpose Cash Grant	See section 5.3
	Winterisation/summerisation	Plastic sheeting/tarps & fixings	Winterisation and summerisation often involve the same types of output as emergency shelter support, therefore separating these into a sub category avoids possible confusion between similar outputs applied for different purposes
		Construction materials	
	Cash for Work	Debris clearance	Provided as an example, though may require further sub categories is the likely outputs of cash for Work activities will differ
Recovery objective	Repair/construction	Repair	It may be desirable to subdivide this into owner-driven repair and partner driven repair, since there may be a requirement to analyse owner driven repair giving greater consideration to complementary technical assistance activities, which can help to assure the quality of outputs.
		Construction of temporary shelter	Might be subdivided into different types of shelter output, for instance, transitional shelter, core shelter, collective centre.
	Support to	Rental support	

	displaced	Host family support	
		Collective Centre repair	
	Technical assistance	Household training	See previous comments on technical assistance. Specialist training during the recovery phase might involve the training of carpenters or masons.
		Community training	
		Specialist training	

Table 4. Proposed activity classification

5.2 Cash as a modality

By aligning the categorisation of activities by objectives as opposed to programming methods/modalities chosen, the 4W system can be more closely used to infer coverage relative to outcomes. As cash based programming is not likely to ever be a primary objective of a shelter and NFI response, it should be seen as one of several modalities through which an objective can be achieved. Therefore, it is recommended that modality be recorded as an additional, separate attribute of the activity, as opposed to being used to categorise outputs. The advantages of this are:

- By separating the recording of modality and output type, it allows for a **change in modality** of the programme without having an impact on how the output is classified against an objective. For instance, if an emergency shelter programme shifts from in-kind to cash modalities, the output of the activity is the same and therefore this change in modality should not impact the classification of the output, i.e. emergency shelter. This supports the shift in dialogue away from 'cash based programming' to '**market based programming**', assuming that if agencies are conducting responsible programming, then they should be monitoring markets and potentially switching modalities if required. Likewise, an effective reporting system should accommodate such changes.
- In some shelter programmes, a **mix of modalities** may be used in order to deliver the intended output. For instance, an owner driven repair programme may use a mix of in-kind materials, cash vouchers for other items, an unconditional cash grant towards hiring labour, plus some technical assistance. By recording modality separately, it also becomes easier to represent the full range of modalities, or that a mix of modalities are used. This is preferable than the approach of breaking the programme down to report each modality as a separate activity, since the fact that it is the *same* group of beneficiaries receiving a package of support which results in the output being achieved.

Table 5 outlines the recommended categories for a 'Modality' field that would be used to store modalities in their own field separate from the three level activity categorisation outlined in the previous section, allowing these two factors to vary independently. In addition to the modality type, it may be desirable to record the cash value for cash based approaches (or the average cash value per household if this varies across the programme) – this can help to support processes such as harmonisation of cash based responses (highlighted as a requirement in the Ukraine response).

Modalities	Description
In-kind	For all in-kind distributions or shelter construction/repair activities where materials are provided by the agency
Voucher	For cash based activities involving vouchers which restrict spending in some way, either by supplier, value or item. If there is a wide variation of voucher approaches within the given response, it may also be desirable to disaggregate further by voucher type (value based or item based) and to also record the voucher value.
Restricted cash	For cash based activities involving other forms of restriction upon usage. This should

	refer only to those conditions which could affect outcome, as opposed to pre-conditions.
Unrestricted cash	For cash based activities where usage is unrestricted.
Mixed modality	For activities which use a mix of modalities to achieve a specific outcome (e.g. mixture of in-kind materials, vouchers and training as jointly contributing to a repair).

Table 5. Recommended modality categories

HOW TO REPRESENT MIXED MODALITIES?

Whilst it could be possible to limit modality to single field using the list provided above, for programmes using a mix of modalities, this would only allow the recording that a mix was used, but could not be used to accurately represent **which** modalities. This would limit the ability, for instance, to disaggregate fully by modality type (i.e., to calculate HHs receiving support in the form of cash).

This limitation may be seen as acceptable depending on the coordination and reporting requirements of the response. If, however, it is decided that details of all modalities are necessary then this could be implemented by representing the categories of modality across several fields, with each field holding a binary yes/no value to indicate usage of that modality within the activity. This approach models the one-to-many relationship that can exist between a type of output and the modalities used to deliver it. An example recording modality as a single field or using multiple fields is shown in Figure 5a and b:

Options: cash voucher, in-kind, restricted cash, unrestricted cash or mixed modality

Activity	Modality
NFI	Cash Voucher
Shelter repair	Mixed modality

Figure 5a. Example of modality stored as single field

Modalities are in separate fields, with each field having a binary option of yes or no

Activity	In-kind	Voucher	Restricted cash	Unrestricted cash
NFI	No	Yes	No	No
Shelter repair	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Figure 5b. Example of modality stored in multiple fields.

There are two main disadvantages of using multiple fields:

- It increases the complexity of the reporting form, which is often designed to be as compact as possible to support user friendliness.
- As 4W reporting is broken down by location and sub locations, partners may have to provide these details repeatedly across many rows of data as the same methods are being applied across many programme areas

It would be more time efficient to collect this information only once from agencies, and store it in such a way that it can be cross referenced with the programme's locations, therefore enabling full disaggregation by modality across the database - Section 5.4 outlines the recommendations as to how this can be implemented.

5.3 *Multipurpose Cash Grant (MPGs) reporting*

For the Shelter Cluster, the key question related to MPGs is to what extent they have contributed specifically towards shelter and NFI objectives. Since the outputs of these programmes cannot be firmly determined until post distribution monitoring has been undertaken, this makes it very challenging to accurately record these based specifically on their outputs, as outlined in previous recommendations.

As a result of this, a different approach is recommended for the recording of these activities than the recommendation for other reporting of shelter or NFI based cash activities. This approach is based on the assumption that MPG programmes have been undertaken in keeping with current **guidelines**, and that this information is shared with the SCT:

- The **programme design** should have been based on an assessment of needs, which will have influenced which **sectors** the programme was designed to address
- That the **extent** of those needs will influence the **value** of the grant. The latter will be based on the principle that a proportion of the overall grant will be spent on shelter or NFI, and that this proportion will be sufficient to allow the purchase of the item required to address the identified need
- That in terms of shelter and NFI, MPGs will be designed primarily to address emergency needs as opposed to recovery needs
- **Post distribution** monitoring is undertaken. This can validate assumptions regarding the proportion of the grant spent on shelter and NFI; however, in order for these to be useful in terms of validating the shelter/NFI outcome of those purchases, PDM tools will need to be aligned to measure shelter/NFI outcome indicators

Taking into consideration these assumptions, the following steps are recommended:

- 1) **Record MPG activities initially as a separate type of output.** This is different to the approach outlined above for other cash based activities, for which it is recommended that outputs are recorded according to what the cash activity will result in, i.e. purchased items. Since there is greater uncertainty over whether MPGs will have resulted in the desired items being purchased, it means that there is still equal or greater uncertainty regarding the resulting shelter/NFI outcome for these beneficiaries. Therefore, analysis and reporting of these outputs should differentiate between MPG outputs and non-MPG outputs; to do this, MPG activities can be recorded as a separate output type by including it within the third level of activity categorisation, as shown in Table 4 (section 5.1). This can be within a second level sub-category which relates to the intended output (e.g., emergency shelter, NFI), though kept separate from outputs where the exact items are known (e.g., tent, tarpaulins, kitchen set). Since these sub-categories sit under their relevant objectives (reflected in the first level of classification), this allows their contribution towards overall objectives to be easily calculated, yet also broken down to identify the specific contribution of MPGs. This is recommended since there is greater uncertainty regarding the outcome of these activities. Reporting MPG contribution separately, and clearly communicating any caveats to be considered when inferring outcomes from the data, are two steps that can help to communicate this uncertainty effectively so that it can be taken into consideration when used in decision making.
- 2) **Engage with the design of Post Distribution Monitoring processes for the MPG.** Firstly, within coordination mechanisms, the harmonization of PDM tools and methodologies for all partners undertaking the MPG should be advocated. This will ensure consistency of

indicator selection and measurement across the whole MPG programme. Secondly, it will allow participation in indicator design and selection. For the contribution of MPGs to be measured towards sectoral objectives, MPGs would need to track the same indicators as the SCT - the difficulty, however, is that this presents MPGs with a very wide range of potential impact measures across all of the sectors. Recent advocacy has been focused on the need to reduce this to a measurable number by establishing either joint or minimum outcome indicators (see Section 3.6). The potential advantages and disadvantages of these two approaches is outlined in Table 6. Regardless of which is chosen, the SCT will need to engage in PDM design:

- If minimum outcome indicator are chosen, then the SCT will need to influence the choice of those indicators; this will allow alignment with other outcome measurement processes, such as SCT monitoring assessments.
 - If a joint indicator is chosen, it is likely to be in the form of a coping strategy index aimed at measuring overall welfare/wellbeing of beneficiaries. Since this is not the kind of information usually collected by the SCT, it may be desirable to modify SCT monitoring assessment tools to include measurement of this index, in order to provide a basis on which outcomes can be measured holistically across all shelter and NFI outputs.
- 3) **Once Post Distribution Monitoring has been undertaken, update the recording of activities.** PDMs should provide validation of the proportion of grant which was spent on shelter and NFI related items, which will validate the overall volume of outputs that were recorded for the activity. It should also provide a clearer idea of **what types of outputs** were purchased (i.e. Tent, tarpaulin, kitchen set), which will also help to validate the assumption that these will contribute towards certain objectives. This could result in changes to measures of progress against objectives as a result of validation through PDM processes. Whilst this is undesirable, particularly in instances where the indicators are adjusted to show **LESS** progress than was previously thought, it is an inherent limitation faced when working with data which has not yet been validated. Again, clear communication of the reasons behind such shifts in indicators can help to mitigate against misinterpretation of the data.

Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Development of a single outcome indicator per sector	More likely to be able to analyse jointly with other sectoral indicators.	Difficulty in establishing a single indicator that can reflect both emergency shelter and NFI impacts, and also potential recovery impacts
Development of a coping strategy index aimed at measuring overall welfare/wellbeing of beneficiaries	Takes into account the potential 'added value' of MPGs beyond their immediate sectoral contribution.	Not indicators historically measured by the SCT, and therefore would limit the ability to analyse shelter and NFI intervention impacts holistically across the whole response.

Table 6. Approaches to reporting programme level information.

5.4 Systematic recording of programme details

One of the challenges faced when designing cluster reporting templates is the desire to collect as many relevant details from partners that will support analysis, whilst at the same time keeping the reporting burden upon agencies to a minimum. Since agency 4W reporting is broken down by geographical location and by output type, for most partners this means providing many rows of data. Whilst the *number* of outputs may vary by location, other details related to the activity are often shared across a number of different locations. Requiring partners to submit these same details

repeatedly for every location could lead to significant unnecessary repetition for agencies, increasing the time needed to complete the reporting form.

This may be particularly pertinent for cash based programmes, when there may be a requirement to record not just the direct output of the activity (e.g., restrictions associated with usage, cash value or average cash value) but also the anticipated items purchased. Some of these factors are features of the programme as a whole, and therefore collecting and storing them across repeated rows for every programme location is a waste of time for agencies to report. It also results in **data redundancy** within the database – this is when the same data is repeated in many rows. This can lead to large files which can become unwieldy to work with, since SCT information managers most commonly use spreadsheet applications such as Excel for storage and analysis of data. Whilst being very user friendly and accessible, spreadsheet applications are not designed specifically for efficient data storage.

A more elegant solution in terms of data storage would be to collect some information at the level of the programme, then record corresponding programme locations and outputs. Figure 6 demonstrates the difference between this programme approach and the standard approach in terms of the way that the data is structured. The advantages and disadvantages of these approaches are summarised in Table 7.

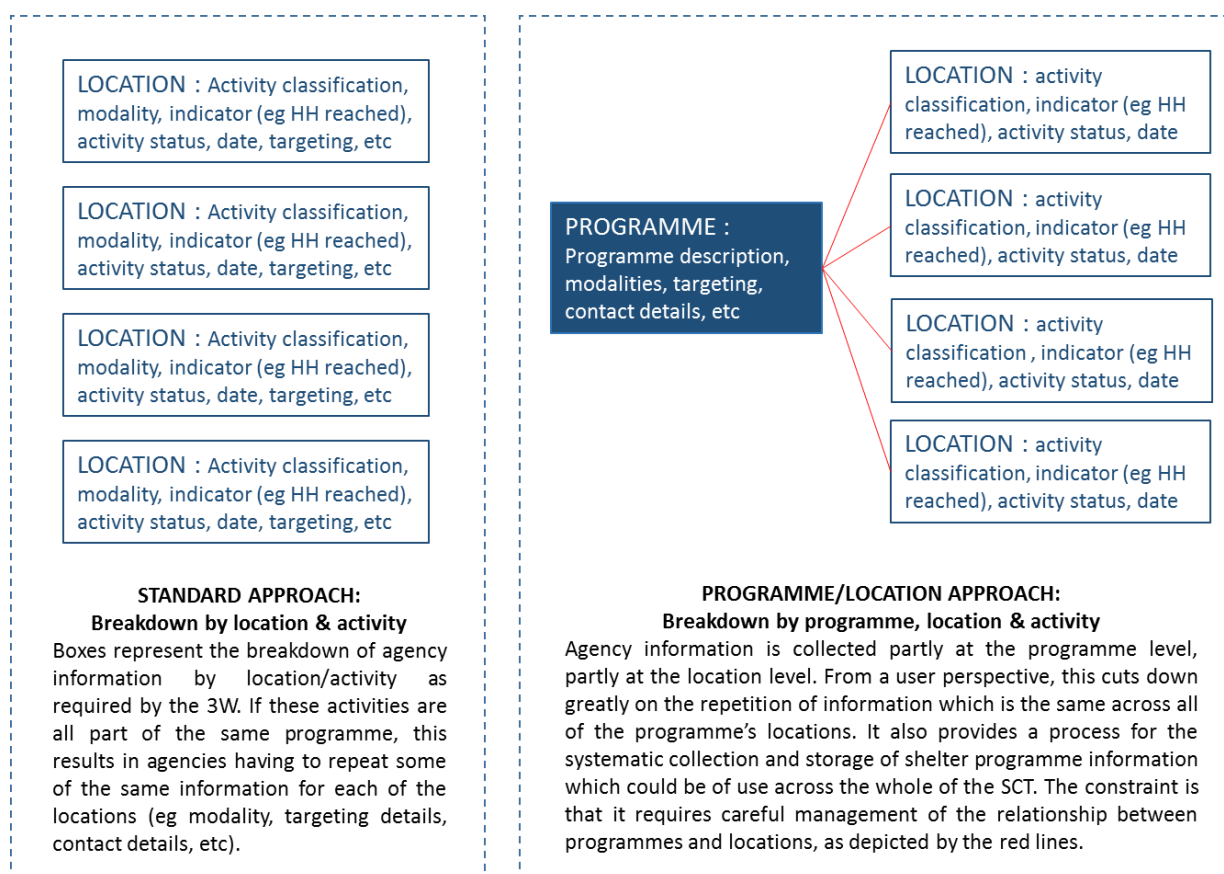


Figure 6. Comparison of data structure in standard location/activity 4W reporting, and proposed reporting approach incorporating programme level information.

Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Standard approach: collect and store activity details for every location and activity	• Simpler in terms of working with the data as it is stored in a single table • Can be collected using a single form	• Leads to significant data redundancy, where the same data is repeated across many rows • Unnecessary time requirement for agencies to repeat the same information when submitting data
Programme/location approach: collect and store some activity details at the programme level, some at location	• Less redundancy in the database, reducing file sizes • Facilitates the collection of additional details about the overall project that could be otherwise cumbersome to collect and store across all project locations • Will result in less repetition of the same details for agencies whose programmes cover multiple location.	• As related data is stored across two tables, it requires accurate cross referencing in order to work with all of the data effectively. Maintenance of this cross-referencing ('relationship' in database terms) between programmes and locations can be challenging – see box below on the challenges of collecting and analyzing relational data (i.e., related data which is stored in more than one table) • Two forms will be required to collect the data – one for programmes, one for activities by location. This may also present challenges in terms of ensuring usability, since this is a new approach to 4W data collection.

Table 7. Approaches to reporting programme level information.

Whilst the collection and storage of programme level data has some disadvantages, these are mainly technical in nature. The greatest advantage, however, is that it would provide **greater feasibility for the collection of additional details about the programme**. This may be of particular benefit when dealing with cash based programmes; since the outcome of these activities is inherently more uncertain, systematically storing and recording additional details about the programme (such as details about restrictions, conditions related to beneficiary selection criteria, post distribution monitoring results) could be of great use in leveraging the most from this data:

- This could support a more refined analysis of the data according to specific programme details (for instance, according to different types of restriction)
- During a response, there is sometimes the need to re-categorise activities/outputs in terms of their contribution towards objectives. This could be due to objectives being modified or added at a later stage of the response – the latter being frequently the case for recovery based objectives. It might also be due to a technical standard being applied at a given time, against which previously reported outputs must be evaluated in order to determine whether or not those outputs can be seen as contributing towards various objectives. For instance, a voucher could be provided for the purchase of materials to repair a shelter, and initially considered to be contributing to emergency and recovery objectives; later in a response, technical standards may be defined that require a greater amount of materials than were factored into the voucher value or restrictions. This could require the output to be re-categorised, perhaps counting it only towards emergency objectives.
- Technical advisors are generally the SCT members with the most knowledge of project details, as well as an understanding of which details may affect the outcome of the activity. This knowledge can be of great use within information management to support analysis; the systematic collection and storage of programme details provides a way of using this information across the whole coordination team.

TECHNICAL CHALLENGE: COLLECTING AND MANAGING RELATIONAL DATA

At the level of the database, storing data according to programme *and* output locations means storing information in two tables – one for programmes and one for the outputs by location. This is referred to as **relational data** (i.e. data held across many tables, but which have a relationship to one another), in this case the **relationship** between the two tables is that each programme has one or more locations – in database terms, this is a **one-to many** relationship. This has implication for both data collection, data storage and analysis:

Data collection: data will need to be collected either in two forms (one for programmes, one for outputs by location), or in a form containing sub-forms. If already using an Excel workbook for the standard output-by-location 4W form, the former could be relatively easily achieved by adding an additional spreadsheet within the workbook for programmes. The latter solution of a form with sub-forms would require more development, but is also technically feasible. If other technologies are being used for data collection, such as online 4W reporting systems, or ActivityInfo, this could affect the feasibility of modifying data collection to include programme level information.

Data storage: The relationship (cross referencing) between each programme and its corresponding outputs by location will need to be recorded and managed within the database to ensure that these remain correctly linked together. This is normally addressed by the use of database applications such as Oracle, SQL Server or Microsoft Access, which incorporate a relational database management system (RDMS) that allows the cross referencing to be managed automatically, reducing the likelihood of errors being accidentally generated within critical cross referencing fields. Excel is a spreadsheet application and therefore does not provide this functionality, therefore if using Excel for data storage, the cross referencing will need to be managed carefully. Thought will also need to be given as to how to ensure cross referencing will always be unique within the database; this will depend on what system of IDs are applied as the basis for cross referencing, and may be affected by whether the IDs are applied when data is entered into the form, or when data is imported into the database.

Analysis: Analysis will become more complex as it will require calculations to be made taking into account the relationship between programmes and locations. Again, database applications have in-built functionality to support this, for instance through the use of Standard Query Language (SQL) to allow users to define calculations using data held across multiple tables, taking into account the relationship between these tables. Similar functionality can be achieved to some extent in Excel by using functionality such as 'lookup' formulas and pivot tables, but it is likely to be more time consuming to develop, and can result in Excel files that contain such a large amount of formulas and calculations that they become error prone and unwieldy in terms of their file size.

Given that most SCTs use Excel for data collection and storage, managing the cross-referencing system is anticipated as being the greatest technical issue. If using Excel, initial allocation of cross-referencing IDs could be tackled in one of two ways; the first would be to split agency submission by programme, the other would be to collect all programme and location information together. These two approaches and their advantages and disadvantages are outlined in Table 8. An example of the implementation of a project sheet can be found in the sample Excel reporting template which can be found [here](#):

Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
ONE FORM PER PROGRAMME: Agencies to submit a separate 4W reporting for each programme, incorporating corresponding locations. This	Referential integrity guaranteed as cross referencing between programmes and locations would be implemented by information managers when consolidating the data	For agencies with multiple programmes, this would require the submission of multiple reporting forms. May result in a lengthy data consolidation process that has to be repeated each time data is updated.

is an approach which has been used by the food security cluster in Gazientep.		
ONE FORM PER AGENCY: Agencies submit details of all programmes and all locations in one form, with cross referencing occurring within the form.	For agencies with multiple programmes, this would still mean the submission of only one report - easier to update and manage both for reporting agencies and for the SCT.	Cross-referencing would need to be applied within the reporting form and imported into the database. In order for referential integrity to be achieved, the cross referencing system will need to result in unique IDs across the database. This may require some additional quality control processes for the data import stage.

Table 8. Approaches to reporting programme level information.

5.5 Market assessment

Given the current advocacy towards the use of market based approaches, this is likely to result in an increased requirement for partners to monitor market trends in order to determine the most appropriate modality at a given point in time. This may be based on factors such as:

- Functioning of markets
- Access to markets by intended beneficiaries
- Availability of suitable items within existing markets (may include aspects of quality)
- Cost of items
- Functioning of transport networks to enable transport of purchased items
- Analysis of the supply chain for key items, to identify logistical constraints and ensure that sufficient volumes can be made available, and within required timescales
- Availability of existing cash transfer mechanisms that could be used for a cash based approach

These are factors often playing an influence within programme design, though are not commonly tracked regularly by agencies. There have been occasions (for instance, in the Philippines Haiyan response) where partners have requested support from the SCT for a joint market assessment, particularly with respect to the cost and availability of shelter construction materials, and supply chain constraints.

There is a potentially valuable role that the SCT could play in supporting agencies undertaking market based approaches, by supporting the systematic collection, collation and dissemination of information related to markets. Additionally the findings of such assessments can also inform advocacy on behalf of the sector in instances where cash is or is not appropriate for the shelter response.

The recommendation is that this is approached in two ways:

- 1) **Initial rapid market assessment:** Initial market functionality and access is generally established through rapid assessment mechanisms in the early stages of a response, such as the Multi-Sector Rapid Assessment (MIRA) approach. This can include the availability of a limited number of key commodities which may impact the initial response; furthermore, rapid assessments may be undertaken by other clusters which may be pertinent for the Shelter and NFI cluster; for instance, the Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) cluster frequently undertakes rapid assessments to support the programming of food assistance. As

the food security sector is more evolved in terms of its use of cash based approaches, these include an evaluation of various factors related to the feasibility of cash programming - this may be equally useful for shelter and NFI cash programming. Engagement with multi-sector assessment coordination mechanisms may allow:

- Influence over tool design, to ensure that access and functionality of markets is included within the assessment
- The inclusion of an evaluation of the availability of a limited amount of key commodities – this should be focused on emergency relief items, since these will be the priority during the early stages of the response
- Coordination with other clusters undertaking sectorally focused rapid assessments may allow joint assessment to be undertaken on themes of relevance to multiple sectors, such as the feasibility of cash programming.

- 2) **Shelter and NFI market assessment:** Shelter construction and repair can potentially involve a very wide range of construction materials. Furthermore, the quantity and volume of items that is required for a shelter response may be substantial, requiring specific examination of the supply chain functioning and capacity. Because of this, a sector-specific market assessment will still need to be undertaken in order to provide sufficient detail to support shelter programming decisions. It is recommended that the SCT advocates for a joint shelter market assessment as a matter of course within a shelter response, and engages in coordination with partners regarding tool selection or design. Many tools exist for shelter market assessments, such as the Emergency Mapping and Market Analysis (EMMA) Tool, which can be adapted to the specifics of the context, and the shelter response.
- 3) **Monitoring of markets:** It is recommended that the SCT engages with partners to identify any commodities whose cost or availability may impact shelter programming, so that mechanisms can be designed to monitor and report regularly on these factors. This could be achieved through the use of a common tool which could be used periodically and uses the results of the assessments identified above as a baseline; it may be feasible to engage partners within this process, through a shared responsibility for data collection. As experience of monitoring markets within shelter and NFI is currently limited, best practice cannot yet be identified in terms of what information is collected and how; however, if implemented by more SCTs, it may be possible to develop standard templates and methodologies.

6. ANNEXES

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