Evaluation of UNHCR's Policy on Cash-Based Interventions (2022-2026)

Strategic Thematic Evaluation Commissioned by the Evaluation Office

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

This evaluation will synthesise and generate evidence on the implementation of UNHCR's 2022-2026 Policy on Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) across diverse operational contexts. Its overarching purpose is to inform UNHCR's future policy development, strengthen its strategic partnership and programmatic approach, and ultimately leverage the agency's full potential and comparative advantage in delivering cash-based assistance to forcibly displaced populations.

BACKGROUND

The 2022-2026 Policy on Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) makes CBI the preferred modality across assistance, service delivery and protection, adopting a "why-*not*-cash" approach. Built around four strategic objectives and seven outcomes, it spans emergency response, digital payments, and accountability. The policy positions UNHCR as a thought leader on CBI and commits to collaboration under the Global Compact on Refugees.

UNHCR's CBI encompasses both cash and vouchers, with the vast majority (95 percent) provided as unrestricted multipurpose cash transfers. Cash is mostly provided for well-being and basic needs, but also for a wide range of other objectives that include support to returns, cash as part of protection programming, and cash with specific sectoral outcomes and objectives.

Between 2022 and 2024, UNHCR disbursed approximately USD 2.33 billion to 22.3 million recipients in over 100 countries.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. **Policy Implementation**: To what extent has UNHCR implemented the CBI policy?

2. **Relevance and Adaptability of CBI:** Does the design and implementation of UNHCR's CBI align with the operational context and priorities of forcibly displaced people?

3. **Efficiency:** How efficient is UNHCR's cash-based programming?

4. **Effectiveness**: What difference has CBI made in the lives of forcibly displaced people?

5. **Coordination and Leadership**: How has UNHCR's role influenced the broader humanitarian CBI response?

SCOPE AND APPROACH

The evaluation examines UNHCR's global use of CBI over 2022-2026 and covers different contexts (emergency, protracted, transition/development) and affected populations (refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, internally displaced persons, stateless people, and, where relevant, host communities).
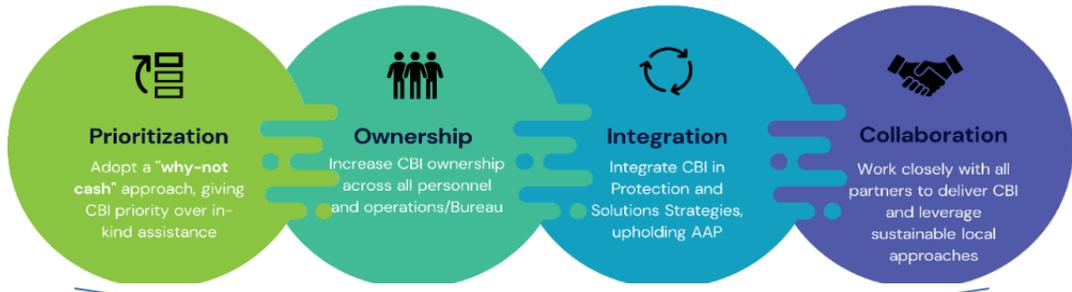
The evaluation will utilise a mixed-methods approach, drawing on quantitative and qualitative data. The design is utilisation-focused, participatory, and theory-based, combining a case study approach with focus group discussions and key informant interviews, an online survey, quantitative and qualitative secondary data analysis, and document analysis.

CASE STUDIES

The evaluation will conduct four in-country and four remote case studies:

- In-person: Afghanistan, Lebanon, Armenia, Uganda
- Remote: Egypt, Ukraine, Sudan, Brazil

CBI Policy Objectives

Prioritization	Ownership	Integration	Collaboration
Adopt a "**why-not cash**" approach, giving CBI priority over in-kind assistance	Increase CBI ownership across all personnel and operations/Bureau	Integrate CBI in Protection and Solutions Strategies, upholding AAP	Work closely with all partners to deliver CBI and leverage sustainable local approaches

People of Concern...

1	Increasingly access CBI as the preferred modality of UNHCR assistance from emergency preparedness and response to the achievement of solutions
2	Receive CBI that promote inclusion and access to local sustainable services
3	Access unrestricted CBI along with services as part of a basic needs approach
4	Participate as partners in the design, delivery and monitoring of CBI to help address their protection concerns
5	Access digital payment solutions where personal data is responsibly managed
6	Access CBI through collaborative cash approaches that minimize duplication
7	Receive rapid CBI in a simple, efficient, and accountable manner that addresses risks

TIMELINE

Dec '25-Feb '26 Inception	Mar-April '26 Data Collection	May-June '26 Data Analysis & Reporting	Jul-Sep '26 Validation & Dissemination	Q3 '26 Management Response

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