



GLOBAL PAYMENT SOLUTIONS FOR HUMANITARIAN CASH ASSISTANCE

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Cover photo: Afghanistan 2022, Families in Patika province who have been severely impacted by the earthquake and who have lost their livelihoods are being provided with assistance through unconditional cash grants from the Afghan Red Crescent Society. Cash assistance has proven to be a quick, safe, reliable and efficient way to support vulnerable communities in the wake of disasters. It allows people to determine for themselves what their most urgent needs are. © Meer Abdullah/IFRC

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Kenya 2020. A community member in Isiolo receives a text message confirming successful registration for the Kenya Red Cross Society's cash programme where two payments will be sent via M-PESA mobile money.

© Kenya Red Cross Society and Netherlands Red Cross

INTRODUCTION

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) commissioned a study to validate the need for a global payment solution and the feasibility of implementing such a solution to enable scalable and faster distribution of humanitarian cash assistance during emergencies. This report outlines the findings and observations based on consultations with over 30 representatives from the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, other humanitarian organizations and the private sector¹. The insights from this report aim at informing the IFRC and other humanitarian actors on the opportunities for a global payment solution, models for such solutions, and key risks and considerations for implementation. Additionally, this report aims at providing insights and encouraging financial service providers (FSP), fintech² in general, and other private sector actors to use their expertise, innovative solutions and services to help address the challenges of humanitarian actors such as the IFRC when scaling up cash assistance.

The IFRC has an ambitious goal of reaching 50 per cent of its humanitarian assistance using cash and vouchers by 2025 and has identified the lengthy process of procuring FSPs during emergencies as one of the barriers to reaching this goal. Cash preparedness is crucial in this scale-up strategy, where an important activity involves National Societies establishing framework agreements with FSPs. Efforts have increased to support more National Societies over the years; however, cash preparedness activities take time while, at the same time, disasters and crisis events are growing and their impacts getting more severe.

The IFRC has a payment solution for the Americas region using prepaid cards that may be topped up with monetary value remotely once the cards are shipped to the country affected by the disaster or crisis. This has been in use since 2014 and has proven effective and quick in disbursing cash during emergencies supported by the IFRC. The concept of a global payment solution was inspired by this regional prepaid card option. But expanding this regional solution to address global needs is not so simple given the varying contexts, cultures, infrastructure, compliance and regulations, as well as the geographical coverage required to cater beyond one region.

1. Consultations with the private sector were focused on financial service providers that are able to provide multi-country or multi-region services and not meant to be exhaustive in terms of the types of payment solutions offered.

2. Fintech, or “financial technology” is a fast-growing area with companies using new technologies to deliver financial services.

Nigeria 2022. Affected persons in Lafia, Benue State, count their money after cash distribution following the Nigeria Hunger Crisis appeal.
© Aduratomi Bolade/IFRC



Anan Ake Bad Tallafin Rage Radadin Ya'

CASH VOUCHER:

• CASH VOUCHER: _____

• VOUCHER NO. _____

• TRANSACTION TYPE _____

• DATE _____

• AMOUNT _____

• TO _____



NEEDS FOR A GLOBAL PAYMENT SOLUTION

When COVID-19 infections surged in early 2020, the IFRC launched a global emergency appeal to support National Societies in their response to this pandemic. About 60 of the 192 member National Societies included Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) in their response plans and another 10 were evaluating the feasibility of using CVA in their specific contexts³. But only 41 National Societies were able to distribute cash within the first six months of the emergency. National Societies that were prepared and have established agreements with FSPs and experience using CVA were able to quickly provide cash assistance to address basic needs and socio-economic impacts.

According to the IFRC's COVID-19 12-month emergency operational update report⁴, "one of the challenges in delivering cash with many National Societies was the lack of pre-agreements in place with FSPs and the need to ensure that they were flexible for this emergency and compatible with IFRC procurement standards. It typically takes up to six months to establish an agreement with any FSP, including a formal tender process and due diligence exercise".

The COVID-19 pandemic was one example of an emergency that has global or multi-country impacts. The current hunger crisis in Africa is affecting 23 countries with over 120 million people in need of immediate support. There, the IFRC and its members are focusing on 12 priority countries with emergency assistance. Indeed, according to the IFRC's World Disasters Report 2020⁵, the rise of extreme weather and climate-related events is expected to continue unless more action towards climate adaptation and mitigation are done. Rise in conflicts and civil unrest such as in Afghanistan and recently in Ukraine are also causing forced displacements, where neighbouring National Societies must prepare to support the influx of people moving in or through their countries for safety. IFRC's response to the Ukraine crisis is focusing on seven neighbouring countries plus Ukraine and looking to expand support with CVA to seven more countries where displaced people have increased the population.

The opportunity therefore for the IFRC to have a global solution that could be activated simultaneously in the countries where disasters and crises have affected people is highly beneficial to demonstrate scale, speed and quality service using CVA. This will also help the IFRC reach its ambitious goal for scale.

3. IFRC COVID-19 6-month operational update, August 2020.

4. IFRC COVID-19 12-month operational update, January 2021.

5. <https://www.ifrc.org/document/world-disasters-report-2020>

For the National Societies, a global solution could be an opportunity to help them gain more experience in dealing with FSPs, particularly when they have not yet conducted cash preparedness. In addition, having an alternative payment solution that could be used during an emergency would be helpful in cases where the current contract is no longer valid or if the services provided by existing FSPs are not feasible to use given the context of the emergency. Having an alternative solution may also be helpful in case the country faces market shocks or unexpected disruptions in FSPs such as sanctions, currency devaluation or liquidity issues.

BOX 1: OPPORTUNITIES FOR A GLOBAL PAYMENT SOLUTION

For IFRC Secretariat:

- ◎ Ability to provide timely and scalable cash that could be deployed immediately in emergencies
- ◎ Be agile to respond to rising global and multi-country impacting disasters and crises
- ◎ Complement cash preparedness activities which typically take time, and are carried on outside of emergency situations

For National Societies:

- ◎ Gain experience with using FSPs especially when they have not yet done this through cash preparedness activities or have no experience in using CVA before
- ◎ Have an alternative payment solution in cases where the contract with current FSP is no longer valid or the services of the FSP are not feasible for the context of the emergency
- ◎ Have an alternative in case of market shocks or unforeseen disruptions with current FSPs, including sanctions and currency devaluation

In addition to addressing the procurement issue, the global payment solution could also **shorten the time for money to be routed through the financial pipeline to reach affected people**. Typically, funds flow from IFRC headquarters in Geneva to the regional office then to the country office or the National Society's bank account to the local FSP. For example, an internal analysis in 2019 of the IFRC financial pipeline in one country in Asia Pacific showed that funds transfer could take about 17–21 days because of the time it takes for the intermediary banks to process and move the funds. The days vary based on the banks and the number of intermediaries. A global solution could help reduce the number of intermediaries (e.g. IFRC Geneva to the global FSP to the local FSP) and therefore the overall time to get money to the affected population.

The expectations are high if indeed a global payment solution is feasible to implement for the needs of the IFRC and its ambition to scale up CVA. It is also worth noting, however, that there are bottlenecks and challenges in implementing CVA that the global payment solution will not be able to address, and therefore there is a need to be realistic on what the solution will help address. For example, the flow of funding could be optimized but the process involved to request for funding, the internal approvals and the review process on the side of the FSP will not be addressed by the solution itself.

DEFINING A GLOBAL PAYMENT SOLUTION

A global payment solution in the context of this study was thought of as a service that would provide cash in different contexts and that could be activated in different locations when emergencies arise. The concept draws inspiration from the IFRC's regional payment solution for the Americas region that used a financial provider to issue prepaid cards that could be shipped to an area affected by an emergency and topped up with cash value remotely. See Box 2 for more details about the Americas regional payment solution.

The key properties IFRC expects from a global payment solution include:

- Ability to be activated from global, regional or country level
- Ability to offer different payment mechanisms (e.g. bank cards, mobile money, remittance, etc.) providing flexibility to address different contexts and programme needs
- Ability to scale in terms of volume of cash and number of people to assist
- Ability to address risks and challenges in providing cash to vulnerable populations
- Ability to increase accountability and transparency to donors, partners and affected populations



Indonesia 2016. The women in Rido Manah, Indonesia, received about 60 US dollars each using mobile money as part of a pilot project run in a partnership between Palang Merah Indonesia (Indonesian Red Cross), American Red Cross and Mastercard to distribute funds digitally to families via their mobile phones for the purchase of water and other items during the drought season.

© American Red Cross

BOX 2: PREPAID CARDS IN THE AMERICAS REGION

In 2014, the IFRC established a regional framework agreement with a company that provided prepaid cards that could be shipped to emergency locations and distributed to affected people in the Americas region. The cards did not have monetary value when shipped. When they arrived in the country of operation, the cards were assigned to individuals and topped up remotely with monetary value (USD currency) using a web portal. The individuals then used an ATM to withdraw their cash assistance or purchased from shops and vendors that accepted Visa prepaid cards. It took nine months to do the initial procurement and establish a regional framework agreement.

Between November 2019 and May 2022, the prepaid cards have been used in 14 countries in the Americas region including a scale-up of cash assistance in the Bahamas. Over 16,700 cards were activated and transferred over 13.6 million USD to affected people. The cards were used in response to the population movement in the Americas, floods, response to hurricanes Eta and Iota, response to hurricane Dorian (Bahamas), and response to the volcano eruption in St. Vincent.

The prepaid cards were seen as a quick way to distribute cash particularly when an agreement with a local financial service provider is not available or usable for the emergency context. For instance, in the Bahamas, the National Society had prior experience in using locally procured prepaid cards from a local bank. However, when Hurricane Dorian affected the country in September 2019, the contract with the FSP was not valid. There were also some questions on whether the FSP would be able to handle the scale in terms of volume of cash to distribute and number of people to assist. After the analysis and comparison between the IFRC's regional payment solution and the local option, it was decided to use the IFRC's payment solution, although the service costs were higher than the local option. Timeliness and scale were prioritized which allowed the IFRC and the Bahamas Red Cross Society to start distributing cash in less than one month (which coincided with when markets started functioning again) and scale up in subsequent months. Over 3,000 vulnerable households were assisted by February 2020 and about 11 million USD loaded in the cards⁶.



Grand Bahama, Bahamas 2019. Geniece was one of the first people to receive financial assistance from the Bahamas Red Cross Society using a prepaid card after the devastating impact of Hurricane Dorian. © American Red Cross

6. <https://adore.ifrc.org/Download.aspx?FileId=307860> – IFRC The Bahamas Hurricane Dorian Emergency Appeal six months update, May 2020.

During the consultations with other humanitarian actors, it seemed that **not many have invested in a global payment solution**. One agency mentioned they contracted a global remittance company, but it was not widely used in response; one reason being the geographical coverage of the provider was not sufficient in areas where most needs are. Many other organizations were focusing on local procurement of FSPs or relying on partners that have existing agreements with FSPs.

The concept of a global payment solution was investigated by the IFRC back in 2015. In 2016, the American Red Cross, which was supportive of exploring global payment solutions, partnered with Mastercard, a global payment company to pilot a new technology that "enables humanitarian organizations to deliver funds through different channels – payment cards, mobile money, bank accounts and cash-out agents – from anywhere in the world"⁷. It was however only tested with mobile money and was not used for international emergencies after the pilot. Some of the challenges faced earlier by the IFRC in pursuing a global payment solution were:

- 1.** Difficulties in coming up with a set of requirements that are realistic for vendors to implement, given the many contexts and scenarios to plan for with a global solution. The scope becomes too broad, and services of financial companies might focus on some specific services only (e.g. mobile money for a certain geographical area or agents being available primarily in urban areas).
- 2.** Financial products and services evolve quickly, and humanitarian actors may not be aware of what exists and is feasible to use for humanitarian cash assistance.
- 3.** Too time consuming to procure and set up global framework agreements. The regional agreement for the Americas took nine months to complete the initial procurement.

The needs, ambitions and commitments of the IFRC have changed since its first attempt at finding a global payment solution. At the same time, the nature of disasters and crises affecting multi-countries warrants new solutions. But the approach of the IFRC to find such a global payment solution will also need to change. Learning from the challenges faced before, the IFRC will need to better engage the private sector (FSPs, fintech) to discover available solutions, rely on their expertise to map options and risks of which humanitarian actors may not be aware, and build meaningful shared-value relationships to establish trust and focus on what is most important, which is to address the needs of affected people.

7. <https://newsroom.mastercard.com/asia-pacific/press-releases/mastercard-and-palang-merah-indonesia-launch-mobile-disbursements-program-for-humanitarian-aid/>

Eswatini 2020. A beneficiary in front of the MTN merchant where he will cash out his assistance received through mobile money.
© Ville Palonen/Finnish Red Cross



MODELS FOR A GLOBAL PAYMENT SOLUTION

During the consultations, participants asked whether the IFRC envisions a single provider or FSP offering a global payment solution. The basic analysis done on the sample of financial institutions with multi-country coverage (see Annex 2) showed that there is a diverse set of offerings available in the market and traditional procurement based on a single list of requirements covering a very broad list of contexts is quite unrealistic. Therefore, it became clear that different models for implementation will be necessary. The following are three models that attempt to address the properties expected from a global payment solution:

1. Aggregator model

There are companies that are investing in direct contracting with local banks and different payment solutions and therefore aggregating means to distribute cash. They would receive the funds from their clients and distribute through their locally contracted FSPs on behalf of the clients. Examples are: [Segovia](#) (acquired by [Crown Agents Bank](#)) offering integrations with banks and mobile money providers, [RedRose Ltd](#) offering an e-voucher solution as well as direct integration with MoneyGram, some local banks, and mobile money providers, and [MFS Africa](#) providing mobile money solutions to over 35 countries in Africa.

Pros:

- Having a company with pre-agreements helps save time in conducting several local procurements (including due diligence checks, negotiations on rates as well as terms and conditions) and therefore faster activation of services during emergencies.
- The risk of non-delivery by local FSPs is taken on by the aggregator.
- One centralized place to do reconciliation and reporting.
- Aggregator may be able to help with training.

Cons:

- Relying on one company risks a single point of failure that could impact many other programmes and initiatives utilizing that company.
- Detailed contract negotiation with a local FSP is not possible; will rely on the negotiated terms and conditions by the aggregator. For example, provisions around data protection might not be as robust, or there may be inability to adhere to privileges and immunities of an international organization.
- The aggregator may not be fully aware of how the local FSP will operate depending on conditions and contexts. For example, some remittance companies may allow different types of identities (e.g. driver's licence, birth certificate, tax registration), and in other countries the remittance company might take only a specific type (e.g. international passport or national ID card).
- Following up on issues (e.g. person unable to withdraw cash), may take time as the aggregator will need to work with the local FSPs to investigate.

2. A suite of payment solutions

This model envisions having different payment mechanisms available to be deployed, where the region and country operation teams can decide on the most appropriate solution(s) to use. Many National Societies tend to use payment mechanisms popular in their regions (e.g. mobile money services in Africa, prepaid cards in the Americas, remittance in Asia Pacific). But having more options for them would help increase flexibility particularly if other payment mechanisms would be best utilized in harder to reach areas.

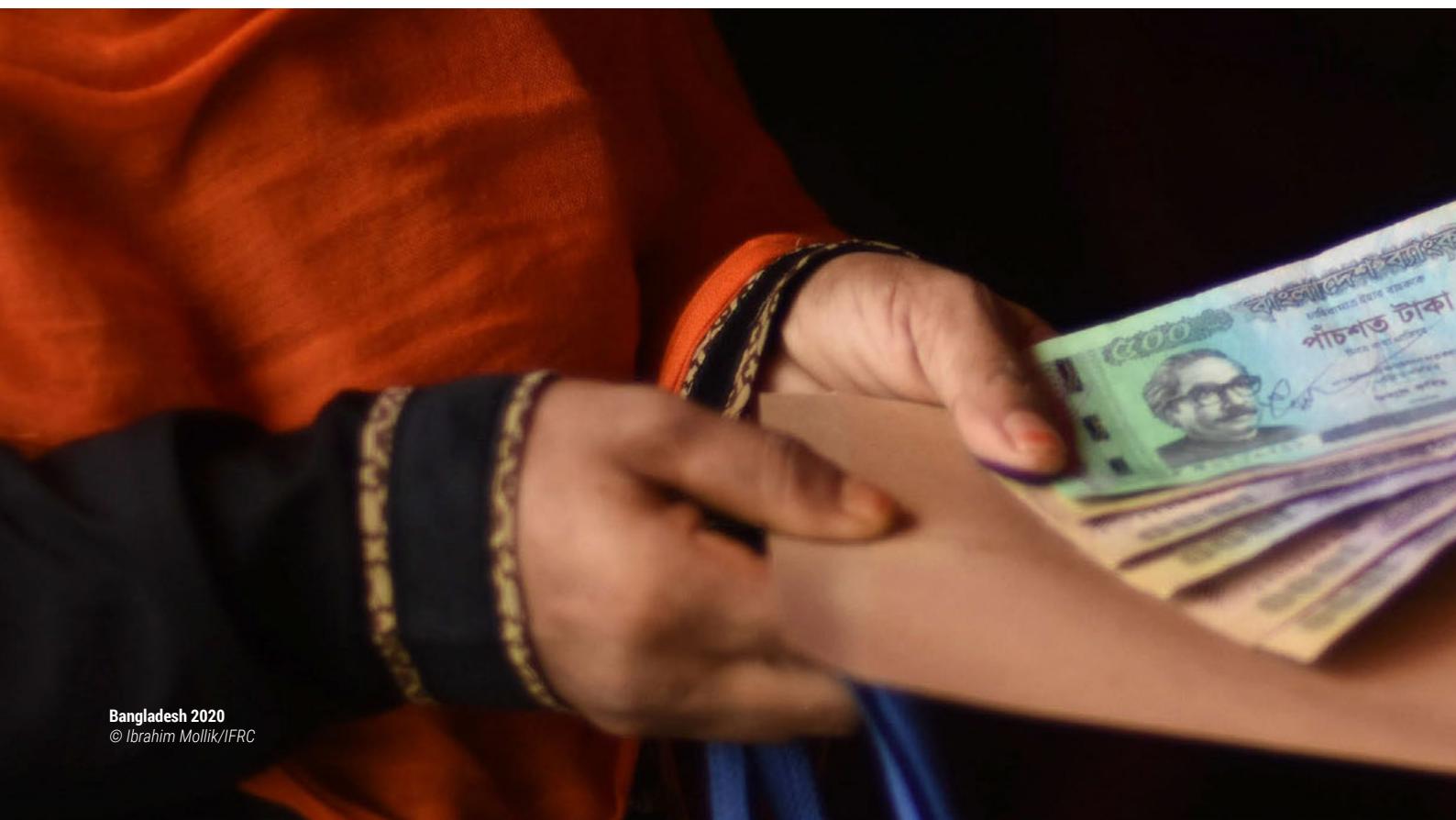
Companies that offer such specialized payment mechanisms for the region or a cluster of countries, such as the prepaid card provider for the Americas, would be helpful to provide choice and flexibility. Although this model entails procurement of separate payment mechanisms, managing the requirements and tailoring them to what is expected of such payment mechanisms would be more realistic and attract service providers that do offer such services rather than spreading out too broadly.

Pros:

- Flexibility and choice depending on what will be the most appropriate payment mechanism for the emergency.
- IFRC negotiates terms and conditions directly with each provider.
- Competition created between companies offering similar payment solutions to help drive competitive pricing.
- Once agreements are in place they are available to be activated for different emergencies and save time in the long run.

Cons:

- Procurement of multiple FSPs could take a long time.
- More dedicated resources are needed for vendor management of multiple FSPs.



3. Partnerships with multinational companies

This model focuses on partnerships with global financial companies (or those with multi-country reach) to leverage their expertise and their networks to find solutions. In contrast to the previous two models where procurement with service providers is necessary, this model focuses on strategic engagements, which could lead to commercial relationships and therefore procurement later. Examples of companies with global or multi-country reach include Visa, Mastercard, Western Union, MoneyGram, Vodacom and Airtel.

Because of the fast evolution of technology and financial solutions as well as regulations and laws, it is important to have diverse partners that can inform humanitarian organizations of trends, companies working on relevant products, challenges and risks with which humanitarian actors may not be familiar, and that also have access to an extended network to better understand what is available in the market. Through partnerships, the hope is to be able to entice the private sector to build more financial solutions that cater to humanitarian needs.

Pros:

- Allows for open dialogue that is not constrained by the formal and traditional procurement process.
- Opportunity to pilot new solutions and learn about them before procurement and full implementation.
- Opportunity to engage and incentivize the private sector to build financial solutions that cater to humanitarian organizations.

Cons:

- Does not provide readily deployable solutions but could provide support for piloting new products and services.
- Commercial relationships will typically require a procurement process as a service contract is needed if vendors are to be paid for services.
- Identifying who to partner with and creating a meaningful basis for partnership could take time. Some private sector companies might be willing to engage but also have limited resources.

Engagement with the private sector solution providers

The three models are not mutually exclusive. A solution for the IFRC and other humanitarian actors may involve a combination of the three models. The first step is to have better engagement with the private sector that is not constrained by the traditional procurement process and therefore looking at the third model on partnerships and conducting market dialogues⁸ would be helpful. For instance, the [CashHub](#), which is a global CVA resource platform for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement hosted by the British Red Cross, started a Private Sector Reference Group aimed at bringing together representatives from fintech, digital service providers and others to informally discuss the challenges faced by the Movement with CVA and how the private sector might help address some of these challenges. Such dialogues or engagements are meant to educate each other's sector on how they work as well as their specific needs, constraints, incentives or motivations. Discussions should lead to insights on solutions and their feasibility to be deployed.

Another reason for meaningful engagement is to help build trust. During the consultations with humanitarian actors and with private sector companies, it was observed that each party perceives different goals or outcomes: humanitarian action versus profit. Building a global solution that is deployed in the difficult contexts in which humanitarians work requires commitment and trust that is beyond contractual agreements as it means learning, adapting and solving problems along the way in a different way from the typical clients of private sector providers.



Turkey 2021. A migrant at an ATM withdrawing money which she receives as part of a cash assistance programme in Turkey.
© Turkish Red Crescent

8. "A market dialogue can give you valuable information about possible solutions, market dynamics and tender specifications." See. https://www.innovasjonnorge.no/globalassets/0-innovasjonnorge.no/subsites/hipnorway/innovation-friendly-procurement-tools_02062020.pdf

Poland 2022. Mariia is one of the first Ukrainian refugees to receive cash relief using a prepaid card. Mariia left her hometown to seek safety in Poland.
© Carina Wint/IFRC



CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING A GLOBAL PAYMENT SOLUTION

Learning from the regional payment solution for the Americas and in discussion with key informants, the following are some of the key factors to consider when sourcing and implementing a global payment solution:

Costs

Compared to locally procured and directly negotiated services, a global payment solution will be more expensive. The premium service costs might be justified since the provider takes on the risks for the performance, delivery and management of its local providers, in addition to the convenience of not having to go through multiple local procurements¹⁰. In the example of the use of the IFRC's regional prepaid card mentioned in Box 2, the cost analysis showed that the local card previously used by the Bahamas Red Cross was considerably cheaper than the regional card. There were flat fees for ordering the plastic cards and there were variable fees for different transactions such as ATM balance inquiry, international ATM fees, point of sale fees, etc. Having the funds transferred in USD versus the local currencies could also make a big difference depending on the country. For remittance services, there could be foreign exchange rate fees controlled by the FSP. For mobile money, additional fees could be added to the standard transaction fees.

It is possible to negotiate the different costs, but it will be important to do some analysis on cost factors and model costing scenarios to understand the ranges that will be acceptable for the organization. One factor to negotiate is the potential for large volumes, particularly if National Societies are allowed to join the framework agreements for their own specific programme use in addition to IFRC's programmes and operations.

Duration of use

Given the likely higher costs of global solutions than local solutions, it is important to consider the duration for which global solutions are used. Having the global solution used for emergencies where it is difficult to procure local solutions would ensure timely cash assistance is provided. It would, however, be ideal to have local solutions to transition to quickly, not only to save on the premium costs but also to ensure National Societies or local branches of the organization are able to rely on solutions that they themselves procure and negotiate, which is more sustainable. The use of global solutions could certainly help local actors learn more about and get experience with different financial solutions, which will be useful when they procure their own local solutions as well as have an alternative in case the local solutions are not feasible in certain contexts.

10. See the pros and cons for the different models for the global payment solution.

Preference of end users

The aggregator and the suite of solutions models aim to provide flexibility for the humanitarian organization to deploy the most appropriate payment mechanism(s) available. Equally important is to ensure the solution option is appropriate, desired and preferred by the cash recipients. Providing options to affected people on how they would like to receive their cash assistance promotes respect and dignity just as much as how they are to use cash to address their needs. Certain payment mechanisms require sensitization and training for cash recipients. For example, for the population movement in 2016 in Greece, the IFRC and Hellenic Red Cross provided support to the migrants on how to use ATM cards as some of them were not familiar with their use¹¹. Giving options, when possible, helps increase the quality of humanitarian service.

Differences in local implementation

One assumption with global solutions is that once the solution is activated for one country, the implementation would be exactly the same in another country or location. Because of varying contexts in addition to different laws and regulations in different countries, it is expected that there will be variations on how services might be activated in different locations. For example, the “know your customer” (KYC) requirements might be different and therefore it is important to analyse which are the valid identity documents accepted. Another example is that certain banks or financial providers in-country might be blocked by the government.

The nuances of the local activation of services will also need to be analysed, for instance, geographical coverage of the provider, liquidity of the agents or financial institutions, delays in sending payment instructions, availability of local customer services, what types of reports are available and timeliness of reconciliation. Depending on how well the global provider has tested transactions with their local providers, it might be that they are learning about the nuances and issues at the same time as their clients. It is therefore recommended to conduct a test first with the local providers before planning to scale up.

It is also necessary to be prepared to adjust each organization’s standard operating procedures (SOPs) if they are to be developed from a global perspective. Particularly when a suite of payment solutions is being provided, each payment mechanism will require its own specific SOPs (e.g. payment cards versus remittance). Having focal points that know the intricacies of the various solutions from activation to distribution, reconciliation and reporting will be important.

11. <https://cash-hub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/10/Key-Learning-and-Recommendations-North-Greece-CBA-IFRC-042017.pdf>

Integration with data management

Humanitarian organizations have been investing in data management solutions to support scale-up of their CVA interventions (e.g. IFRC's use of RedRose, World Food Programme's [WFP] SCOPE, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' [UNHCR] ProGres). Ensuring that these data management solutions can integrate with the global payment solution is essential to facilitate secure transactions, promote privacy and data protection, enable tracking and monitoring of payments (ideally in real-time), link transactions with data of recipients to help triangulate issues regarding cash disbursements, and permit reconciliation, audit and reporting.

Challenging contexts

Market, financial and general economic volatility could impact the financial institutions that are responsible for distributing humanitarian cash assistance. This study does not go into detail on impacts of such challenging contexts but did ask how a global payment solution might be helpful particularly in dealing with sanctions, devaluation of currencies and heavy restrictions on financial institutions.



Eswatini 2020. Eswatini Red Cross Society cash transfer operation. Beneficiary Alice Gina received her assistance through mobile money. Here, the MTN agent is processing her cash out request.
© Ville Palonen/Finnish Red Cross

Sanctions is a broad and complex topic that applies to companies or individuals and differs due to situation or context. This study focused on sanctions against banks that could affect the management of payments for CVA. For example, donors from the USA or EU might restrict how funds are channelled to financial institutions that have been sanctioned by their governments. There are certain exemptions for humanitarian action to which specific licences or approval to use sanctioned companies could be obtained. But according to a global financial institution consulted for this study, the time it takes to get the necessary approvals might not be conducive for emergency situations, and there could be wider impacts to networks that could affect acceptability and availability of services and therefore such licence or approval might result in very limited activities and capacities.

Heavily restricted financial institutions due to liquidity issues, disruption in infrastructure and national financial systems is another important context to analyse to discover whether global payment solutions might be helpful. Situations in Afghanistan after the Taliban took control in 2021, the economic crisis in Lebanon that started worsening in 2019, and the impacts of a long conflict in Yemen that weakened its banking sector and confidence in formal financial institutions¹², have all shown difficulties in distributing cash aid due to such restrictions. A global payment solution typically relies on the availability of functioning financial institutions in the country and therefore could be difficult to deploy in these complex situations.

High inflation and devaluation of currencies could also impact the effectiveness of having a global payment solution. Funds channelled from an international FSP to a local FSP might be subject to highly volatile exchange rate fluctuations. The CALP Network produced some documentation on good practices and case studies in contexts of high inflation and depreciation¹³. There are several recommendations including the use of hard currency¹⁴ that could be looked at with global payment solutions.

With these challenging contexts, some key informants have raised the possibility of having global providers work with local providers that might include informal payment systems such as "hawala"¹⁵, which allows for transfer of money without formal banking relationships. These informal payment solutions come with risks since they are typically not regulated by government and financial bodies, but in many cases, they are effective, efficient, and accepted by local communities. Where there is detachment from a formal banking relationship is further emphasized by blockchain¹⁶-based solutions such as cryptocurrencies¹⁷. Also currently unregulated, the emerging technology is being sought after to solve cross-border money transfer issues where there are significant challenges due to sanctions, restrictions in formal financial institutions such as banks, and currency devaluations. See Box 3 for more details and examples of how blockchain-based solutions have been used in humanitarian cash assistance.

These topics on challenging economic contexts are complex and warrant more research including how global payment solutions may be helpful in such contexts.

12. Impact of conflict on the financial sector in Yemen: implications for food security (ODI, December 2021) https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/Impact_of_conflict_on_the_financial_sector_in_Yemen_JgsNMP.pdf

13. <https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/good-practice-review-on-cash-assistance-in-contexts-of-high-inflation-and-depreciation/>

14. CALP – **Hard** currency refers to money issued by a nation seen as politically and economically stable. Hard currencies can sometimes be accepted as a form of payment for goods and services and even preferred over domestic currency. The typical example is US dollars (USD).

15. <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/Role-of-hawala-and-similar-in-ml-tf.pdf>

16. **Blockchain technology:** A blockchain is a decentralized distributed database or ledger that stores information electronically in digital format. A blockchain guarantees the fidelity and security of data and generates trust without the need for a trusted third party. Any data stored on blockchain is unable to be modified, making the technology trusted for transactions such as payments and for information on cybersecurity and healthcare. Read more at <https://builtin.com/blockchain>

17. <https://consensys.net/blockchain-use-cases/finance/>

BOX 3: BLOCKCHAIN-BASED SOLUTIONS AND CRYPTOCURRENCIES

The interest of humanitarian actors to explore blockchain-based solutions and cryptocurrencies to deliver CVA has been increasing particularly for cross-border aid. The benefits sought include better traceability of donor funding, automated impact assessment, increased access to fund people in need, and increased efficiency in funds transfer¹⁸. CALP's report on *The Future of Financial Assistance* indicated the opportunities of using blockchain and cryptocurrencies in two scenarios they foresee by 2030 to address interoperability of data for people moving across international borders, improve identity management and need to address KYC, anti-money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT) requirements, having a more resilient payment option for people on the move and when shocks affect markets, and for faster and cheaper remittance options¹⁹. There are concerns and limitations of such solutions, including weak regulations and volatility of monetary value, leading therefore to low trust and perception of high risks.

Nevertheless, humanitarian organizations are piloting and seeking evidence of such benefits and analysing the perceived risks. A few notable examples:

- ① Oxfam's Project Unblocked Cash²⁰ was launched in May 2019 and piloted an e-voucher system in Vanuatu where 200 participants received near-field communication (NFC²¹) cards linked to a digital wallet with DAI²² cryptocurrency tokens that have an established monetary value. The platform leveraged the public blockchain solution of Ethereum. The cards were used in participating stores and vendors cashed out the funds in local currency. Oxfam scaled their solution when Cyclone Harold and COVID-19 hit Vanuatu in 2020, reaching over 35,000 beneficiaries with two million USD in cash assistance²³.
- ② In 2021, Hope for Haiti launched a pilot targeting women and children and providing them with assistance using e-vouchers for a nutrition programme. A digital wallet was provided to the participants who received stablecoin tokens managed on the Celo blockchain. Merchants had an app that read the wallets and tokens and cashed out using a mobile money provider. Realtime analytics were provided allowing the programme teams to monitor the programme and trace funds²⁴. The process eliminated financial intermediaries, reducing operational costs due to cross-border transactions. Hope for Haiti also allowed cryptocurrencies to be received to raise funds for emergencies such as the 7.1 magnitude earthquake in August 2021.
- ③ In 2019, Mercy Corps conducted a pilot of a blockchain-based voucher system that used "Humanity First Token" for refugees from South Sudan that fled to Uganda. The tokens were pegged to Uganda Shillings. The refugees received a digital wallet that could be used within their stay in Uganda or in their country of origin if they chose to return. The tokens could be used with local vendors to receive food and solar panels, for instance. The vendors can then redeem the tokens received at Binance Uganda exchange²⁵. Binance is a global cryptocurrency exchange.
- ④ In August 2021, after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, a humanitarian crisis ensued where borders were closed, costs increased significantly, cash and food supplies were reduced, currency plummeted, and many lost their jobs and needed essential services. Banks closed for a long period of time and money transfers were discontinued, making it very difficult to get access to cash. Code to Inspire, an NGO providing education to young Afghan women, started using cryptocurrency stablecoin BUSD, which they sent to students (value of 200 USD per month), which were exchanged for local currency at money exchanges. Due to the collapse of the financial system, there has been a rise in the use of cryptocurrencies in Afghanistan²⁶.

18. <https://www.coindesk.com/podcasts/coindesks-money-reimagined/the-complexities-of-blockchain-in-global-aid-efforts/>

19. <https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/the-future-of-financial-assistance/>

20. <https://consensys.net/blockchain-use-cases/social-impact/project-unblocked-cash-case-study/>

21. **Near-field communication (NFC)** is a set of short-range wireless technologies. NFC allows the sharing of small amounts of data between two Android devices, such as smartphones, for example.

22. **DAI** is a cryptocurrency where the value is kept as close to one US dollar (1:1 ratio) as possible.

23. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/unblocked-cash-project-using-blockchain-technology-revolutionize-humanitarian-aid>

24. [Hope for Haiti Chooses Celo and Emerging Impact as First Blockchain Partners to Deliver Digital Humanitarian Aid | by Celo Foundation | The Celo Blog | Medium](https://celo.org/hope-for-haiti-chooses-celo-and-emerging-impact-as-first-blockchain-partners-to-deliver-digital-humanitarian-aid/)

25. [Binance Charity Joins Forces with Mercy Corps to Launch Impact Token to Aid the Displaced | Binance Blog](https://www.binance.org/en/press-releases/binance-charity-joins-forces-with-mercy-corps-to-launch-impact-token-to-aid-the-displaced)

26. [Afghans turn to cryptocurrencies amid US sanctions - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-58000000)

Jordan 2021. Ahmad Theeb Abu Shefeh takes money from an ATM that he received through the Red Cross cash assistance programme in Amman, Jordan. The money is essential for Ahmad and his family to survive in Jordan.
© Andrew McConnell/British Red Cross



CASE STUDIES

COVID-19 pandemic

The IFRC's COVID-19 response operation was a global effort of individual domestic responses by its member National Societies. In January 2020, the IFRC launched the first global emergency appeal in response to the rise of infections due to the COVID-19 virus, which was eventually declared as a pandemic. In the first six months of the pandemic response, 60 National Societies worldwide have included CVA in their response plan and another 10 National Societies were considering including CVA. The appetite to use CVA as a response tool was very positive even for the National Societies that have never used it before due to the speed it takes to deliver cash, the choice and dignity it provides recipients, and the ability to minimize face-to-face interactions when delivering cash using digital means. It was clear that the National Societies that already have valid contracts with FSPs and experience with delivering cash assistance were able to implement their CVA interventions quickly. However, those that did not have FSPs and prior experience delivering CVA faced considerable challenges. The procurement of FSPs during an emergency was seen as one of the critical bottlenecks in CVA, and this issue was magnified during the COVID-19 response given the number of National Societies trying to implement CVA. The procurement process could take up to six months including due diligence and contract negotiations with FSPs.

The use of the regional prepaid cards in the Americas was helpful for National Societies that were able to use it for their COVID-19 response. The cards were easy to top up with monetary value remotely, reducing physical contact.

In this scenario and in future pandemic responses, a global payment solution could be an option for National Societies that may not have their own local FSP contacts yet (or have expired or unusable agreements). It could at minimum be used for the immediate response ensuring cash is delivered to vulnerable families as quickly and as early as possible, while the local procurement process is conducted in parallel.



Bangladesh 2020. Abdul Rashid who lost his job following the COVID-19 lockdown was one of 1,200 families in Cox's Bazar that received cash grants from the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society to help recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their livelihoods. © Ibrahim Malik/IFRC

Ukraine and impacted countries crisis

Since February 2022, the conflict escalation in Ukraine has displaced millions of people to neighbouring countries. National Societies in Ukraine and the neighbouring countries, with the support of the IFRC, are assisting affected people with cash assistance for immediate basic needs. The rate of movement of people to find safe accommodation has been unpredictable, and people continue to move in the months since the beginning of the crisis. The IFRC is supporting Ukraine and seven neighbouring countries, many of which have not used cash assistance before and therefore do not have established contracts with local FSPs. The IFRC tried to engage a global financial company that provided prepaid cards across Europe, but unfortunately costs were too high and there was no time to engage meaningfully during the peak of the emergency. The IFRC then tried to extend the scope of the regional prepaid card solution used in the Americas region since a commercial relationship has already been established with the FSP. There were some limitations including geographical coverage in certain countries, but it allowed the prepaid cards to be deployed in at least two countries. Further challenges were faced because of the low limits of money that could be topped up in the cards and since it required a significant amount of effort to manage the prepaid cards manually, deliver and train recipients on how to use them, provide assistance to those who lost their cards or forgot their PIN codes, deliver reports and undertake reconciliation. The IFRC already have a framework agreement with RedRose for data management, and RedRose just integrated with MoneyGram remittance services prior to the conflict. The MoneyGram service was available in all the countries being supported by the IFRC, although some specific areas did not have very good coverage. Since there were adequate MoneyGram agents in the priority areas for the operation, it enabled the IFRC and the National Societies to scale up.

Having two options for payment solutions that could be deployed to all countries covered by the operation provided flexibility especially since the prepaid cards did not require individuals to present official IDs (since some of them have lost or left their IDs or never had them in the first place) while the MoneyGram option required official identity documents. There were still some limitations faced with the MoneyGram option and varying issues in different countries. However, according to the IFRC's three-month operational report, 646 households received prepaid cards in Poland and 1,685 households received cash using the MoneyGram service. In Romania, just one month after starting the cash assistance programme, over 26,000 individuals received cash assistance worth EUR 2.76 million using the MoneyGram service²⁷.

In this scenario and where people are displaced and moving to different countries or areas, a global payment solution that allows for different payment mechanisms (e.g. prepaid cards, remittance, bank transfers, etc.) that are readily activated could help the country programme teams to design the most appropriate CVA intervention for the affected population where hopefully their preferences and choices on how to best receive cash assistance can also be taken into consideration.



Romania 2022 © Angela Hill/IFRC

27. IFRC Operations Update 3 for the Ukraine and impacted countries crisis. <https://adore.ifrc.org/Download.aspx?FileId=546775>



Lebanon 2020. Since September 2020, the Lebanese Red Cross shifted the focus of its response to direct financial assistance of 300 USD per month for seven months for 9,800 of the most vulnerable affected families. Their vulnerability was exacerbated by the massive explosion in the port area of Beirut, the economic crisis with the devaluation of the local currency, and the surge in the number of COVID-19 cases. © Lebanese Red Cross

Lebanon complex humanitarian crisis

In August 2020, Beirut's port was affected by double explosions on top of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the deteriorating economy since 2019. The fluctuations in the local currency (the Lebanese pound [LBP] when it lost nearly 90 per cent of its value against the US dollar by May 2021²⁸) led to price increases of basic goods and hyperinflation. The banking systems were also affected where cash withdrawals were restricted to only the local currency LBP instead of having options to withdraw USD²⁹; liquidity became an issue. Organizations that issued ATM cards found it difficult for recipients to use the cards in certain banks and had issues withdrawing their cash assistance.

In this situation where the financial markets are disrupted and the economy has collapsed, it is difficult for a global payment solution with standard payment offerings to provide an added value, unless it was able to disburse in USD or euros in country, but this could also create protection issues for those receiving such currencies with high value. In other countries facing serious economic crisis such as Afghanistan and Ukraine, the use of cryptocurrencies and blockchain-based financial solutions has been explored. It would therefore be important for a global payment solution to include highly innovative solution options that could provide additional flexibility when traditional banking and financial services are not available.

28. <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Lebanon-final.pdf>

29. <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/ninja-forms/2/DSP-CAMELEON-Research-Report-Jan-2021.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS³⁰

For the IFRC, the following are recommended:

1

Utilize the models presented in the report to analyse the best fit for the IFRC in developing a global payment solution based on the pros and cons. The opportunity to have a solution in place that could be activated during emergencies particularly at large scale with multi-country impacts will be beneficial, at minimum to address the short-term needs to distribute cash quickly or as an alternative if current providers are not able to deliver.

2

There is a need for more engagement with the private sector as part of the procurement process. Given the example of the [Innovation-friendly procurement process](#) promoted by Innovation Norway, an open market dialogue could be a way towards this engagement, since it removes constraints in better understanding the solution offerings of providers before a traditional tender process is launched.

3

Link the global payment solution to cash preparedness. National Societies will be able to gain experience and learn by piloting with a global solution so they can determine on what would work for their local context. This will also test the global solution in that context and be an alternative solution in case the local option is unavailable or not feasible for a period of time.

30. At the time of the publication of this report, the IFRC has started testing how an aggregator model could work with RedRose who integrated with MoneyGram (global remittance), with mobile money providers in Africa, and directly with local banks. The IFRC also started strategic discussions with multinational/global payment institutions to see how partnerships could be used to gain access to experts in the finance sector, share insights on how the humanitarian sector works and challenges in providing cash to vulnerable people in very difficult situations and environments, and look for ways to co-develop solutions for humanitarian cash assistance globally. Furthermore, the IFRC is having informal discussions with fintech providers and will look to organize sessions and events for more systematic, meaningful engagements with the private sector.

Afghanistan 2022 Afghan Red Crescent
Society teams provide cash assistance to
households that were affected by flash floods
in Laghman province
© Meer Abdullah Rasikh/IFRC Afghanistan



CONCLUSION

The trends indicate that there will be more global or multi-country impacted disasters and crises or emergencies. Getting more National Societies cash-ready and with established contracts with financial service providers will take time. In order to reach the flagship goal of having 50 per cent of humanitarian assistance using CVA, readily available payment mechanisms are essential. There is a big opportunity with a global payment solution to address the gaps, given the lengthy procurement processes or situation in which currently contracted financial service providers might not be able to provide cash at the onset of an emergency. A few options to model a global payment solution have been provided with different pros and cons. It is also important to acknowledge that these solutions are not meant to replace current approaches of procuring locally, but rather to complement when such local options are not available or feasible at the time of the emergency. It is also important to build more meaningful engagements with private sector partners, who have skills, expertise and competencies to grow and enhance the global payment solution(s), given the rapid evolution in the finance sector and the potential to entice them to develop more products and services that cater to the needs of humanitarian organizations.

A global payment solution addresses only specific areas of bottleneck in humanitarian cash assistance delivery, and procurement of local solutions is generally more cost-effective and more sustainable. A global solution will not cover or be appropriate for all contexts, and will not cover all locations, so prioritization of risks to address contexts and geographical locations based on likelihood of repeat disasters will be important. The solution should complement and not be expected to replace local solutions.

Chile 2022. Jesús, better known as @jesuskitchen on social media, is Venezuelan and currently lives in the Bío-Bío region. During the COVID-19 pandemic and without stable work, he began posting Instagram messages about different dishes of his own creation in efforts to get sponsors to help him set up his own restaurant. He received cash assistance thanks to the the Chilean Red Cross and IFRC with their Livelihoods Cash Transfer Programme which supports entrepreneurs to prioritize and address the specific needs of their businesses.

© Cruz Roja Chilena



ANNEXES

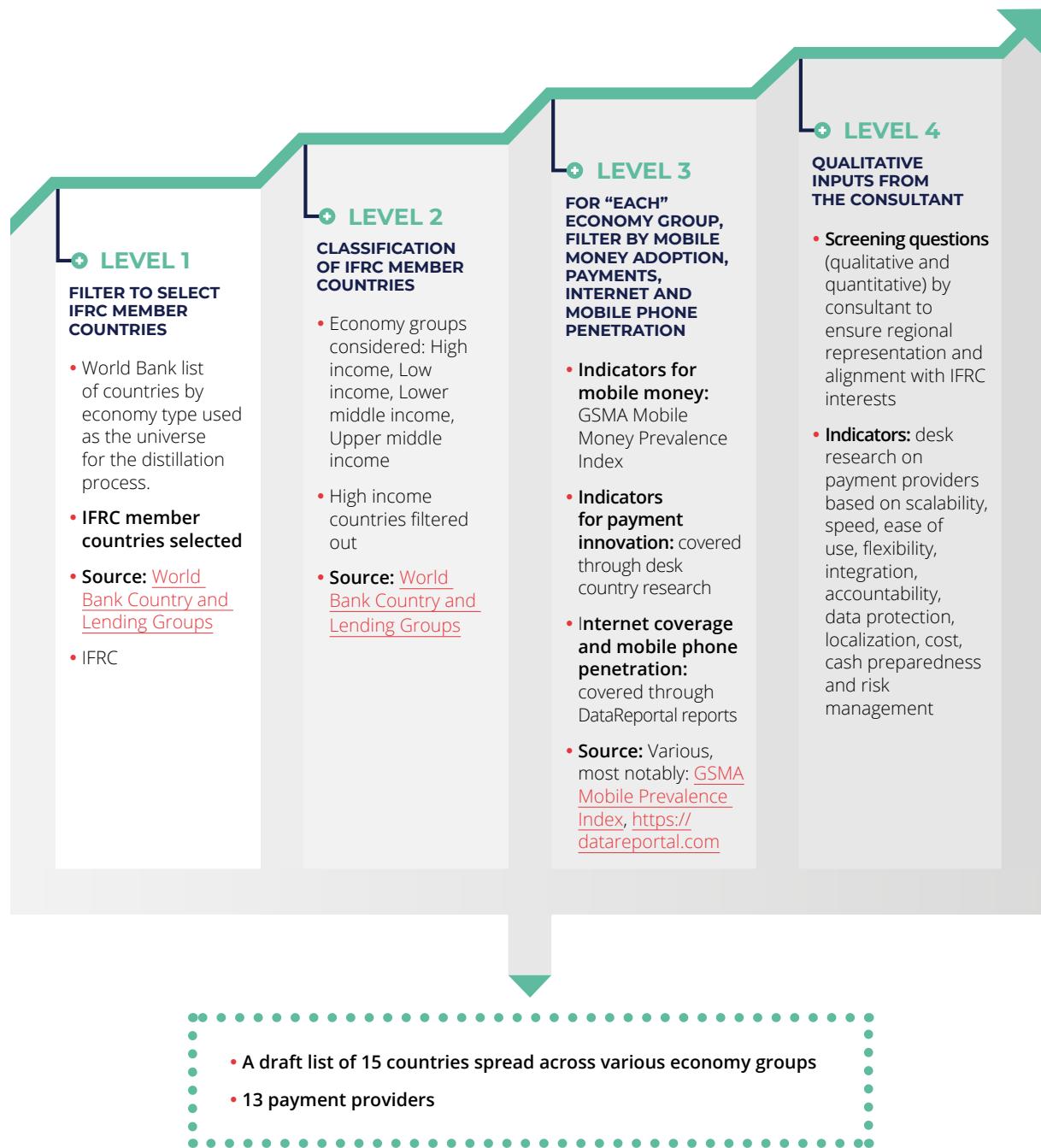
ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The following methodology was applied to achieve the objectives of the study:

MIXED METHODOLOGY	DATA COLLECTION	CONSULTATIVE APPROACH	QUALITY ASSURANCE
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mix of qualitative and quantitative research tools to address the study objectives.• Triangulate primary and secondary data to arrive at robust and conclusive results.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Desk review using secondary literature available on the humanitarian payments, fintech and global payment solutions with the perspective of cash and voucher assistance at a global level that has been sorted into an analytical framework.• Desk review of IFRC, CALP and other similar actors' programme literature implemented at a global level.• Primary data to be collected through key informant interviews, focus group discussions and online surveys as required.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Countries, payments and remittance companies and stakeholder identification at inception stage to identify and map their divergent interests and priorities.• Inclusive and transparent approach to gain insights that are meaningful for the study objectives.• Structured engagement with stakeholders through key informant interviews, focus group discussions and online survey as required to ensure that there are no information leakages.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data sources for the desk research are carefully scanned to only include credible and reliable publications that are relevant for the study.• Sources for primary data collection will be carefully selected from the stakeholder map and as per need with consent and approval from IFRC.• Process for sampling such as country and payment providers' shortlisting will be discussed and validated with IFRC as required.• Multiple review stages for deliverables with IFRC and key stakeholders before finalization.

ANNEX 2: SHORTLISTED COUNTRIES AND SAMPLE PAYMENT PROVIDERS

Countries were shortlisted based on the World Bank economic indicators, country economy groups, mobile money adoption, payment providers, and internet and mobile phone penetration. Fifteen countries were selected across various economy groups and payment providers to compare



S No	Region	Economy type	Economy	Mobile money adoption ³¹	E-payment solutions ³²	Internet coverage [2G-4G] ³³	Mobile phone penetration ³⁴
1	Americas	Lower middle income	Bolivia	Low (0.39-0.20)	O	65%	99%
2	Americas	Upper middle income	Chile	ND	O	82.3%	132.1%
3	Americas	Middle income country	Paraguay	High (0.79-0.60)	O	68.5%	100.3%
4	Americas	Upper middle income	Panama	ND	O	64.8%	107.9%
5	Americas	Lower income	Haiti	Medium (0.59-0.40)	O	37.3%	64.3%
6	Americas	Lower middle income country	Honduras	Medium (0.59-0.40)	D	38.2%	71.1%
7	Africa	Low income	Ethiopia	Low (0.39-0.20)	D	20.6%	38.5%
8	Africa	Lower middle income	Benin	Very high (0.80)	O	28.4%	83.6%
9	Africa	Mixed economic system	Congo	Very high (0.80)	D	32.1%	88.7%
10	Asia Pacific	Middle income	Bangladesh	High (0.79-0.60)	O	28.8%	100.2%
11	Asia Pacific	Lower middle income	Nepal	Low (0.39-0.20)	O	36.7%	131.3%
12	Europe and Central Asia	Upper middle income	Azerbaijan	ND	D	81.1%	111.0%
13	Asia Pacific	Low income	Afghanistan	Very low (19)	D	22.0%	68.7%
14	Asia Pacific	Middle income country	Fiji	Medium (0.59-0.40)	D	70.5%	138.6%
15	Asia Pacific	Lower to middle income	Papua New Guinea	Low (0.39-0.20)	D	15.2%	34.4%

Notes: Very high: > 0.80; High: 0.79-0.60; Medium: 0.59-0.40; Low: 0.39-0.20; Very low: <19; Payments innovation: "O" denotes countries that are offering e-payment solutions. "D" denotes countries where such services are under development; ND: No data

31. https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wpcontent/uploads/2021/09/MMPI_The_Mobile_Money_Prevalence_Index.pdf

32. World Bank - Payments Innovation: "O" denotes countries that are offering e-payment solutions. "D" denotes countries where such services are under development.

33. <https://datareportal.com/>

34. <https://datareportal.com/>

A select number of payment solution providers were shortlisted based on recommendations from consultation participants and desk research on service offerings that could be activated in different countries or areas. This list is not meant to be exhaustive and the attempt to rate them according to the criteria envisioned for the global payment solution was not meant to be conclusive or definitive. This analysis aimed at comparing aspects of the selected solutions based on key informant interviews and desk research. It is therefore important to engage actively with these providers and the private sector in general to gain better understanding of their capabilities.

S No	Economy	Payment provider	Scalability	Speed	Ease of use	Flexibility	Integration	Accountability	Data protection	Localization	Cost	Cash preparedness and operational readiness	Risk management
1	Global	Celo	G	G	G	L	G	E	L	L	ND	Y	G
2	Global	Vital Wave	G	G	E	G	G	E	G	G	ND	L	E
3	Global	BPC Technologies	G	G	G	E	E	G	G	G	ND	L	E
4	Global	Red Rose	E	E	E	G	G	G	G	G	ND	Y	G
5	Sub-Saharan Africa	Leaf Global	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	ND	L	G
6	Sub-Saharan Africa	Eversend	E	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	ND	L	G
7	Europe	Papara	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	ND	L	G
8	Global	Zwipe	E	E	E	E	E	G	E	ND	Y	E	
9	Sub-Saharan Africa, UK, and Myanmar	Squid	E	E	E	E	E	E	G	G	ND	Y	E
10	Sub-Saharan Africa	Grassroot Economics	G	G	G	E	G	G	G	G	ND	Y	E
11	Several	Google Pay	E	E	E	E	E	G	G	E	ND	L	E

Notes: G means "Good", L means "Low", E means "Excellent", "ND" means No data and Y means "Yes"

Provider	Solution Type	Regions
Celo	Cryptocurrency	Global
Vital Wave	Payments	Global
BPC Technologies	Payments	Global
RedRose	Humanitarian payments	Global
World Line	Payments	Global
Leaf Global	Fintech/payments	Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda
Eversend	Send/receive money, virtual debit cards and cryptocurrencies	Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda
Nagad	DFS	Bangladesh
Papara	Money transfer, payments	Turkey
Zwipe	Biometric cards	Global
Squid	Fintech, humanitarian payments, remittances	Kenya, with operational bases in Greater London, South West England, Nairobi, Abuja and Yangon
Grassroots Economics	Blockchain-based CVA system/community currency	Africa
Google Pay	Mobile wallet	Australia, Canada, India, Japan, Russia, Singapore, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States
Mastercard	Payment network	Global
Crown Agents Banks (acquired Segovia)	Mobile wallet and bank integrations	Global
Avalanche (Ava Labs)	Blockchain	Global

Romania 2022. Inna Ponoza accesses the money she received from the Romanian Red Cross through MoneyGram. She was the second person to receive assistance from this programme. An IFRC delegate travelled with her to ensure the process ran smoothly. The Romanian Red Cross continues to work to give crucial aid to people impacted by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. At the same time as providing comfort, information and emergency kits, including food, water and hygiene kits, they are distributing financial assistance to help people who have lost so much.

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ZONA
SUPRAVEGHEATA
VIDEO



Rate de schimb contra RON la data 29.04.2022		
Valuta (Currency)	Cumparam (We Buy)	Vindem (We Sell)
EUR	4,9210	4,9990
USD	4,6051	4,6890
AUD	3,2010	3,3590
BGN	2,5110	2,6990
CAD	3,2341	3,6990
CHF	4,7071	4,8390
CZK	0,1910	0,2110
DKK	0,5061	0,6790
GBP	5,8010	5,8990
ILS	1,1331	1,4090
JPY	0,0351	0,0379
NOK	0,4910	0,5190
PLN	1,0010	1,0790
SEK	0,4610	0,4790
TRY	0,2033	0,4990
HUF	0,0131	0,0139





THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.



The **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

For more information on this IFRC publication, please contact:
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