



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Consultancy on External Positioning, Coordination Role, and Advocacy for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) among National Societies in the MENA Region

*Issued by: Lebanese Red Cross; MENA Cash Center of Excellence (CCoE)*

*Type of Contract: Consultancy Firm / Institutional Consultancy*

## 1. Background and Context

Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) has become a central modality of humanitarian response across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, driven by protracted crises, large-scale displacement, and growing evidence on its effectiveness, dignity, and efficiency compared to in-kind assistance. National Societies (NS) across the region have significantly scaled up their CVA programming over the past decade, both in emergency response and as a bridge to longer-term social protection systems.

Despite this operational growth, National Societies' external positioning on CVA remains uneven across the region. This may impact upon visibility, credibility, and influence for example in inter-agency coordination mechanisms, humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus discussions, and engagement with government social protection systems. In many contexts, National Societies are strong operational implementers of CVA but may not be consistently recognized, represented, or engaged as strategic actors in:

- National and sub-national cash coordination platforms (e.g. cash working groups)
- Linkages with government-led social protection and safety net systems
- Policy dialogue and advocacy spaces on CVA-related regulation (e.g. financial service provider regulation, data protection, taxation of humanitarian transfers)
- Donor and inter-agency strategic planning processes

As part of its role supporting the CVA strengthening of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies in the MENA region, the Cash Center of Excellence is seeking to identify practical, targeted and impactful approaches, methods, guidance and/or tools to support National Societies in the region to strengthen their external positioning, coordination role, and advocacy on CVA, with a specific focus on external relationships, first and foremost with Governments and national authorities.

This assignment builds on, and must not duplicate, existing regional infrastructure and evidence, notably: the MENA Regional CVA Community of Practice (CoP); the Movement's RCRC CVA Strategic Framework to 2030, which establishes NS coordination leadership and social protection linkage as strategic priorities; and recent

CALP Network MENA-region research on locally-led CVA, cash coordination, and social protection linkages (see Annex D). The consultancy is expected to build directly on this body of work rather than repeat it.

## 2. Rationale and Justification

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Consultations with National Societies in the region, along with existing lessons-learned exercises, point to a recurring set of challenges:

- Limited understanding within NS leadership of why and how to invest in external positioning on CVA (often seen as a technical/operational issue rather than a strategic one)
- Weak or inconsistent representation in cash coordination structures, particularly where National Societies' auxiliary role to government is not effectively leveraged (aim to explore reasons for this weak/inconsistent representation)
- Difficulty translating CVA operational experience into evidence and advocacy messaging usable in policy dialogue
- Limited institutional guidance on how to engage constructively with government social protection actors without compromising Fundamental Principles (notably neutrality, independence, and impartiality)
- External positioning and advocacy with governments is most effective when it is championed at NS senior leadership level (Secretary General/Director General), not left solely to technical CVA focal points, a pattern reflected in Movement good practice (e.g., Turkish Red Crescent, Bangladesh Red Crescent)
- Absence of a structured, replicable process for NS to self-assess their positioning, identify blockers, and design a response

A consolidated product/deliverable, combining guidance, self-assessment tools, case studies of good practice, and step-by-step processes would fill this gap and provide MENA National Societies with a practical resource they can adapt to their own context.

## 3. Purpose and Objectives

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### 3.1 Purpose

To develop a practical, user-friendly products/deliverables (to be decided by the consultancy based on what is beneficial the most) that strengthens the capacity of MENA National Societies to position themselves externally on CVA, engage effectively in coordination mechanisms, and advocate for their role including in relation to government social protection systems.

### 3.2 Specific Objectives

1. Map and analyze the current state of NS external positioning on CVA across the MENA region, including good practice and persistent barriers.
2. Clarify the role and added value of National Societies in local/national CVA coordination mechanisms, and their auxiliary relationship to public authorities in this context (include barriers within the wider coordination architecture as well as barriers within the NS). Assess the extent to which National Society CVA activities are captured and reflected in inter-agency information sharing, reporting, dashboards, and response analysis mechanisms.
3. Identify key blockers and enabling factors for effective external positioning and advocacy, with contextualized analysis (e.g., by country typology: conflict-affected, protracted displacement, middle-

income with developed social protection systems, etc.). distinguishing between internal NS barriers and external/systemic barriers.

4. Document case studies where NS external positioning and advocacy on CVA has been done well, extracting transferable lessons.
5. Develop practical guidance and a step-by-step process NS can use to diagnose their own positioning gaps and design a tailored response.
6. Develop a specific module/component on engagement with social protection systems and government actors, including principled approaches to linking humanitarian CVA with national safety nets.
7. Ensure that the learning materials designed are usable, adaptable, and actionable for NS with varying levels of capacity and resourcing.
8. Assess the gap between National Societies' operational CVA capacity and their institutional positioning, examining whether their level of recognition, representation, and influence is proportionate to their actual CVA experience, scale of operations, geographical reach, and contribution to the wider humanitarian and Movement CVA landscape.
9. Assess the nature, quality, and influence of National Society participation in cash coordination mechanisms, distinguishing between attendance, formal membership, access to information, technical contribution, and actual influence over decisions. The analysis should identify objective evidence of influence and triangulate National Society perspectives with those of other coordination actors in order to validate findings and document effective examples of good practice.

## 4. Scope of Work

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The assignment covers all National Societies in the MENA region that are working with CVA, with a proposed sample of 4-5 case study countries reflecting diverse contexts (to be agreed with the Cash Center of Excellence at inception), such as:

- Conflict/protracted crisis contexts
- Contexts with strong government-led social protection systems
- Contexts with active cash coordination platforms/cash working groups
- Contexts where NS holds/has held CVA coordination or co-coordination roles

The consultancy will combine:

- Desk review and secondary data analysis
- Key informant interviews (NS staff/leadership, IFRC, ICRC, UN cash coordination actors, government social protection counterparts, donors (FCDO, ECHO, local actors, etc.)
- Consultative workshops/validation sessions with NS, including engagement with the existing MENA Regional CVA Community of Practice as a validation and dissemination channel
- Products/deliverables drafting, design, and testing/piloting

*Suggested case study/country entry points (to be confirmed at inception, informed by existing documentation): Lebanon (fragmented cash coordination governance and recent reform efforts), Iraq (documented cash working group transition/deactivation process), Jordan (mature CWG architecture and social protection dialogue), Iraq/Libya/Yemen (documented CALP research on humanitarian CVA-to-social protection linkage feasibility), and Türkiye (large-scale alignment of NS-delivered CVA with a national social protection-adjacent system through the Emergency Social Safety Net).*

## 5. Specific Tasks and Deliverables

| # | Task                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Deliverable                                                        |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Inception phase: review existing materials (IFRC/ICRC CVA and coordination guidance, PMER, prior positioning assessments), refine methodology and case study selection                                                                            | Inception report and workplan                                      |
| 2 | Regional mapping and situational analysis of NS external positioning on CVA, coordination engagement, and social protection linkages                                                                                                              | Mapping/analysis report                                            |
| 3 | Identification and documentation of 4 to 5 good practice case studies (including at least one on social protection/government linkage) not necessarily limited to the MENA Region (for example, Kizilay, Kenyan RC has good examples to consider) | Case study compendium                                              |
| 4 | Analysis of key barriers/blockers to effective external positioning and advocacy, categorized (institutional, political, capacity, regulatory, etc.)                                                                                              | Barrier analysis note                                              |
| 5 | Development of practical guidance, self-assessment tool (without duplicating what already exists within the CVAP self-assessment tool), and step-by-step process for NS to identify issues and design responses                                   | Draft products/deliverables (guidance + tools)                     |
| 6 | Development of dedicated module on social protection and government engagement, grounded in Movement policy (auxiliary role, Fundamental Principles)                                                                                              | Product/deliverables suggested                                     |
| 7 | Consultation and validation with a sample of NS (workshop/webinar)                                                                                                                                                                                | Validation report with feedback log                                |
| 8 | Finalization, design/layout, and packaging of toolkit (including summary/advocacy brief version)                                                                                                                                                  | Final deliverables (full version + short guide), presentation deck |
| 9 | Dissemination support (e.g., short training/orientation session for NS or regional focal points)                                                                                                                                                  | Session delivered + materials                                      |

## 6. Suggested Learning Material (indicative – to be refined with consultant)

1. Introduction: why external positioning on CVA matters for National Societies in MENA
2. The role of NS in local/national CVA coordination: mandate, added value, auxiliary role
3. Barriers and blockers: a typology, with country examples
4. What existing good practice looks like: case studies and lessons learned
5. Step-by-step guidance: self-assessment → issue identification → action planning
6. Engaging with social protection systems and government: principles, entry points, risks, and safeguards
7. Advocacy messaging and tools (templates, talking points, positioning statements)
8. Annexes: assessment templates, checklists, resource list

## 7. Methodology (indicative)

The consultancy is expected to propose a detailed methodology, which should include at minimum:

- Desk review of Movement and inter-agency CVA and coordination guidance

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- Semi-structured KIIs across a representative sample of NS, IFRC/ICRC cash focal points, government social protection counterparts, and coordination platform leads
- A participatory case study documentation approach
- At least one validation workshop with NS representatives before finalization
- A plan for ensuring content is practically usable (not purely academic), including plain-language drafting and visual/adaptable formats

## 8. Governance, Management, and Reporting

- The consultancy will report to the MENA Cash Center of Excellence.
- A Steering/Reference Group comprising relevant NS cash focal points, IFRC and LRC MENA Cash Center of Excellence, and other relevant Movement partners will review key deliverables at defined milestones.
- All deliverables must be submitted in English and Arabic and reviewed by the Steering Group prior to finalization.

## 9. Timeline (indicative – to be adjusted)

| Phase                                   | Duration  |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------|
| Inception                               | 2 weeks   |
| Mapping, KIIs, case studies             | 2 weeks   |
| Draft products/deliverables development | 4 weeks   |
| Consultation/validation                 | 2 weeks   |
| Finalization and design                 | 2 weeks   |
| Total                                   | ~12 weeks |

## 10. Required Expertise and Qualifications

The consultancy firm/team should demonstrate:

- A strong institutional track record in **humanitarian research, evaluation, learning, advocacy, and humanitarian coordination**, with demonstrated experience delivering complex assignments for international humanitarian and development organizations.
- Proven and substantial **technical expertise in Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) and market-based programming**, including experience assessing, designing, evaluating, or developing guidance related to CVA.
- Demonstrated experience conducting **regional, multi-country, or globally relevant evaluations, research studies, learning reviews, or evidence-generation assignments**.
- Proven experience conducting **humanitarian evaluations and research using mixed methodologies**, combining qualitative, quantitative, and participatory approaches.

- Demonstrated capacity to undertake **cross-country comparative analysis** and synthesize evidence across different operational and institutional contexts.
- Strong experience producing **high-quality knowledge products**, including evaluation reports, research reports, evidence briefs, case studies, guidance, tools, and technical recommendations intended for operational, regional, and/or global audiences.
- Demonstrated ability to translate research and evaluation findings into **practical recommendations that can inform programming, technical guidance, organizational learning, and policy discussions**.
- Demonstrated experience working with major humanitarian actors, preferably including the **Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, UN agencies, international NGOs, donors, and global humanitarian technical networks**.
- Strong knowledge of the **global humanitarian and CVA landscape**, including emerging trends, operational challenges, accountability, localization, markets, data responsibility, and quality of cash programming.
- Significant experience working in **fragile, conflict-affected, displacement, emergency, and/or access-constrained contexts**.
- Demonstrated experience in the **MENA region**, with a strong understanding of the diversity of humanitarian and operational contexts across the region.
- Experience assessing **remote, hybrid, or reduced-access humanitarian programming** would be considered a strong asset.
- Strong regional MENA experience and contextual knowledge; Arabic language capacity within the team is required (English/Arabic bilingual deliverables)
- **Strong methodological expertise, including experience with approaches such as:**
  - Desk reviews and evidence synthesis
  - Key informant interviews
  - Focus group discussions
  - Surveys and quantitative analysis
  - Comparative case studies
  - Participatory evaluation methods
  - Triangulation and validation of findings
- Demonstrated ability to engage effectively with a wide range of stakeholders, including **National Societies, Movement partners, humanitarian practitioners, technical experts, senior leadership, local actors, and affected populations**.
- Strong understanding of relevant cross-cutting considerations, including **accountability to affected populations, protection, gender and inclusion, localization, information management, data protection, financial service providers, and operational risk**.
- Excellent **analytical, synthesis, facilitation, and publication-quality report-writing skills in English**.

- **Arabic language capacity within the proposed team is highly desirable.**
- The proposed **Team Leader/Senior Technical Lead should have a minimum of 7 years of relevant humanitarian and/or development experience**, including substantial experience leading complex evaluations, research, or learning assignments.
- The proposed team should collectively bring complementary expertise in:
  - CVA and market-based programming
  - Humanitarian evaluation and research
  - Qualitative and quantitative methodologies
  - MENA regional expertise
  - Evidence synthesis and knowledge-product development
- Key team members should hold relevant **advanced university degrees** in international development, humanitarian studies, economics, social sciences, public policy, evaluation, research, or another relevant discipline.
- The consultancy firm/team should provide evidence of at least **three to five comparable assignments**, preferably including regional or multi-country studies and assignments that have contributed to wider humanitarian learning, guidance, or practice.

## 11. Evaluation Criteria (for proposal selection)

| Evaluation Criterion                                             | Key Elements to Assess                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Weight     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>1. Understanding of the Assignment and Strategic Approach</b> | Understanding of the scope and objectives; regional relevance; contribution to global CVA learning; understanding of complex, fragile, and access-constrained contexts; approach to translating country-level evidence into regional and global learning.                                                                                                       | <b>15%</b> |
| <b>2. Relevant Organizational Experience and Track Record</b>    | Experience in humanitarian research and evaluation; strong CVA and market-based programming expertise; regional/multi-country assignments; production of evidence, guidance, or learning products; experience with RCRC Movement, UN agencies, INGOs, donors, and technical networks; MENA and fragile-context experience; relevance of comparable assignments. | <b>15%</b> |
| <b>3. Qualifications and Experience of the Proposed Team</b>     | Senior CVA expertise; humanitarian evaluation and research expertise; regional and multi-country experience; MENA and fragile-context knowledge; evidence synthesis and knowledge-product development; academic qualifications; language capacity, including Arabic.                                                                                            | <b>15%</b> |
| <b>4. Methodology and Analytical Approach</b>                    | Quality and robustness of methodology; mixed-method design; comparative and cross-country analysis; triangulation and validation; stakeholder participation; ethical considerations, data protection, accountability and inclusion; approach to generating regional and globally relevant findings.                                                             | <b>15%</b> |

|                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>5. Quality Assurance, Workplan and Deliverables</b> | Feasibility of workplan; senior technical oversight; quality-assurance arrangements; internal review and validation; ability to deliver high-quality, publication-ready outputs suitable for regional and global dissemination. | <b>10%</b> |
| <b>Total Technical Score</b>                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>70%</b> |

### Minimum Technical Threshold

Only proposals achieving at least **60% of the available technical score** will proceed to financial evaluation.

Priority will be given to proposals demonstrating an exceptional combination of **CVA technical expertise, rigorous humanitarian research and evaluation capacity, regional knowledge, and a proven ability to convert evidence into learning and products that can influence humanitarian practice beyond the countries directly studied.**

## 12. Budget and Payment Schedule (indicative)

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Payments to be linked to milestone deliverables, e.g.:

- 40% upon signature and inception report approval and upon submission of mapping/analysis and case study compendium
- 40% upon submission of draft toolkit
- 20% upon final validated toolkit and dissemination session (submission of the final toolkit on Dec 2026 if we have time constraints).

## 13. Duration of Assignment

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Estimated total duration: 12 weeks

## 14. Annexes (to be attached when issued)

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- Annex A: List of relevant background documents
- Annex B: List of NS/stakeholders to be consulted
- Annex C: Key reference resources (mandatory reading for bidders)

## Annex C: Key Reference Resources (Mandatory Reading for Bidders)

Bidders are expected to demonstrate familiarity with the following resources in their technical proposal and to build on them rather than duplicate them.

### Movement Cash Hub

- [RCRC Movement CVA Strategic Framework to 2030](#) (Cash Peer Working Group) – frames NS coordination leadership and social protection linkage as strategic priorities
- [Strengthening Linkages with Social Protection Systems: Orientation Guidance for RCRC National Societies](#) – comparative advantages, engagement modalities (vertical/horizontal expansion, piggybacking, alignment, design tweaks), and case studies (Turkish Red Crescent/Kızılaykart-ESSN, Kenya Red Cross/HSNP, BVI Joint Cash Platform, Greece Cash Alliance)
- [Cash in Emergencies Toolkit](#), Module 4 (CEA, Coordination and Partnership) – includes dedicated sub-modules on External Partnerships and CVA Coordination Guidance
- [MENA Regional CVA Community of Practice](#) – existing regional coordination structure hosted by the Lebanese Red Cross under the MENA Cash Centre of Excellence
- [https://cash-hub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/10/CVAPreparednessLocalisationReport\\_EN\\_5Oct21.pdf](https://cash-hub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/10/CVAPreparednessLocalisationReport_EN_5Oct21.pdf) (CVA and localisation study; Cash Hub, using the START Network's seven dimensions of localisation, including coordination, visibility, and policy influence)
- <https://cash-hub.org/resources/webinar-series/#Webinar42> (May 2024) – senior NS leadership discussion (Secretary General, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society; Director General for International Affairs and Migration Services, Turkish Red Crescent Society; IFRC Director, Disaster, Climate and Crises; British Red Cross Director of Humanitarian Cash Assistance) on advocacy with governments and CVA-social protection linkages – identifies Bangladesh Red Crescent as an additional good-practice case beyond Türkiye

### CALP Network

- [Cash Coordination Tip Sheet](#) – best practice and resources for CVA coordination at field level
- [The State of the World's Cash 2023, Chapter 4: Cash Coordination](#)
- [The State of the World's Cash 2023, Chapter 6: Linkages with Social Protection](#)
- [The State of the World's Cash 2023, Chapter 3: Locally-Led Response](#)
- [Supporting the Linkages Between Humanitarian CVA and National Social Protection Systems](#) (coordination-focused tip sheet)

### CALP Network – MENA-specific (priority reading)

- [Mapping of Humanitarian-Development-Social Protection Coordination Initiatives in the MENA Region](#) (Nov 2025) – regional mapping to build on directly
- [Locally-Led Responses to CVA in the Middle East and North Africa: Barriers, Progress and Opportunities](#) (2023) - based on 35 interviews across Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, oPt, Syria, Türkiye, Yemen
- [Investigating Operational Models for Multi-Purpose Cash Delivery and Links to Social Protection: Spotlight on MENA](#) (2023) – six MENA case studies
- [Feasibility of Achieving Resilience by Linking Vulnerable Populations Receiving Humanitarian CVA to Development and Social Protection – Iraq, Libya, Yemen](#) (Dec 2023)

- [Cash Working Group De-activation in Iraq](#) (2023) – documented transition of CVA coordination structures
- [Learner Cash Coordination in Lebanon, Moving Forward – Policy Paper](#) (Nov 2025) – current analysis of fragmented cash coordination governance
- [Rapid Reflection on the Scale-Up of Cash Coordination – Türkiye/Syria Earthquakes](#) (2023)

*Note: bidders should also consult [the CALP Network's MENA regional page](#) for the most current publications, as new MENA-specific research is added regularly.*