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# GOOD PRACTICES ON **CASH BASED INTERVENTIONS**



## **AND WASH**

***This document provides an overview of UNHCR's implementation of Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) to contribute to achieving WASH outcomes.***

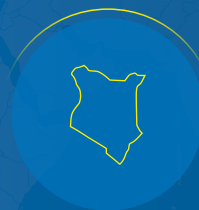
*The document outlines current practices, presents existing corporate guidance, and highlights noteworthy and inspiring learning from a diversity of country operations including:*



**Burkina Faso**



**Democratic Republic  
of Congo**



**Kenya**

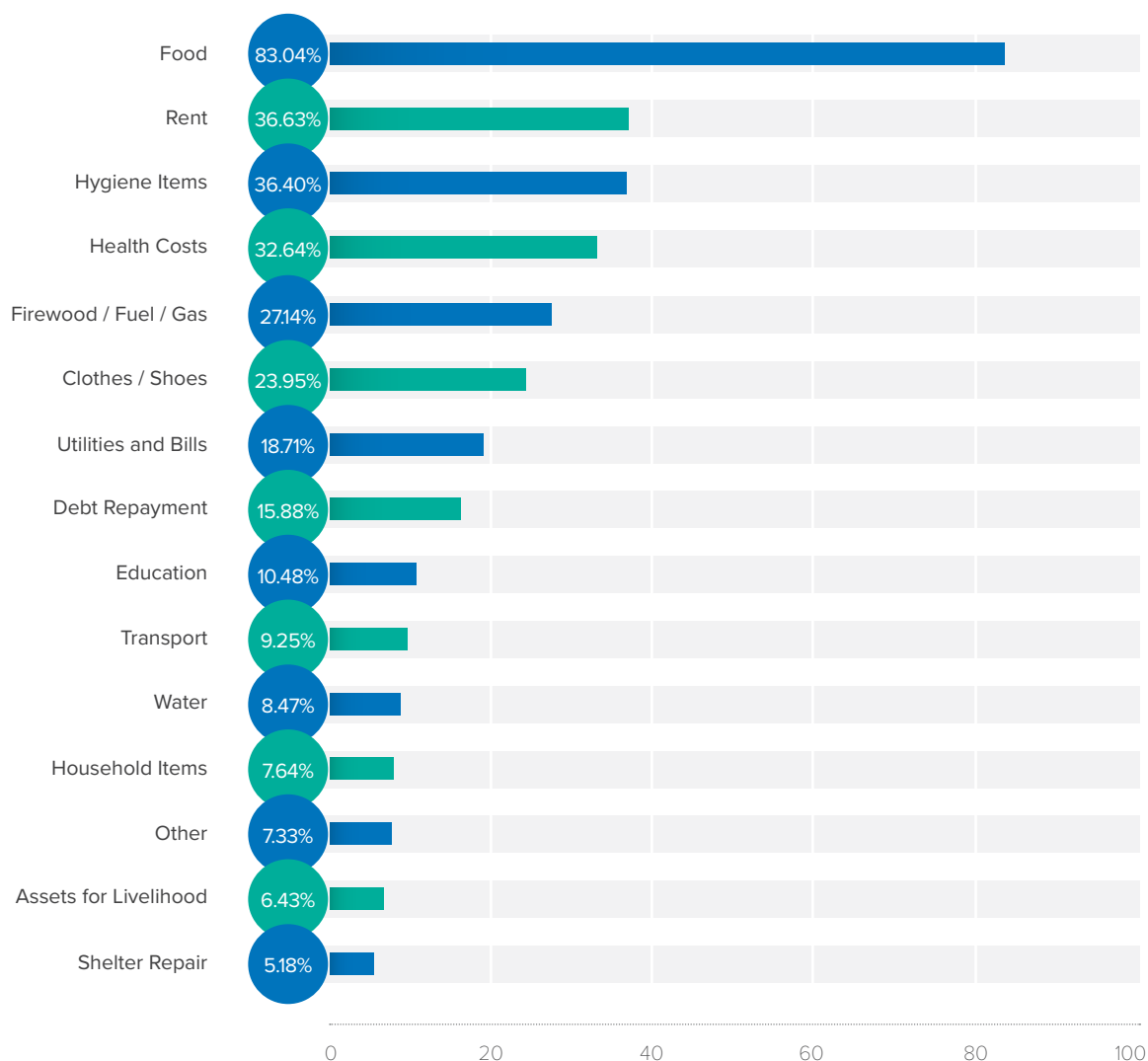
## **1. THE USE OF CASH FOR WASH**

UNHCR uses both multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA)<sup>1</sup> and targeted sectoral CBI to achieve WASH outcomes.<sup>2</sup> The minimum expenditure basket (MEB) is used to calculate the amount of the MPCA, which considers needs for WASH expenses such as water fees and hygiene items. During 2021, UNHCR disbursed approximately \$670 million in cash assistance globally, of which 81% was directed to MPCA (Expenditures are summarized in Table 1).

<sup>1</sup> Multipurpose cash assistance grants are regular or one-off cash transfers to a household that fully or partially cover a set of basic or recovery needs in different sectors (for instance, for shelter, food, education, and livelihood) and support protection and solutions outcomes. By definition, MPCA grants are unrestricted cash transfers that put recipient choice (the prioritisation by recipients of their own needs) at the centre of programming.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, Cash Based Interventions for WASH Programmes in Refugee Settings, 2016, <https://wash.unhcr.org/download/cash-based-interventions-for-wash-programmes-in-refugee-settings/>

**Table 1 - CBI PDM - Top 15 Expenditures in 2021**



Recipients of MPCA are empowered to choose how to meet their basic needs.<sup>3</sup> Global data showing how cash recipients used MPCA for basic needs<sup>4</sup> suggests that 36% of households spent a portion of their cash assistance on hygiene items, which is the third highest expenditure. Expenditures on hygiene items are higher in comparison with other years due to many households increasing their expenditures on hygiene items to mitigate COVID-19. 9% of households spent a portion of their MPCA on water. The percentage of households using MPCA to purchase food (83%) and rent (37%) reflects how people spend according to a hierarchy of needs. Overall, 71% of cash recipient households reported that they meet only half or less of their total basic needs.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, Multi-Purpose Cash and Sectoral Outcomes: A Review of Evidence and Learning, May 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/5b28c4157.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> MPCA used for WASH is based on post-distribution monitoring reports across 64 countries as of February 2022.

## UNHCR and Cash Assistance

*UNHCR continues to increase the use of CBI to achieve protection outcomes for refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, internally displaced, stateless people, and hosts. UNHCR's policy<sup>5</sup> aims to expand and systematize the use of CBI as an important modality of assistance, service delivery, and protection to enable inclusion and access to local, sustainable services. UNHCR promotes a holistic approach that includes unrestricted CBI coupled with services to meet basic needs of refugees and others of concern across protection, shelter, and sectoral*

*outcomes in education, health, livelihoods, and WASH (water, sanitation, hygiene). UNHCR generally advocates the use of unconditional and unrestricted CBI across sectors.<sup>6</sup>*

***Since the beginning of its cash institutionalization in 2016 through 2021, UNHCR has delivered approximately USD 4 billion in cash assistance to 33 million recipients in 100 countries with 95% disbursed without restrictions.***

## 2. CBI AND WASH STRATEGY

UNHCR's WASH programmes aim to ensure that all refugees and others of concern have access to safe and sufficient water, safely managed sanitation, and live in hygienic conditions. UNHCR uses CBIs to achieve WASH outcomes in the three areas of water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. UNHCR's *Cash Based Interventions for WASH Programmes in Refugee Settings* outlines practices, lessons learned, and best practice guidance, including an overview of 23 WASH programmes where UNHCR and partners have used CBI to cover a variety of WASH expenditures.

### **Examples of WASH CBI include:**

- **Water:** Increase access to drinking water through various water vendors, improve access to kits for water storage and treatment, repair domestic piped water networks, and ensure maintenance of water supplies.
- **Sanitation:** Support household construction of sanitation facilities by covering materials and/or labour costs and household access to desludging services.
- **Hygiene:** Purchase a range of hygiene products such as personal, menstrual, domestic, and baby hygiene commodities.

The different settings in which UNHCR operates determine the involvement of UNHCR's support and provision of WASH services.


<sup>5</sup> UNHCR Policy on Cash-Based Interventions. 2022-2026. <https://www.unhcr.org/61fbc91a4>

<sup>6</sup> Conditionality refers to prerequisite activities or obligations that a recipient must fulfill in order to receive assistance. Unrestricted CBI are CBI that can be used as the recipient chooses – i.e., no effective limitations are imposed by the implementing agency on how the cash transfer is spent.

The potential for using CBIs for WASH outcomes depends on the context, the response phase,<sup>7</sup> and the market system. A thorough understanding of the market system<sup>8</sup> for WASH commodities and services, supply and demand challenges, and barriers to access is required to design and implement sound CBIs.<sup>9</sup> As a starting point, there are many core relief items (CRIs) for WASH that could easily be monetized, including buckets and soap.

### 3. COUNTRY SNAPSHOTS

As of 2022, UNHCR delivers cash assistance in 100 countries worldwide and works with partners to provide WASH services to roughly 8 million refugees in approximately 30 countries.<sup>10</sup> The following country snapshots showcase how UNHCR uses CBI to promote WASH outcomes.



## CBI empowers refugees to construct and maintain latrines in Kenya

Key Takeaway from Kenya

Implementing CBI for latrine construction in Kenya has enabled UNHCR to empower refugees and others of concern to participate in the process of latrine construction which resulted in an increased sense of ownership during construction, maintenance, and usage. As a result, it has increased toilet construction within a shorter timeframe than through direct construction or in-kind and contributed to better hygiene outcomes with reduced risks of cholera outbreaks and other water-borne diseases. The income flow from purchasing local supplies and services has also improved coexistence with local communities.

**Context:** Kenya currently hosts over 540,000 refugees and asylum-seekers mainly living in the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps as well as urban areas, including the capital, Nairobi. Kenya has also identified some 18,500 stateless persons in the country. In October 2020, 155,685 refugees and asylum seekers lived in Kakuma refugee camp (established in 1992) and 39,623 lived in nearby Kalobeyei settlement (established nearby in 2015).<sup>11</sup> UNHCR has worked in Kenya for decades on programmes that benefit the large number of refugees and host community members particularly in areas of WASH, healthcare, and education.

**Activities:** Since 2018, UNHCR has implemented CBI in Kakuma and Kalobeyei, starting with cash for shelter and later monetizing CRIs and energy. In 2019, UNHCR started to disburse conditional cash grants through progress-based installments to construct latrines linked to conversion of transitional to permanent shelters in parts of Kalobeyei.

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR, WASH Manual: Practical Guidance for Refugee Settings, 2020, <http://wash.unhcr.org/unhcr-wash-manual-for-refugee-settings/>  
<sup>8</sup> John Allen and James Brown, Market-Based Programming in WASH: Technical Guidance for Humanitarian Practitioners, September 2021.  
<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, Cash Based Interventions for WASH Programmes in Refugee Settings, 2016, <https://wash.unhcr.org/download/cash-based-interventions-for-wash-programmes-in-refugee-settings/>  
<sup>10</sup> UNHCR What We Do – WASH in Refugee Settings, Accessed February 2022, <https://wash.unhcr.org/what-we-do/>  
<sup>11</sup> NRC and UNHCR, Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Settlement Site, Kenya: WASH KAP Survey Report, 2020.

### UNHCR Global Guidance and Best Practice

Using cash for toilet in camp settings requires robust stakeholder engagement, assessment, planning and design, implementation (construction and cash transfers), and monitoring and evaluation. For guidance on how to conduct each of these phases, supported by key lessons from different contexts, see [UNHCR Cash for Latrines: Key learning and checklist](#).

### Top Tip from the Field

Providing CBI for toilet construction has demonstrated clear benefits compared to providing toilet in-kind or through direct construction. However, some keys to success also include having:

- a clear communication strategy with guidelines on the purpose of the cash, how to spend it, and what conditions are required,
- a solid technical solution with clear instructions and breakdown by stages for optimal cash allocation,
- a suitable cash transfer mechanism (one with a transactional account delivers added value),
- regular monitoring and follow-up to provide technical guidance and troubleshooting,
- and hygiene education and promotion, like the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) strategy used in Kenya, which focuses on behavioral change to empower community-led solutions like elimination of open defecation.

When UNHCR started CBI for toilet construction in Kalobeyei, only 30% of the residents had toilet, which increased to 70% over two years. In comparison, in Kakuma, where there was no CBI for toilet construction, the toilet ownership is just 43%. In Kalobeyei, cash recipients are empowered to manage the entire toilet construction process from purchasing supplies to hiring masons and laborers. They frequently organize themselves into groups to negotiate with suppliers and purchase materials in bulk at reduced prices. UNHCR's implementing partners deploy sanitation engineers to advise and assess the quality of the work and monitor work progress together with the recipients.

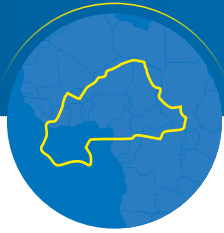
**Lessons Learned:** UNHCR has realized efficiency in time and costs since providing conditional cash assistance and enabling refugees and others of concern to manage their own toilet construction. When refugees and others of concern have the agency to choose and decide how to manage the process, they aim for faster construction and better pricing and quality of materials and labor. They are also more inclined to maintain and use the toilets.

UNHCR also found that 100% of the cash has been spent in the local markets, thus ensuring that the cash assistance also benefits the local community. When cash is injected into local markets, the number of traders and variety of goods increase. Although some refugees and others of concern experience challenges with traders delivering sub-standard materials (38% as per the PDM) or delivery delays, they use their bargaining power to negotiate better quality and supply when they organize as a group.

[UNHCR Kenya Latest Updates](#)



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## CBI for water and hygiene items in Burkina Faso

### Key Takeaway from Burkina Faso

Providing cash instead of in-kind hygiene kits for women gave them a choice, dignity, and privacy and also improved WASH sector outcomes around hygiene. This experience exemplifies Principle four on Menstrual Hygiene Management in the [UNHCR WASH Manual](#), which is one of five principles outlined for WASH programmes in refugee settings.

### UNHCR Global Guidance and Best Practice

Robust monitoring and evaluation reports on CBIs for WASH that clearly describe benefits, successes, and challenges for the WASH sector have been limited.

However, enough available evidence shows strong potential to use CBIs to support refugees' access to WASH commodities and services, in out-of-camp contexts where markets are accessible and diverse, and where water and sanitation services require payment. To read more recommendations, see [UNHCR's CBI for WASH Programmes in Refugee Settings](#).

### Top Tip from the Field

In most contexts, UNHCR and implementing partners provide water for free to refugees and others of concern, sometimes by sub-contracting water authorities to supply water. However, depending on the context, CBI can bridge the gap and

**Context:** 1.4 million IDPs and 23,000 refugees and asylum seekers reside in Burkina Faso. Widespread violence has forced many people to flee from their homes to seek safety primarily in urban centers. As a result, most refugees and IDPs live in communities with access to markets and services, and shelter and WASH are priority needs.

**Activities:** In 2021, in the Sahel region, as a protection intervention, UNHCR provided cash assistance for basic needs and shelter to 554 households, including IDPs with specific needs and vulnerable host community members. UNHCR also integrated 1,878 refugees with specific needs into the community and provided cash grants for three months.

The previous year, UNHCR provided CBI for shelter and water following an influx of refugees into urban areas after having to evacuate a refugee camp. Because water is not free of charge, UNHCR provided Cash for Water to several refugees relocated to the town of Dori. Each household received a monthly grant to purchase water daily from the public municipality or local water vendors for a period of three months.

Following focus group discussions, UNHCR switched to providing cash instead of hygiene kits as the recipients were not using the kits and preferred cash.

**Lessons Learned:** UNHCR intended the CBI primarily to meet shelter requirements, however, recognizing that water is also a top priority and is scarce in the Sahel, UNHCR combined the two cash grants. UNHCR realized that cash to purchase water could effectively and efficiently be combined with the CBI for shelter.

UNHCR learned that when providing cash for menstrual hygiene management, women could purchase what they needed and items they were used to. It also allowed them to maintain privacy and manage sensitive gender dynamics with men in the household. Providing cash instead of hygiene kits resulted in better hygiene and protection outcomes, and increased efficiency of UNHCR's assistance.

[UNHCR Burkina Faso Latest Updates](#)

enable people to purchase more water than they would normally be able to in contexts where water is scarce. UNHCR's WASH response programme framework provides similar observations for other contexts, like in post-emergency and protracted phases of a crisis, where UNHCR could also use CBI as a solution for vulnerable households to pay directly for water services. For more information, see [UNHCR's WASH Manual 2020](#).



## The impact of market assessments and sensitization support for CBI and WASH in DRC

### Key Takeaway from DRC

Most recipients of MPCA spent part of their cash grants on WASH items. However, when cash is insufficient to cover all basic needs, WASH items may not always be the highest priority. Cash recipients may prioritise more immediate needs of food and shelter. For these reasons, CBI should be accompanied by targeted routine sensitization on the risks of deprioritizing soap and toilet construction. Complementary activities like behavior change communication strategies (BCCS) are essential to help people understand these risks and how they can practice good hygiene, even when cash for expenditures is limited.

### UNHCR Global Guidance and Best Practice

Understanding WASH market systems is essential for programme effectiveness. To design and implement sound CBIs, a coordinated team of WASH and CBI experts need to conduct thorough assessments

**Context:** There are approximately 7.1 million IDPs (5.2 million), returned IDPs (1.4 million), refugees (516,417), asylum seekers (1,373), and returned refugees (22,900) residing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Most refugees live in host communities (73%) in underserved, poverty-stricken areas, and the rest live in refugee camps (26%) or urban areas (1%). DRC is a large country with five sub-offices and diverse terrain, requiring specific regional response interventions.

**Activities:** In 2021, UNHCR used CBI for various WASH initiatives in different locations, including for toilets, shelter, menstrual hygiene management, and CRIs (e.g., soap and buckets). To be able to use cash, items need to be available in the market, and UNHCR has conducted regular market assessments to confirm WASH items remain available in local, remote markets because supply chains can be disrupted by security issues or when roads become impassable during the rainy season.

UNHCR provided cash for toilet construction in 2019 and 2020 in the subregion of Baraka. UNHCR has also disbursed unrestricted MPCA to refugees, IDPs, and host community members throughout the country, allowing recipients to prioritize their expenditures. Based on post-distribution monitoring (PDMs) in various regions, most recipients used part of their cash assistance on water and hygiene items.



of the market system to understand how markets function and vary by location and season. Supply may fluctuate, therefore conducting regular market assessments should be a standard market practice to confirm the availability and the price of items. In addition to assessing the supply of WASH commodities and services, it's also important to understand recipients' behaviors and preferences on WASH and identify supply- and demand-side challenges. Market analysis informs the design of responses that address barriers to access WASH services for refugees, which can then in turn support or even strengthen markets. For more information and illustrations of these benefits, see [UNHCR's CBI for WASH Programmes in Refugee Settings](#).



#### Top Tip from the Field

With MPCA, recipients purchased WASH related items when they had sufficient cash and items were available in the market. Though MPCA was unrestricted, use of sectoral CBI for toilet construction required a more strategic approach. UNHCR provided cash in installments, disbursing the first installment without conditions to initiate action, but making subsequent installments conditional upon the level of advancement. At times, UNHCR had to adapt and mix cash with in-kind when refugees could not readily buy certain items in the market, such as timber for toilet slabs or roofing materials. While WASH experts continue to provide technical support and oversight during toilet construction to ensure quality standards, it is essential that WASH and CBI teams coordinate closely throughout program design and implementation to achieve outcomes. The WASH and CBI teams need to collaborate jointly to create standard operating procedures (SOPs) for CBI and WASH, conduct market assessments, collect recipient feedback, and monitor implementation progress. Such intentional and regular collaboration is vital to ensure success.

In the Goma region, UNHCR provided MPCA to a number of refugees and/ or IDPs in 2020. Results from PDM in early 2021 show that while food was the top expenditure with 96% of households spending a portion of their cash assistance on food, 21% of households used a portion of their cash assistance to purchase personal hygiene items, 8% used a portion to purchase water, and 4% used a portion on construction or repairs of a toilet. However, for many the total cash assistance was insufficient and 68% of all households expressed that they were not able to cover at least half of their most urgent household needs.

In Kananga, UNHCR provided MPCA to a number of refugees and/or IDPs in 2020. Results from PDM show that 26% of households used a portion of their cash assistance to purchase water and 6% used it to buy hygiene items, including soap, water containers, washbasins, and menstrual hygiene items. However, due to budget constraints, the grant size was insufficient to cover all household needs and recipients had to prioritize expenditures. Of households surveyed, 20% said the cash assistance was inadequate to cover all their water needs, and 10% of households could not satisfy their needs for hygiene articles.

**Lessons Learned:** In general, unrestricted MPCA allows households to prioritize expenditures. Recipients clearly view WASH as important, but it may not be a top priority on their expenditure list when forced to make difficult decisions on how to spend limited cash. Many perceive hygiene as a preventative expense, and rather than prioritize buying soap or building a toilet to reduce contamination, they choose to address more immediate needs like buying food or paying for shelter. This situation presents a challenge to achieve WASH outcomes, and in a worst-case scenario, could result in serious consequences such as a cholera outbreak. To achieve WASH outcomes, especially when cash assistance is insufficient to cover all basic needs, UNHCR has implemented intensive sensitization campaigns on hygiene.

 [UNHCR Democratic Republic of the Congo Latest Updates](#)

## 4. KEY GUIDANCE

To learn more about CBI and WASH programming refer to the recommended resources listed below.

### ➤ Key UNHCR Guidance on CBI and WASH

1. UNHCR, Cash Based Interventions for WASH Programmes in Refugee Settings, 2016, <https://wash.unhcr.org/download/cash-based-interventions-for-wash-programmes-in-refugee-settings/>
2. UNHCR, Cash for Latrines: Key Learning and Checklist, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/5b476ba67.pdf>

### ➤ Key UNHCR Guidance on WASH

1. UNHCR, Hygiene Promotion Guidelines, 2017, <http://wash.unhcr.org/download/hygiene-promotion-guidelines-unhcr-2017/>
2. UNHCR WASH, Accessed February 2022, <https://wash.unhcr.org/>
3. UNHCR, Urban WASH Planning Guidance Note, 2017, <https://wash.unhcr.org/download/urban-wash-planning-guidance-and-case-studies/>
4. UNHCR Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Accessed February 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/water-sanitation-and-hygiene.html>
5. UNHCR, WASH Manual for Refugee Settings, February 2020, <http://wash.unhcr.org/unhcr-wash-manual-for-refugee-settings/>
6. UNHCR, WASH, Protection and Accountability, 2017, <https://wash.unhcr.org/download/wash-protection-and-accountability/>
7. John Allen and James Brown, WASH Cluster, Market-Based Programming in WASH: Technical Guidance for Humanitarian Practitioners, September 2021, [https://wrc.washcluster.net/sites/default/files/2021-09/WASH%20MBP%20Guidance\\_V6\\_FINAL\\_2.pdf](https://wrc.washcluster.net/sites/default/files/2021-09/WASH%20MBP%20Guidance_V6_FINAL_2.pdf)

### ➤ Key UNHCR Guidance on Cash Based Interventions

1. UNHCR, Cash Assistance and Protection: Why, What and How?, September 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/616fc52e4>
2. UNHCR Cash-Based Interventions, Accessed January 2022, <https://intranet.unhcr.org/en/protection-programme/cash-based-interventions.html>
3. UNHCR, CBI Repository, Catalogue of UNHCR's tools and Guidance for Cash Assistance, <https://intranet.unhcr.org/content/dam/unhcr/intranet/protection-operations/cash-based-interventions/documents/english/tools-guidance/CBI%20Repository.pdf>
4. UNHCR CBI Tools & Guidance, Accessed January 2022, <https://intranet.unhcr.org/en/protection-programme/cash-based-interventions/tools---guidance.html>
5. UNHCR, Multi-Purpose Cash and Sectoral Outcomes: A Review of Evidence and Learning, May 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/5b28c4157.pdf>
6. UNHCR Online CBI Training Toolkit, Accessed February 2022, <https://unhcr.csod.com/ui/lms-learning-details/app/curriculum/039628b6-2753-41d5-b715-84de737c2f08>