



# THE USE AND CALCULATION OF CASH GRANTS IN VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

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**Considerations to Assist UNHCR Colleagues**

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## INTRODUCTION

UNHCR has been providing cash grants in support of voluntary repatriation and reintegration since the 1980s. Despite this widespread operational practice, to date UNHCR has not produced any standard guidance specifically on the use and calculation of cash grants in voluntary repatriation contexts. Given that UNHCR has released its policy on Cash Based Interventions (CBI) with a five-year strategy for the institutionalisation of CBI (2016–2020), it is important to provide guidance to staff on criteria for calculating such cash grants, to ensure that in as far as applicable, their provision is coherent with this CBI guidance. This will contribute to facilitating implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR, affirmed in December 2018), particularly its fourth objective on supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

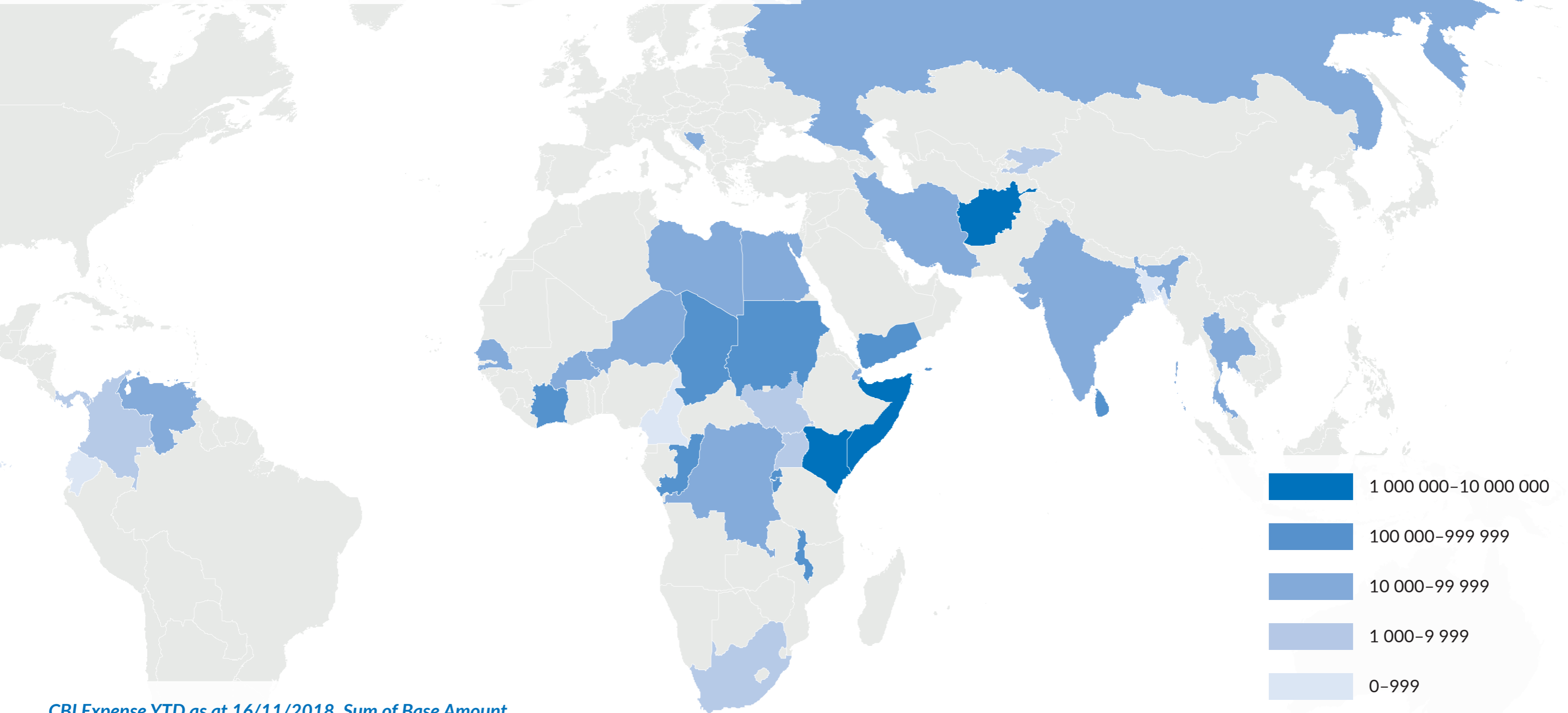
This guidance is intended to support UNHCR staff and partners involved in voluntary repatriation in ensuring that the provision of cash for voluntary repatriation reflects the latest global standards for CBI and maintains a focus on the objective of supporting sustainable voluntary returns. It is not prescriptive: it is clear that a ‘one size fits all’ approach will not work given that each context is different. Rather, the guidance aims to provide food for thought, and practitioners should adapt it for use in their own specific contexts. This guidance is as relevant to situations of facilitated or promoted voluntary repatriation, as to situations where UNHCR decides to financially assist those who have returned to their country of origin in a self-organized manner.

By basing calculations on context-specific field evidence, the hope is that UNHCR staff can be confident in their accountability to the refugees they serve. In addition, providing clarity on why cash transfers have been set at particular levels will serve UNHCR well when sourcing funding from donors.

The methodology for producing this guidance included a desk review; interviews and focus group discussions with UNHCR staff, partners and returnees; and field testing in one operation.

# 1. CONTEXT

The map below shows where UNHCR is currently providing cash grants in the context of voluntary repatriation.



**CBI Expense YTD as at 16/11/2018, Sum of Base Amount**

Country	Grand Total
Afghanistan	2 916 003
Somalia	1 563 434
Rwanda	805 759
Chad	537 552
Sudan	461 490
Malawi	430 944
The Republic of the Congo	162 961

Country	Grand Total
Sri Lanka	105 950
Dem. Rep of the Congo, Reg Off	93 019
Senegal Regional Office	59 549
Yemen	548 023
Islamic Republic of Iran	21 703

Country	Grand Total
India	12 128
Burkina Faso	11 924
Djibouti	10 140
Venezuela	7 770
Kenya	1 138 029
Russian Federation	3 265
Egypt	3 072

Country	Grand Total
Libya	2 110
Niger	31 229
Kyrgyzstan	802
Colombia	750
South Sudan	400
Uganda	200
Morocco	150

Country	Grand Total
Panama RO	81
Cameroon	70
Bangladesh	36
Ecuador	12
South Africa Regional Office	400
Cote d'Ivoire	315 098

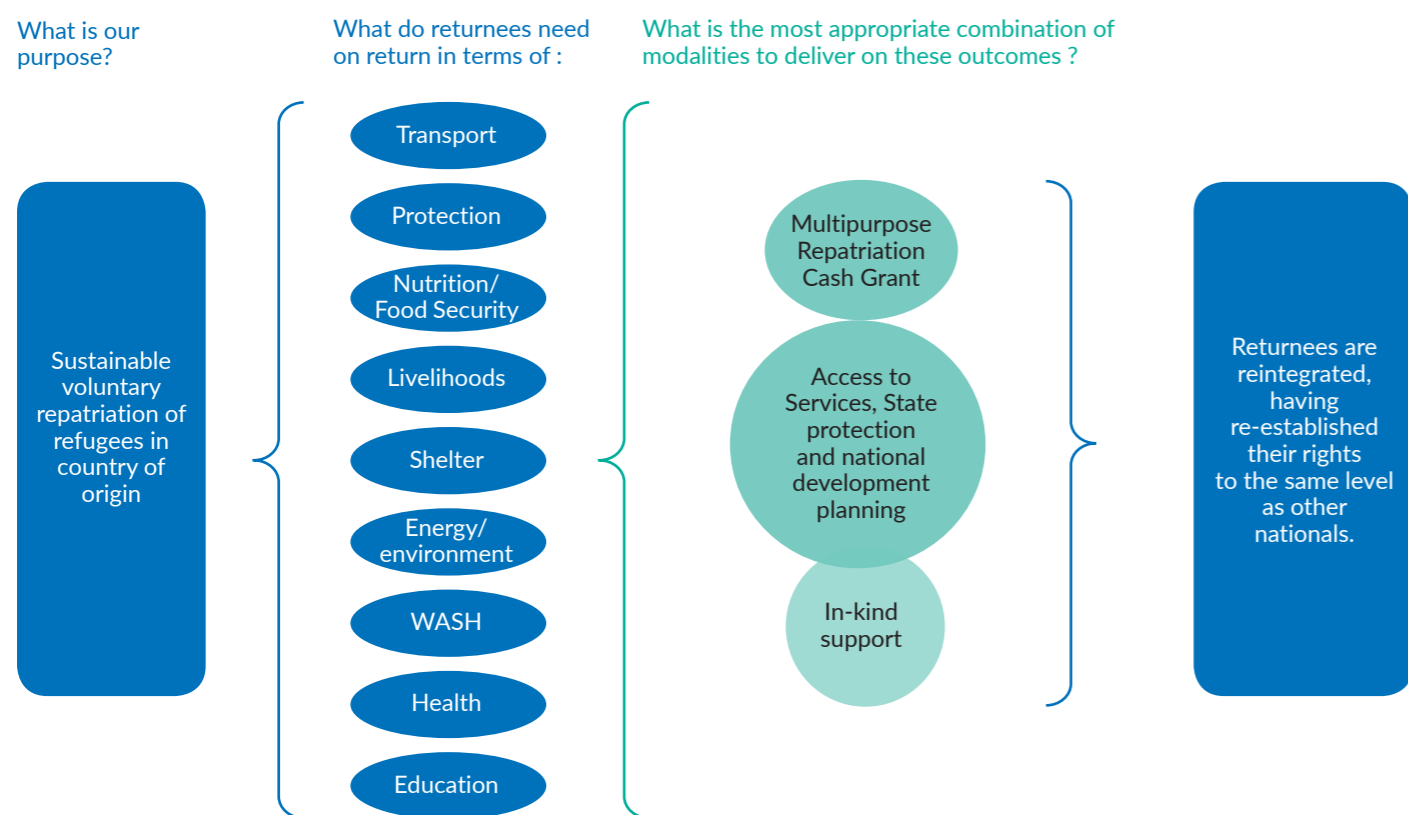
Country	Grand Total
Thailand	17 401
Bosnia and Herzegovina Rgnl OF	4 484
Burundi	316 188
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>9 582 819</b>



To enhance protection and the safety and dignity of return, cash grants have typically been used as part of a larger package of assistance to cover the costs of repatriation and to support returnees in covering their basic needs on arrival in their country of origin or former habitual residence<sup>1</sup>.

The provision of cash can challenge the basis of sustainable return if the level of cash transfer provided is so high that it becomes a reason to return. Cash itself should not be an incentive but rather an 'enabling tool'. The decision to return is rarely straightforward and returnees base their decision on multiple factors. The level of the cash transfer value may or may not be important to this decision, depending on individual returnee households' socio-economic profiles and linkages back in the country of origin.

Cash is just one tool available to UNHCR. In each context, UNHCR will need to examine which of the identified protection and assistance needs will be addressed by providing cash grants, and which will be addressed through other avenues. Cash does not operate in a vacuum; the broader political context and protection environment, as well as relationships among humanitarian and development actors, other stakeholders, and governments in country of asylum and country of origin are key. Political commitment is needed from the state in the country of origin to actively engage in supporting sustainable reintegration through the allocation of necessary resources.



The provision of cash should also not be seen as a substitute for return monitoring, recognising that there are particular protection risks that cannot be mitigated by a cash grant, such as lack of access to civil documentation where on-the-ground advocacy may be necessary, or prevention of and response to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) which may require monitoring of and support to the systems in place. For example, in Afghanistan, it has been recognised that issues relating to security of tenure and quality of shelter cannot be addressed solely through provision of a cash grant. These instead require technical and legal support, such as legal assistance and awareness-raising on housing, land and property (HLP) rights and property law.<sup>2</sup>

The use of individual cash grants will often complement area-based support provided by UNHCR and others in areas of return. One of the factors UNHCR will consider in the discussion on cash grants will be how best to use limited resources: whether to dedicate the bulk to individual cash grants or investing more in other types of rehabilitation or development initiatives.

## 2. DESIGNING THE CASH GRANT

This guidance does not intend to replicate what already exists in the Operational Guidance and Toolkit for Multi-Purpose Cash Grants (2015) and the Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit (2017)<sup>3</sup>. Rather, it seeks to highlight divergences and set out additional considerations relevant to voluntary repatriation.

### 2.1 Needs, capacities and risks assessment

The provision of cash grants in contexts of voluntary repatriation should be informed by a needs and capacity assessment a security assessment and a protection assessment in areas of intended return in refugees' country of origin.

#### Protection assessment

The protection assessment may be ongoing, with information collected through intentions surveys; focus group discussions with prospective returnees and communities in areas of intended return; or protection monitoring in return. Compilation of existing information should help identify protection gaps, including the ability to meet basic needs and restart livelihoods upon arrival. Additionally, the economic situation of local communities in intended return areas and those communities' ability or desire to accept returnees should be assessed. These gaps and capacities will inform the cash grant's protection objectives. Whether or not returnees with specific needs can have those needs met by cash must also be considered in the protection assessment, and where relevant, alternatives identified.

#### Security assessment

A detailed assessment of security conditions is key. UNHCR should refrain from providing cash in hand when, in consultation with proposed beneficiaries, it is agreed that this may put returnees at risk when they travel through certain areas. In this case, safer delivery mechanisms should be explored, including but not limited to mobile money, bank accounts or banking cards.

#### Needs and capacity assessment

Needs and capacity assessments will require a multi-sectoral, joint approach involving protection, key technical sector and programme staff from the outset. They will require participation of UNHCR offices in both country of asylum and country of origin. Conducting these assessments will enable the multifunctional team to determine the material needs required to ensure safe and dignified returns; the main protection risks facing returnees; and whether the provision of cash would mitigate or exacerbate those risks. Consultation with key stakeholders is critical at this stage to gather existing information and to identify opportunities for collaboration.

### 2.2 Setting objectives

To contribute to sustainable voluntary repatriation, the programme's detailed objectives should be based on the outcome of a sound protection assessment and needs analysis.

Below are examples of potential objectives for voluntary repatriation/reintegration programmes:

- To enable refugees to return to their country of origin in a safe and dignified manner.
- To support returnees in the reacquisition of their own housing, land and/or property.
- To provide refugee returnees with a safe and dignified system of transport to return to their destination of choice in their country of origin, and to cover essential needs (such as food and accommodation) on the journey.
- To support the essential needs of returnee households (e.g. access to food, water, documentation, education, health, shelter) once back in the area of intended destination in the country of origin.
- To prevent returnees resorting to negative coping strategies in the first six months of return.
- To support returnees to restart their livelihoods, access employment, and start businesses, thereby increasing chances of sustainable reintegration.

Once detailed programme objectives are identified, a cash feasibility assessment<sup>4</sup> will help evaluate if and how cash grants could be used as one of the assistance modalities within the broader voluntary repatriation programme.

## 2.3 Link with development partners from the start

In the spirit of the GCR, and with a view to moving ahead with implementation of its fourth objective on supporting conditions for return in safety and dignity, UNHCR should start discussions with stakeholders working on early recovery and development as early as possible in the voluntary repatriation preparation process. These stakeholders include government, refugees, and UN agencies, as well as the private sector, the World Bank, international financial institutions and civil society.

Any financial assistance and support provided by UNHCR should, if possible, be linked to other developments in the country of origin, in order to avoid a patchy transition between the different support systems. It is particularly important to understand if returnees may be covered by governmental social safety nets and if they are included in other social protection schemes, such as for health care, education and legal aid.

UNHCR in the country of origin should conduct a stakeholder mapping of humanitarian and development actors (government departments, the World Bank, UN agencies, NGOs and community-based organisations (CBO), Cash Working Group), including the targeting criteria used by different agencies, in order to understand which institutions in different sectors work in different parts of the country of origin. By keeping development actors updated on returnees' intended destination and the anticipated number of returnees, and by sharing information on returnees' livelihood skills, development stakeholders will be better able to plan their own programmes. UNHCR should also advocate development programmes for the areas of return, where relevant.

Mapping existing and proposed activities in different areas of return by sector will also help identify their absorption capacity and any opportunities for linkage. Linking with national safety nets and any micro-finance and loan opportunities will maximise chances of sustainable reintegration. Joint planning with local authorities and local government in the country of origin is essential.

## 2.4 Operational feasibility

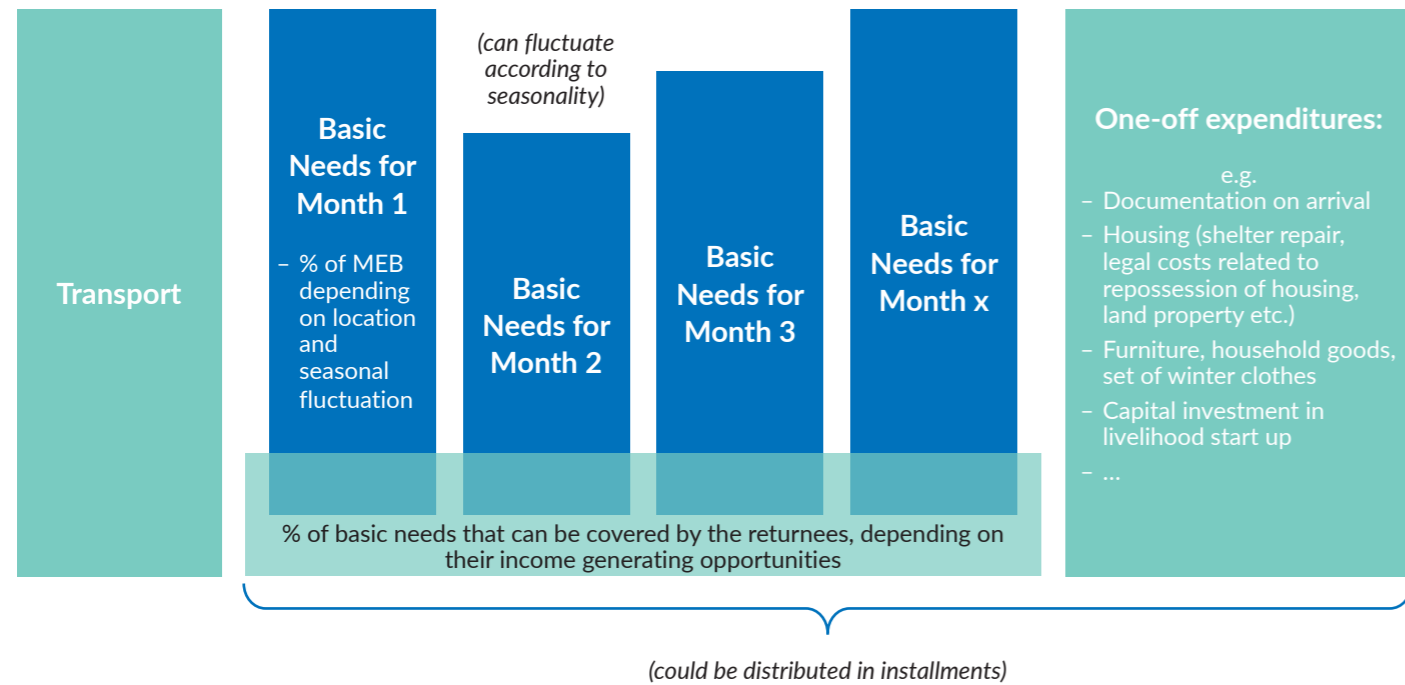
Operational feasibility refers to the analysis conducted by operations to determine whether CBIs are possible and appropriate in a given context. This includes the study of market access and capacity, protection risks and benefits, financial and operational risks, political context, cash transfer mechanisms and delivery options, cost efficiency and skills and capacities. Key aspects are covered in the table below, but for detailed guidance and tools on the different aspects of cash feasibility, refer to the Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit<sup>5</sup>. While the feasibility assessment has to be conducted in the country of origin where most of the cash grant is delivered, an assessment is also required in the country of asylum.

Area of analysis	Key questions and main tools
<b>1. Market access and capacity</b>	Are existing markets (local, regional, and national) accessible and able to provide the required goods or services at an appropriate price to address the needs? Can these markets respond to increased demand if CBIs are applied?  <i>Main tool: UNHCR Market Assessment Companion Guide and Toolkit in the Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit</i>
<b>2. Protection risks and benefits</b>	What are the protection risks and benefits of using CBIs compared with alternatives? What are the protection implications at the individual, household and community levels? How can these risks be mitigated and managed?  <i>Main tools: UNHCR Guide for Protection in Cash-Based Interventions and Protection Risk and Benefit Analysis Tool</i>
<b>3. Financial risks and benefits</b>	What are the potential risks and benefits of using CBIs? How can risks be mitigated and managed?  <i>Main tools: CBI SOP template and Administrative Instruction on the Financial Procedures for Cash-Based Interventions; see the Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit</i>
<b>4. Political context</b>	What is the host country Government position on CBIs to Persons of Concern (PoC) on national and local levels? What are other CBI actors, including the Government, doing? What is the regulatory environment?  <i>Main tools: Best practise summarised in the Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit</i>
<b>5. Transfer mechanisms and delivery options</b>	Who are the financial service providers and what is their coverage and reliable level of service provision? How long might it take to contract and establish the required services? What is the regulatory environment?  <i>Main tool: Cash Delivery Mechanism Assessment Tool (CDMAT); see the Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit</i>
<b>6. Costs and cost-efficiency</b>	What is the cost of delivering CBIs, as compared to using alternative response options? How do the costs vary between different transfer mechanisms?  <i>Main tools: Best practise summarised in the Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit</i>
<b>7. Skills and capacity</b>	What is the level of skills and internal capacity within the operation, across different functions? What additional internal capacity is needed?  <i>Main tool: Overview of steps to establish a cash-based intervention; see the Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit</i>

## 2.5 Calculating the transfer value

In voluntary repatriation contexts, the cash grant generally has three components: transport, basic consumption needs and one-off reintegration costs. The transport component is often provided in the country of asylum, whereas the cash component for reintegration and basic consumption needs is generally provided in one or more instalments in the country of origin, where there is a voluntary repatriation operation. Where there is no such organized UNHCR programme, these elements of the grant may be given in the country of asylum. These components are further detailed below.

### Calculating the value of the cash grant in voluntary repatriation



### Transport component

Depending on the context, the **transport component** may cover the total cost of transporting returnees and their belongings from the country of asylum back to the area of intended return in their country of origin, or it may cover only part of the journey.

In Rwanda, in 2017, UNHCR was providing transport from country of asylum to transit centres within the country of origin, and then on to Sector Centres (the administrative level above the village). A small transport grant was then provided, through the Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs (MIDIMAR), for the final journey from the Sector Centre to intended place of return.

In most cases, the size of the transport component corresponds to the distance travelled to reach the intended area of return. This component is usually distributed at the point of departure, as close to the time of departure as possible.

Somali returnees leaving Yemen are given their transportation allocation once they have boarded the boat ready for departure to Somalia. In some contexts, however, this portion of the grant is provided retrospectively once returnees have reached their country of origin (e.g. Afghanistan, Colombia, and Burundi).

The transport portion of the grant may also include an allocation to cover consumption needs during the journey, e.g. food, water and accommodation.

UNHCR provides support for returnees to travel to wherever they choose within their country of origin. In some operations, all returnees receive the same amount regardless of the distance travelled. The decision to give an average grant is taken for practical reasons, recognising that the amount given may not be enough to cover the total cost of the journey to the area of intended return for everyone. Whichever approach is adopted, the calculated value of the grant's transport component should be based on an assessment of transport costs to different areas in the country of origin. The first step is to get an idea of average costs through discussions with different transporters, truck and bus operators and government agencies. Assistance modalities should also be factored in to the costing scenarios. For example, if in-kind food assistance is being considered, this must be reflected in the average cost of transportation. Once essential price information has been collected, the decision can be made whether or not to give an average flat rate for the transport component.

In Afghanistan, the transport component of the grant is distributed once returnees have arrived back in the country, at one of the encashment centres. Here UNHCR records data about returnees – their area of intended return and any protection concerns – which is then used for follow-up protection monitoring. In addition, returnees can access other services at the encashment centres, such as health screening and mine awareness programmes. Returnees receive their reintegration component usually within a few hours of arrival. **When designing the transport element of the cash transfer, UNHCR Afghanistan conducted a detailed assessment in the seven regions across the country where there are UNHCR offices, acknowledging that costs vary in different markets. Two hundred returnees were interviewed to find out if the cash provided was enough to cover travel costs and essential needs on the journey back to their intended destination. In addition, a market assessment was conducted with truck drivers, transporters and other key informants.**

### Basic consumption needs and reintegration components

The Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) is fast becoming the most common method for influencing cash transfer values. Although there is currently no globally agreed upon standardized definition of MEB, in humanitarian settings it is usually defined by how much the average household in a given context requires in monetary terms to meet their basic needs on a regular basis<sup>6</sup>. It commonly includes food, water, housing and utilities, clothes, communication and transport, education and basic health care needs. The **“basic consumption needs component”** usually covers the portion of the MEB that cannot be covered by returnees themselves and which is not provided for by other actors, including Government, for a given period of time (commonly between three and six months). It is disbursed in one or several instalments. Where national safety nets exist, the grant size could be aligned with national standards to avoid disparity.

Where there is no MEB, the national poverty line or governmental social safety net allocation can be used to establish the grant size for this component.

When returning to their country of origin, refugees will incur one-off costs and costs relating to essential needs that may arise within the context of voluntary repatriation programmes, which make up the **“reintegration component”** of the grant. MEBs usually do not account for these needs, or for the additional requirements of persons with specific needs. They need to be accounted for separately and added to the final grant as part of the reintegration component.

Reintegration costs may be related to the following examples:

- Obtaining documentation relating to births, deaths and marriages occurring in country of asylum
- Obtaining national identity documents
- Re-acquisition of housing, land and property which was occupied by others or unlawfully sold while in country of asylum



- Repairing houses which have fallen into disrepair
- Buying or renting a house and/or land
- Capital investment in livelihood start up (e.g. seeds and tools, livestock, bicycles, goods for trading, etc.)
- Health insurance
- Children's vaccinations
- Education – uniforms and school materials
- Recognition of academic or professional qualifications obtained abroad
- Transport – travel to the administrative centre for documentation or for the judicial system

UNHCR will decide which gaps in expenditure the cash grant aims to fill. Refugees will be returning to different parts of a country, and it is expected that the cost of items and services included in the MEB and in the reintegration grant may vary considerably depending on location. Prices will differ in rural and urban areas, and between rural areas. For example, the cost of rent may be much higher in urban areas when compared with rural areas. In remote locations, prices may be inflated due to high transport costs. These variations should be factored into the cash transfer value calculations. An **average of prices** taken from the main markets in areas of intended return should be used to reflect these national variations.

In addition, UNHCR will need to be aware of **seasonal fluctuations** in prices and needs, particularly in rural economies. Prices collected will reflect market conditions at a specific point in time. For example, noting when the food costs outlined in the MEB were collected will help guide necessary adjustments. If the MEB is conducted soon after the harvest, prices are likely to be lower than the rest of the year, whereas the same exercise conducted in the weeks just prior to harvest will record higher food costs. One option for ensuring the cash transfer value reflects this fluctuation would be to take an average of highest and lowest prices to use as the basis for calculating the food basket element.

NOTE: When using average prices, UNHCR will need to recognise that inevitably some returnees will receive approximately the right amount, while some will receive more and some less than the amount identified to cover their basic needs.

## 3. CONSIDERATIONS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

### 3.1 Shelter

Analysis of various voluntary repatriation operations shows that in most contexts, organising shelter is a priority for returning refugees. Shelter cost, however, is often the largest cost they face. For this reason, if identified as a key priority, it is recommended that UNHCR make a specific calculation of the shelter needs it proposes to cover, with a portion of the overall cash grant being given with this purpose in mind.

### 3.2 Income-generating and livelihood opportunities

UNHCR will need to analyse returnees' potential income-generating opportunities and coping mechanisms (at both individual and household levels) to gauge the speed at which they will be able to re-establish their livelihoods on return. This information can be useful in determining the proportion and duration of the MEB that the cash transfer intends to cover. Individuals may have acquired new skills while in the country of asylum, which they could use on return if there is sufficient demand. UNHCR also needs to bear in mind the potential use of the cash grant as an initial capital investment for income-generating activities. In addition, UNHCR will need to examine traditional social support networks and mechanisms, which are significant in many contexts.

### 3.3 Duration

Each UNHCR country operation will need to determine the length of time the cash grant is intended to last, the number of instalments and the exit strategy. The time frame will depend on levels of support available in areas of intended return – both from government and other sources, and from people's own resources. Setting out the maximum time the cash grant is intended to last helps to manage returnee, partner and donor expectations regarding what returnees can realistically achieve with the grant. UNHCR needs to provide clear messaging as to what is achievable with the cash grant and how it must be complemented by longer-term inclusion of returnees into national development planning and national systems.

### 3.4 Currency

In general, local currencies should be used for the disbursement of voluntary repatriation grants. Basic needs and reintegration components provided in the country of origin should be paid in that country's currency upon return. If transport or other parts of the grant are paid in the country of asylum, the currency of the country of asylum should be used. However, the decision will depend on context. For example, refugees returning to Colombia from Venezuela receive their grant in Colombian currency (pesos). For returns to Sri Lanka, local currency (rupees) is used, and refugees returning to Myanmar from Thailand receive their grant in Thai currency (baht), following returnees' preferences. In exceptional cases, the cash grant may be disbursed in foreign currency.

### 3.5 Flat rate

In contexts of large voluntary repatriation operations, providing different grant sizes based on where returnees will settle is generally not feasible. This practice could also potentially lead to tension between recipients.

Although it is accepted that there are higher costs associated with living in urban compared to rural areas, differentiating the grant size according to area of intended return is not recommended. Having higher rates in urban areas may increase the likelihood of returnees inaccurately reporting their area of intended return.



It may also encourage returnees to return to areas where the highest cash transfer is on offer. In practical terms, it would also be difficult to implement. Use of a flat rate – where returnees receive the same level of cash grant regardless of intended destination – is recommended.

It is generally agreed that there is no particular reason to give a larger grant to adults than to children; apart from people identified as having specific needs, every returnee could receive the same amount, regardless of age.

### 3.6 Maximum per household

In general, the cash grant should be calculated to include all members of a family, regardless of size. If a cap on the maximum amount per household is used, care should be taken to ensure that this does not lead to families being split in order to avoid the amount they receive as a family being capped.

### 3.7 Regular review of grant value

Prices fluctuate and markets change. In some contexts, high inflation rates will mean that the cash grant may not hold its value for long, especially where repatriation programmes have been ongoing for several years. In these contexts, UNHCR in the country of origin will need to examine market prices and trends in inflation to review the cash transfer value every 12–24 months. An evaluation of the impact of the cash grant in Afghanistan recommended a ‘bi-annual adjustment to size of the grant to maintain purchasing power for returnees’<sup>7</sup>. In addition, a mechanism could be introduced whereby once inflation rates reach a certain level (e.g. 5–10%), a review of the cost of the MEB and therefore the transfer value of the reintegration grant is triggered.

Changes in available budgets leading to frequent changes in the cash transfer value (whether increases or decreases), however, can have major implications for returnees and can be a potential cause of friction. Regular changes in value can also have knock-on effects on UNHCR’s implementing partners. If the cash transfer value is changed regularly, it is important to document the process clearly and ensure clear messaging to returnees, particularly around the criteria used as the basis for changes. Budgetary sustainability should be considered in any decision to increase the cash transfer value.

### 3.8 Delivery mechanisms

UNHCR should choose the most appropriate delivery mechanism, based on mapping and assessment of financial services. Decisions surrounding the most appropriate modality will be the same as for other types of cash grants<sup>8</sup>. Preference should systematically be given to delivery mechanisms that further financial inclusion of the returnees, such as returnee-owned bank or mobile money accounts. Advocacy may be required among regulators, such as the Central Bank, to ensure returnees will have access to formal means of payment. These and other digitised means of payment may reduce security risks for returnee households because the cash disbursement is less visible. Where in-kind assistance may not be feasible due to cost or logistical constraints, these means may provide an opportunity to deliver assistance over time. They often enable automated reporting and hence better control and audit trail of the disbursed cash.

Where there are governmental safety nets or other large scale cash programmes in place, the delivery mechanism used by Government or others should be considered. If there are no systems yet in place, UNHCR should coordinate with other interested actors and set up common cash systems that can also be used by other UN agencies and partners.

### 3.9 Sequencing of disbursement and number of instalments

In discussions with refugees, UNHCR operations may want to consider whether to provide the grant in one payment or several instalments. Despite its higher administrative costs, providing the grant in instalments may be indicated particularly in contexts where returnees’ financial literacy and budgeting experience are limited, or where they may face pressure from others arising from receipt of one significant lump sum. In these cases, for example, the first instalment could be larger to cover initial one-off costs associated with return – 50% of the total value – followed by two more instalments of 30% and 20% after 3 months and 6 months respectively.

The transport component of the return grant is often provided in one instalment in the country of asylum. The basic consumption needs and the reintegration components may be provided in one or more instalments.

### 3.10 Targeting strategy and determining eligibility

Within the broader refugee population, UNHCR identifies particular individuals with specific needs. In some contexts, persons with specific needs receive an additional cash amount to address particular challenges they may face in the return context, if these needs represent an additional cost for the household. In general, however, within voluntary repatriation operations, UNHCR targets the whole returning population (blanket targeting). With the evolution of guidance on CBI and experience with vulnerability-based targeting, UNHCR could consider developing this concept in the provision of cash grants in future large voluntary repatriation scenarios.

### 3.11 Coordinate and harmonise assistance between different population groups

In many instances, there will be refugees returning to the same location from different countries as well as those who have been internally displaced and may not be receiving support from UNHCR. Some people may not have left at all. In some contexts returning refugees are perceived as significantly better off than the host communities. UNHCR needs to monitor whether the assistance given to returnees is creating or exacerbating friction between these population groups and ensure that all returning refugees receive the same basic consumption support and reintegration components of the grant, irrespective of their country of asylum. Linking up to and implementing area-based programming can help in this regard.

It is important to collaborate with humanitarian actors in countries of origin to ensure coherent assistance across population groups, as well as with national governments and development actors to monitor the inclusion of returning refugees in existing national social safety nets. Coordination can also maximize the use of resources, which could include joint activities such as feasibility assessments, defining the MEB or common delivery mechanisms.

UNHCR may also need to consider whether it is appropriate to provide cash grants to returnees whose return was self-organised, if they can be verified by UNHCR data in their country of asylum.

## 4. ISSUES TO CONSIDER DURING THE PLANNING PHASE

### 4.1 Put refugees at the centre

Full participation of, and regular consultation with, prospective returnees to identify likely needs on return is essential. Returnees themselves are best placed to know what needs they will likely be able to meet themselves, either through their own resources or by drawing on support from social and kinship networks. They are also best placed to know what the likely gaps will be. By placing refugees at the centre of the process, and ensuring that learning and adaptation of the programme is based on their feedback, UNHCR will increase the likelihood of meeting the voluntary repatriation programme's objectives, of which the cash grant is one element.

### 4.2 Start planning early

Where possible, UNHCR should start planning for the assessments that underpin calculation of the cash grant some months before the organised voluntary repatriation is due to start. Given that negotiation of tripartite agreements can take a long time, it is advisable to start planning once those negotiations are underway. In addition, contracting a financial service provider for cash delivery commonly takes several months, and it is strongly recommended that procurement start at around the same time<sup>9</sup>.

### 4.3 Use information from country of origin and country of asylum

The design of a voluntary repatriation programme including cash grants must consider up-to-date information from both country of origin and country of asylum. UNHCR needs to work closely with government and other key stakeholders to form an accurate picture of areas of intended return. An inclusive approach throughout the process is advisable. This information can form the foundation for identifying priority areas (sectors and geographical areas) and help determine the areas' absorption capacity. UNHCR in country of origin can draw on prospective returnee profiling exercises that have been conducted in country of asylum, including information on returnees' education and skill levels and associated capacity for resuming livelihood activities. This can be combined with information on the length of time prospective returnees have been displaced as well as their access to housing, land and property. All these factors will influence the speed at which returnees are likely to be able to resume livelihood activities in areas of intended destination.

Table 1 sets out a checklist (not exhaustive) of information to obtain from country of origin and country of asylum.<sup>10</sup>

Table 1: Checklist of information required, with possible sources

	Programme Phase	Information required	Possible sources
Country of Origin	Needs, Capacities and Risk Assessment	Security assessment – extent of infrastructural damage in areas of intended return	Government ministries (e.g. Ministry of Social Welfare, Disaster Management, Ministry of Trade and Development etc.); UN agencies; World Bank
		National development plans, national social protection system and safety nets, including returnees' access to social protection and safety nets	Ministry of Social Welfare, Disaster Management, Cash Working Group, Ministry of Planning and Development, Central Bank (for Know Your Customer requirements)
		Humanitarian and development agencies operating in different areas, including CBI, sector and target group; Mapping of social safety nets and ongoing CBI, including delivery mechanisms, grant size, objectives, and coverage.	UN Clusters, Government agencies, NGO partner agencies, Cash Working Group, World Bank
		Service provision and gaps in areas of intended return	Government ministries of country of origin (e.g. Ministry of Social Welfare, Disaster Management, Ministry of Trade and Development etc.); UN agencies; civil society actors
	Operational Feasibility of CBI	Protection issues and risks in main areas of intended return, including legal barriers and/or barriers to accessing services, access to markets	UNHCR; National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs); Ombudsman's Offices; INGOs/NGOs
		Community support mechanisms	Ministry of Social Welfare, NGO partner agencies, UNHCR in country of asylum (refugee profiling)
		Wage rates and national poverty line	Government ministries (e.g. Ministry of Trade); UN partner agencies (WFP/FAO), World Bank
		Inflation rates	World Bank; Government (e.g. Ministry of Trade)
	Calculating the Transfer Value	Markets (trends in market prices of items in Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) from main areas of intended return; availability of goods and services)	Market assessments conducted by UNHCR or partners in areas of intended return; Market price monitoring – WFP/FAO; Government market price monitoring; Cash Working Group
		Transport costs (including road taxes) from likely entry point into country of origin to main areas of intended return; Costs of essential food, water and accommodation during return journey and at area of return	Government ministries (e.g. Ministry of Transport and Roads); transport companies Goods and services providers, Cost of living surveys, Ministry of Social Welfare, NGOs, UN, World Bank
		Reintegration costs: one-off expenditures that may exist beyond the MEB (e.g. administrative fees for documentation, education, rental or land costs, livelihood, etc.)	Goods and services providers, Cost of living surveys, Ministry of Social Welfare, NGOs, UN, World Bank
	Country of Asylum	Needs, Capacities and Risk Assessment	Minimum Expenditure Basket National poverty line Transfer values of governmental social safety nets
Prospective returnees' level of education and skill training received			UNHCR and partner agencies
Length of time of displacement			UNHCR and partner agencies (refugee profiling)
Prospective returnees' expectations of return			UNHCR and partner agencies (intentions surveys; participatory assessments)
		Returnees' asset profiles (access to housing, land or property, etc.)	UNHCR and partner agencies

## 4.4 Regional coherence

To ensure a coherent situational approach to the provision of cash grants to returnees to the same country of origin from different countries of asylum, a harmonized approach and strong co-ordination between UNHCR offices in sending and receiving countries is needed. The goal is for all returning refugees, irrespective of their country of asylum, to be eligible to receive the same levels of assistance for reintegration purposes once they are back in their country of origin.

## 5. MONITORING

In addition to protection monitoring in return, the provision, use and outcomes of the cash grant should be monitored. Specific areas to monitor include changes in needs and vulnerabilities, the assumptions that inform the MEB and cash transfer value, changes in market conditions, and impacts on individuals, households, communities and the local economy.

### 5.1 Set up the monitoring system from the start

The monitoring system should be put in place from the outset of the operation. The most efficient way of doing this will be to integrate cash post-distribution monitoring into already functioning systems of protection monitoring in return, if such a system is in place. This will ensure a single exercise, particularly with regard to household surveys that are carried out. Post-distribution monitoring (PDM) of the cash grant will complement protection monitoring in return more broadly. At a minimum, operations should ensure coherence between the design of PDM and protection monitoring in return frameworks. PDM should be conducted 15–20 days after the cash grant is received.

The standard UNHCR CBI PDM tools, including a household questionnaire (also available in Kobo) and focus group discussion guidelines, should be used and adapted to the context.

When adapting the CBI PDM for voluntary repatriation grants, the operations may want to distinguish between various components of the grant (transport, reintegration and basic consumption needs), and consider e.g. Focus Group Discussions for additional questions, such as:

#### *Transportation component*

- Did the transport enable you to return to your preferred destination of choice?
- Was the transportation grant able to cover all the transportation costs of your journey?
- Was the transportation grant able to cover all costs related to your essential needs (e.g. food and accommodation) during the journey to your destination?
- Did you feel unsafe or at risk during the journey to your final destination?

#### *Reintegration component*

- How long did the cash grant last?
- How long did you expect it last?
- In what areas did you find that the cash grant assisted your return? For example:
  - In acquiring civil documentation (e.g. national identification, birth registration, marriage certificate)?
  - In accessing administrative or legal services (legal aid fees; fees for applications to HLP restitution processes, etc.)?
  - In access to national health services? (e.g. insurance, medicines, consultation fees)
  - In acquiring productive assets? (e.g. land, equipment, necessities for business startup, etc.)
  - For building or accessing shelter for your household? (e.g. buying land, house, building materials or equipment, rent, etc.)
  - For education?

Information collected on returnees' perceptions of the cash transfer value and duration should be analysed when the cash modality is reviewed and fed back to the decision makers responsible for setting the cash transfer value and duration.

Monitoring shall also include questions on markets. In many contexts, government departments and other stakeholders collect market price information which can be used, instead of relying on primary data collection. Existing UNHCR market monitoring tools should be used to track changes in prices of goods included in the MEB, if these prices are not collected by the Government or other actors. Regular monitoring of transport prices will also need to be conducted, to ensure that the transport element of the grant keeps pace with market changes.

### 5.2 Monitoring in disparate areas

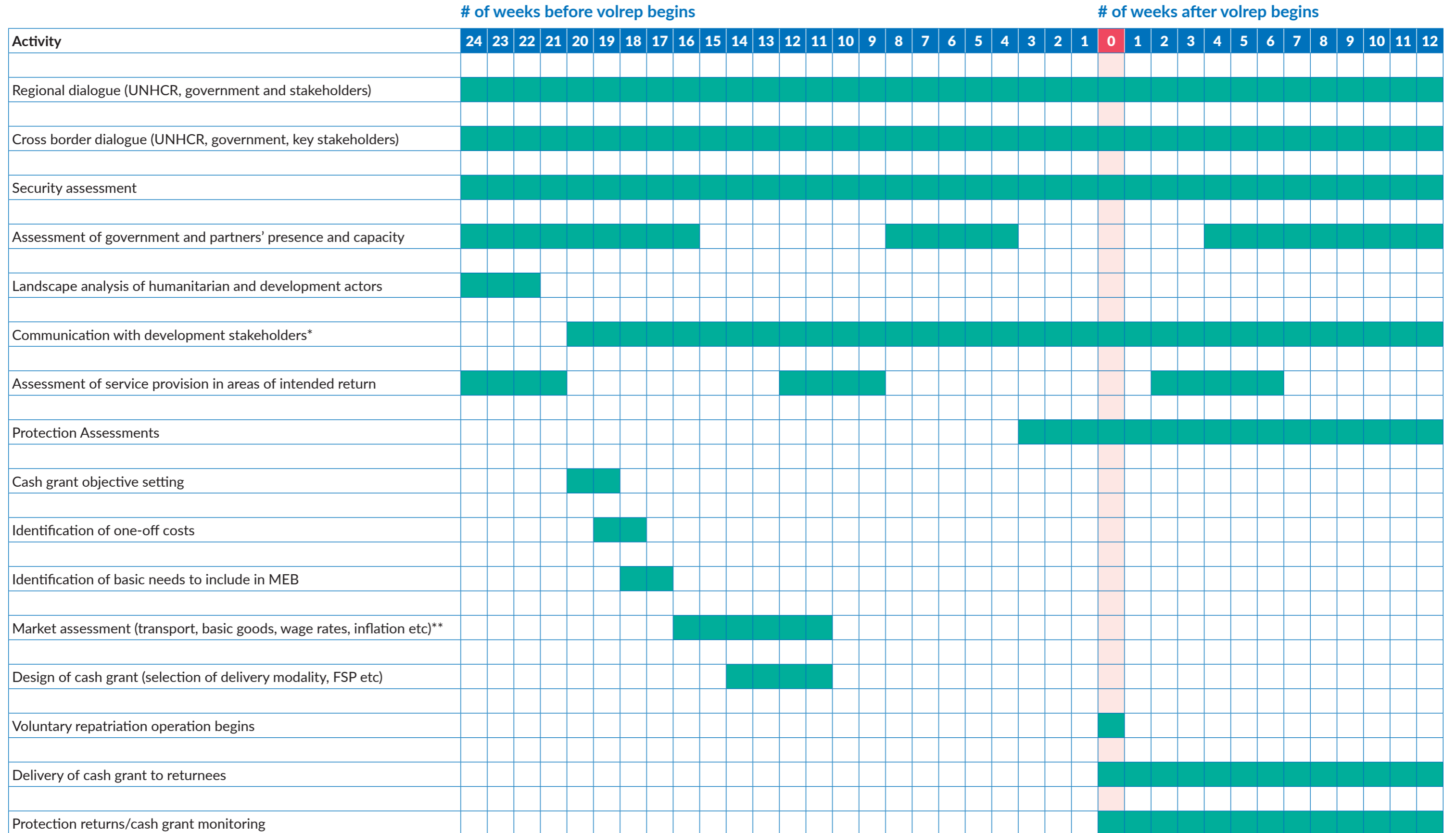
If designing a new monitoring system, it is important to recognise that refugees return to villages and towns across a wide geographical area. When large numbers of returnees are involved, maintaining access to *all* returnees will not be feasible or cost efficient; however, setting up a system whereby UNHCR will monitor a sample of returnees once they have received their cash grants is possible. Provision of SIM cards and/or mobile phones to a sample of returnees in exchange for their participation in monitoring surveys is a common method to circumvent the difficulties associated with monitoring disparate groups of people. Country operations will design their monitoring systems based on access, resources and objectives. This could include working through community-based intermediaries or other partners.



### 5.3 Feedback and response system<sup>11</sup>

A mechanism for recording feedback – which includes comments, suggestions and complaints – from returnees should be integrated into existing feedback and response systems.

Returnees must be aware of these mechanisms in order to inform UNHCR of any issues, including those relating to the cash grant. Discussion of challenges and lessons learned can inform subsequent phases of the operation.



Notes: \* Refers to development stakeholders in areas of intended return

\*\* 6 weeks should be sufficient to undertake market assessment in different areas of intended return

# ENDNOTES

1. For the remainder of this document, references to 'country of origin' include countries of former habitual residence for stateless people.
2. See UNHCR (2018), Multi-Purpose Cash and Sectoral Outcomes: Afghanistan Case Study, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-case-study-multi-purpose-cash-and-sectoral-outcomes>
3. Refer to UNHCR and partners (2015) 'Operational Guidance and Toolkit for Multipurpose Cash Grant', available at [www.cashlearning.org/mpg-toolkit/](http://www.cashlearning.org/mpg-toolkit/), and (2017) 'Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit', available at <http://www.unhcr.org/5a8429317>
4. See UNHCR (2017) 'Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit' for further guidance
5. Ibid
6. See UNHCR and partners (2015) 'Operational Guidance and Toolkit for Multipurpose Cash Grants', p. 22.
7. See Altai Consulting (2009) 'UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Programme: Evaluation of the Impact of the Cash Grant'.
8. Refer to UNHCR (2017) 'Cash Feasibility and Response Analysis Toolkit' and "UNHCR Cash Delivery Assessment Mechanism Toolkit", <http://www.unhcr.org/598c69db7>
9. Extensive guidance on procurement of Financial Service Providers for CBI is available on UNHCR Supply and Procurement website.
10. Government institutions and humanitarian and development agencies may already be collecting this information. Draw on these secondary sources where possible and if reliable.
11. "At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will establish and promote feedback and response systems, including for confidential complaints," UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity (2018), p. 9, <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/women/5aa13c0c7/policy-age-genderdiversity-accountability-2018.html>

