Food Security and Agriculture Cluster
Afghanistan

POST DISTRIBUTION MONITORING: - Guidelines to Monitor processes, outputs and outcomes

A guide for the Afghanistan Cash & Voucher Working Group

George Bete: - August 2013

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Introduction

As in the traditional in-kind distributions, where agencies monitor the food distribution processes, the Cash Transfer Programmes (CTPs) should also be monitored through a Post Cash Distribution exercise generally referred to as the Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM). In fragile environments were security can deteriorate easily, PDM's purpose can be misinterpreted by other stakeholders, if not carefully explained. PDM may affect vested interests of some stakeholders who have in the past managed to divert assistance. In the same line, in areas were issues to do with re-distribution of aid (*where community cohesion and sharing is regarded as a culture*), it can be seen as a vehicle for opposing sub-clan interests. Therefore, if not handled well, it can provoke security risks for an Agency's staff, and also for beneficiaries of a cash programme.

PDMs are means by which an Agency can establish whether the beneficiaries of a project have received their entitled cash payments. It is also a way to clarify the mode of utilization of cash. PDMs reflects whether the cash was; shared (*issues of distribution of aid in Afghanistan are reported to be high*), spend or saved. This type of monitoring also assists managers to find out types of problems the beneficiaries faced during distribution and to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the distribution process. Some questions can be asked in order to obtain a more general idea of the beneficiaries' appreciation of the distribution system, the distributing agency, the amount received, the beneficiaries' coping mechanisms and their socio-economic situation.

Approach and Rationale

These guidelines aim to guide the Cash & Voucher Working Group Members (CVWG) in data collection during PDM exercises for Cash Based Programmes (CBPs). The guidelines are suggestions of how the PDM can be contacted to measure the change on the situation of beneficiaries of cash assistance. Like in assessments of any type, the local context should be considered in making key decisions of how best to approach communities in carrying the PDMs, hence the guidelines aim to guide agencies on considerations which can be useful in PDMs, but not necessarily handicap them in making contextually appropriate judgments or decisions.

What are PDMs

Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) is a tool which aims at systematic collection and analysis of information of the project as it progresses. It provides management with valid information which they can use to assess the efficiency of various inputs of the project and effectiveness of that project in terms of meeting the set objectives. It provides a whole range of information from targeting, registration, obtaining information on the usage of cash transferring modalities and the usage of the Community Help Desks at distribution points. It also assesses the beneficiary's satisfaction with registration and distribution processes.

PDM is a project control mechanism tool- feeding into the project cycle.

Its results are largely quantitative, and highlight broad trends in order to inform programming. Data is collected through interviews with individual (or group of) beneficiaries based on a sample survey format. Results of a PDM are used to feed back into the project cycle in order to improve the way assistance is designed and delivered, responsive to the preferences of beneficiaries and sensitive to potential protection risks and market distortions that could be caused by the Cash assistance.

Why PDMS

i. *To reinforce accountability:* checking whether the agreed amount of cash has been received by the *intended* beneficiaries and also to check whether diversion of cash or its re-

distribution took place. PDMs gather any complaints by beneficiaries on the whole CTP system compelling an agency to employ corrective measures.

ii. *To improve programming:* assessing whether the cash payments were the most appropriate type of assistance, and therefore whether cash should be adjusted or whether alternative assistance should be provided. In order to do so, PDM asks beneficiaries their views on the value of the cash received in relation to the intended uses which are stipulated in the programme design. PDMs also investigates whether the recipients of the cash would have preferred (or now prefer) in-kind instead of cash. They verify the actual use of the cash - whether it was;

   a) used for the intended objective or was diverted to other needs,

   b) kept/saved,

   c) shared/re-distributed,

   d) used for debt repayment, etc,

iii. *To improve cash payments methodologies:* PDMs identifying strengths and weaknesses of the current system versus other forms of cash payments with the aim of making improvements in future CTPs. PDM checks whether beneficiaries were provided accurate and timely information; how long they queued/waited to receive their cash; and asks the recipients their opinion on how well the payment was organised,

iv. *To identify and prevent protection risks:* monitoring whether cash distributions created protection risks for the beneficiaries. PDM asks whether beneficiaries had their security threatened, before, during and after the cash payments. It asks whether indirect expropriation (e.g. by warlords) took place, including price rises on basic goods in the markets. Depending on the sampling methodology used, data could be analysed to understand whether there have been cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, or other breaches of humanitarian/ or an agency's Code of Conduct, triggering senior staff to conduct a more in-depth investigation. Data collected can also reflect on issues to do with household and community relations coming as a result of cash received by the recipients.

Basing on the discussion above, a summary of PDM Objectives can be presented as:

i. Determine effectiveness of the activity and it's process in relation to address needs of the community,

ii. Identify shortcomings in implementation process,

iii. Identify achievements and highlight them (acknowledge and celebrate success),

iv. Enabling project implementers and managers to review progress made,

The PDM Process: - what to consider when collecting data

a. Locations & Time frame: - linking the PDM to the cash payments

PDM for cash transfer programmes should be done taking into consideration the time which beneficiaries of the programme would take to utilise the money after receiving the payments. In this regard, the objectives of the programme come into play. If the money is intended for immediate needs then the PDM should be done immediately after the cash payments, at least two to three weeks after the cash distribution.

In the event that the cash payments are meant to assist beneficiaries in establishing livelihoods, for example starting a business, then the time in which the PDM could be carried may be extended. This is to give beneficiaries ample time to utilise the cash before the Post distribution exercise is carried out. On a different note, PDMs should mirror the sites and beneficiaries who would have received the cash payments. However in each site, not all of them can be interviewed. Thus, a representative sample has to be interviewed per each location (see sampling below). The suggested approach for selecting the locations should be biased towards areas where cash has been distributed.

b. Sampling: - Sample Selection

In most cases it is not possible to survey every beneficiary during a PDM exercise because it is too costly and time-consuming. Therefore, a sample has to be chosen. Sampling means collecting data from a group in the population that is representative of the whole (in this case picking a few beneficiaries from an area/village/location).

Sampling can be likened to eating a bowl of rice where you only have to try one spoonful to know if the food is good enough to eat.

During the exercise, data collectors can employ a mix of both random sampling and purposive sampling methodologies in soliciting for information from respondents within the operational areas. Purposive sampling will ensure that specific conditions that are important in shaping the findings are considered (*for example for the PDM focus is only on the households that received cash under the CBP activities*) while random sampling ensures reduced bias on information obtained from the beneficiaries within the purposively targeted areas.

A sample size has to be considered. In selecting it, it should be borne in mind that the PDM survey is meant to give an idea of what happened post the cash distribution. As such, it attempts to measure issues of satisfaction, accountability and also appropriateness of CBPs. The PDM seeks to attribute the change that happens in the community to the project activities hence its works, as evidence of project outcomes and immediate impact. Therefore, the sample must be large enough to comfortably assume that it is fairly representative of the majority of the population and small enough not to misled programmes by making misguided interpolation and correlations. In the final data collection exercise valid conclusions should be drawn about the whole beneficiary group from studying only a fraction (a sample) of the distribution beneficiaries provided that:

i. the sample is of SUFFICIENT SIZE to satisfy the assumptions of the statistical techniques used,

ii. the sample is REPRESENTATIVE of the qualities/characteristics of the total number of beneficiaries,

c. Data collection tools

There are several ways to gather the information, of which one is the so-called quick appraisal technique, which mainly uses oriented discussions with the CTP beneficiaries in groups or on an individual basis. Structured questionnaires can also be used in collecting the data. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) can be carried out with groups of beneficiaries selected on the basis of sex, age, occupation or a combination.

For structured interviews, the main tool for data collection is a questionnaire (on individual basis) or an interview guide (in case of a FGD-see Annex 1 for a sample). Information has to be gathered from informed beneficiaries of the project. Hence, we suggest that the preferred respondents to the household questionnaire be an adult figure in the household or a child aged at least 12 years in case of orphans. An example of questions which could be asked during a PDM exercise is in Table 1 below. The data collection methods for each set of questions have been provided in the same table.

Table 1: Suggested PDM Questions

Key questions	Methods/Indicators
• Was cash delivered safely and spent safely? • Were any security issues reported as a result of the distribution itself or increased cash on the market? • Were any recipients disadvantaged by the cash payment system?	• Interviews, focus group discussions, analysis of any security incidents, • accessibility of transfer mechanism, • distance to distribution point, • focus on potential discrimination against particular groups in the transfer mechanism,
• Was there any abuse of cash by agency staff, local elites or authorities involved in targeting or distribution?	• Interviews, focus group discussions ,
• What were recipients' views on the use of cash? • If both cash and in- kind assistance were available, which option did recipients prefer? • What were the views of non-recipients?	• Interviews and focus group discussions, with special attention to the reasons for any preferences.
• How cost-effective was cash compared to in-kind alternatives? • How did the cash project coordinate with other interventions?	• Cost-effectiveness analysis, • Mapping of other interventions, • Interviews with other aid agencies working in the area, • Interviews with agency staff working on other

	projects, • Interviews with affected communities about the range of interventions.
• Where and how accessible were the markets where cash was spent? • Did any recipients find it difficult to reach markets (distance, time)?	• Interviews, surveys, focus group discussions, • Distance to market, • Time taken to purchase goods, • Focus on potentially vulnerable people such as the elderly and the disabled.
• How have prices changed? • Were prices influenced by the cash transfer?	• Market price monitoring.
• What was the impact of cash transfers (positive or negative) on the local economy?	• Interviews with traders and local businesses.

The above mentioned list of questions/observation does not pretend to be exhaustive. "Adaptation" of the above to specific situations is possible. Any other observation can be of interest, don't forget to write it down!! Meanwhile, a summary of focus areas from which further questions can be developed, especially for a food security programme are presented in Table 2.

d. Data Collectors: - consider gender and culture

When considering who to use as a data collector, it is best to consider skills such as communication and the ability to get on with the community in terms of ability to speak the local language and also ensure gender mix. Depending on the context, sometimes women are not free to talk to men or men cannot interview women so this needs to be considered. Never assume that everyone knows how to ask questions using a questionnaire. It is worth taking the time to do training on questionnaires, asking questions, not using positive or negative body language. This gives everyone a chance to familiarize themselves with the tool and ensure quality of the data to be collected.

e. Data entry and analysis: - refine data to represent reality

We suggest that the data entry should be done in a scientific way, on excel spreadsheets, or on Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). Data analysis following after the entry should reflect what is on the ground.

❖ In addition to the sample questions in Table 1, for a food security programme, Agencies can consider to focus on the areas in Table 2 below to formulate questions.

Table 2: Examples of the type of information that can be collected for a PDM (Food Security Programme)

Commodity (food) accessibility by men and women	• What access do people have to their own resources and to markets? • Have crops and food stocks been destroyed, or looted? • Who in the household is not receiving sufficient food? • Are there opportunities for causal labour? What wages are paid?
Food control and surplus in the household	• Has there been an increase of domestic violence due to food shortage and the coping strategies adopted? • Who decides how much food/livestock will be sold and how much will be kept for household consumption? • What are the constraints for women to decide on household food use?
Changes in food intake for household members	• To what extent has access to safe drinking water and fuel wood changed? • Which households face the greatest difficulty in accessing food? (Are female-headed households particularly vulnerable?) • In which households are adults suffering from malnutrition? • Has there been a change in the weight of newborn babies? Which households have the lowest weight babies?
Security situation	• How has geographical mobility changed? What has been the effect on women in particular? • How are people accessing basic food and non-food items, water and fuel wood? • What type of activities cannot be carried out because of insecurity? • What can the community do to increase the feeling of security?

Areas to be aware of when conducting a PDM execersise in a fragile environment:

i. *ensure the integrity of PDM results;*

- the purpose of the PDM should be explained to the beneficiaries as well as to other key project stakeholders. Consider doing this during project inception meetings or during stakeholders and community orientation sessions on project kick off.

ii. *reduce security risks for the Agency's staff and of beneficiaries;*

- Situational and Stakeholder analysis should be conducted by the concerned agency's office before each payment, including of clan identities and political affiliations of

stakeholders, and of their relative power. Such analysis may help an agency's decision-making on whether payments could create protection risks for beneficiaries, and highlight whether stakeholders could create security risks to prevent or disturb any monitoring process in the future (including the PDM process),

iii. strengthen accountability to beneficiaries and donors,

- Providing accurate information to beneficiaries before and during a payment on how much they should receive. This is a key way to improve transparency with beneficiaries, and also reduces opportunities for fraud,
- The results of PDM should be shared with the beneficiaries by the concerned organisation for their feedback,
- Donors should be offered regular briefings on PDM results, and provided access to all related data,

Reference

1. Monitoring & Evaluation Guidelines:- **United Nations World Food Programme** Office of Evaluation **Web Site:** www.wfp.org, **E-mail:** wfpinfo@wfp.org:- http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ko/mekb_module_8.pdf

2. UNHCR Non-Food Items (NFI) Post Distribution Monitoring Guidelines, www.eshelter-cccmhaiti.info/pdf/toolkit_en_9293571.pdf