



‘Cash-Based Assistance Programmes for Internally Displaced Persons in the Kabul Informal Settlements’

An Evaluation for WHH and DRC – May 2014





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ACRONYMS

AFA	Afghanis (1 US Dollar is currently worth 57 Afghanis)
Bn	Baseline Sample Size
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ECHO	Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department of the European Commission
En	Endline Sample Size
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
KIS	Kabul Informal Settlement
KIS TF	Kabul Informal Settlement Task Force
Mn	Midline Sample Size
MoRR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
M-PAISA	Mobile money transfer system
NFI	Non-Food Item
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SI	Solidarités International
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USD	US Dollar
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHH	Welthungerhilfe (previously known as German Agro Action)
WHO	World Health Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trends recorded in early 2014 confirm the rising humanitarian needs of Afghans displaced by conflict, natural disasters and man-made disasters: 650,000 Afghans are known to be internally displaced¹. Forced to leave their homes, IDPs gravitate for protection to urban centres. Kabul ranks first in this forced migration scenario: the capital city holds 56% of the urban population with 80% of the population residing in informal settlements². Within this population, IDPs are particularly vulnerable.

Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) are actively providing, in the Kabul Informal Settlements (KIS), targeted assistance to enhance the livelihood potential of IDP households. This is achieved through food and non-food items, direct cash assistance and in-kind donations. During the harsh winters, WHH and DRC work with members of the KIS Task Force to coordinate emergency response and a comprehensive winterization plan.

To improve aid delivery and effectiveness, WHH piloted during the 2013/2014 winter a mobile-based cash assistance programme aimed at supporting IDP families living in the KIS using Roshan's M-PAISA service.

To assess the strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages of these cash-based assistance modalities – and to draw on lessons learned for future programming in support of IDPs in urban informal settlements – WHH and DRC have commissioned *Samuel Hall* to undertake an evaluation of the 2013/2014 winter's cash interventions through a three-phased approach including a baseline, midline and endline survey.

This research is part of *Samuel Hall's* expertise on migration and displacement research, and part of its Urban Studies Programme 2014.

Given the recent introduction of mobile cash assistance in the KIS, the methodology designed is dedicated to evaluate user perceptions, as well as provide key impact and vulnerability indicators to help implementers refine the technology for future assistance. This executive summary provides the key findings of the study.



Image 1: Beneficiaries in New Parliament

¹ UNHCR, 2014. *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement* – January Monthly Update

² WB, 2014. *Afghanistan : Urban Land Management Reform in Kabul*

I. A positive evaluation of the impact of cash-based assistance for IDPs in the KIS but a lack of “local credentials” to be addressed in future programming

The evaluation shows that the WHH/DRC pilot project was successful in assisting IDPs’ winter needs, with an excellent technical implementation and positive satisfaction rates among beneficiaries. This pilot paves the way for a more ambitious programme – targeting more sites and more beneficiaries.

Yet, **the concept of M-Paisa/Mobile cash transfer is poorly understood by beneficiaries** – the need is for more community awareness-raising and mobilization, training and information sharing on the benefits of this technology and type of assistance (especially as compared to more ‘traditional’ assistance mechanisms). *“If NGOs working in the KIS want more buy-in from communities and beneficiaries, they have to explain them, step by step, why and how M-Paisa (Roshan) or M-Hawala (Etisalat) can reduce the influence of middle-men and avoid food diversion, for instance. It has not been done enough on this project, whereas DFID had specifically asked (the implementing NGOs) to convey this message” (Telecommunications Expert and ex-Roshan Sales Manager).*

II. Taking stock of limitations and constraints for a more robust programme roll-out

The research team, in this report, highlights a set of key limitations and constraints to inform future programming. These have been framed around four key vulnerabilities:

- **Vulnerability Variable 1 – Gender:** Female IDPs can be empowered through mobile phones and mobile cash transfers: only 35% of female respondents said that they owned their cell phone. Men tend to hold the main “communications tool” of the family, as such, the mobile cash transfer initiative may represent an opportunity to socially empower female beneficiaries.

Sensitization and training efforts should target female beneficiaries as they show a low understanding of *how* to withdraw money, and lag behind on *when* to draw money: while a large majority of male beneficiaries (83%) seek the cash immediately, more than half of female respondents wait for more than two days before cashing in.

- **Vulnerability Variable 2 – Literacy & Illiteracy:** How to engage the illiterate in using mobile cash transfers? Literate beneficiaries have a much better understanding of this distribution modality. The lack of education is a key explanatory variable, undermining beneficiaries’ capacity to use M-Paisa and withdraw cash. The programme needs to: improve the quality of training sessions and tailor them to illiterate beneficiaries; adapt pedagogically to different literate and illiterate groups; provide refresher courses through practical exercises.
- **Vulnerability Variable 3 – Household income:** Poorest beneficiaries have more difficulties to understand what M-Paisa is, as only 12% of them (endline – 8% midline) can provide a satisfactory explanation, while 27% of the best-off (endline – 48% midline) gave the right answer. The midline survey suggests that poorest respondents are less likely to withdraw money themselves (5% only, to be compared with 30% for the second tier and 40% for the best-off) and the endline reveals that such a lack of practice finally had an extremely negative impact on poorest beneficiaries’ ability to withdraw money, as almost 9 out of 10 ignore how to withdraw money in practice (minus 44 percentage points between the mid- and endline phases).
- **Vulnerability Variable 4 – Age:** Data reveal a better understanding of M-Paisa among youth, i.e. the 15-24 year

old sub-group. They can be capitalized on to increase the chances of success of future programming. But if youth tend to be more at ease with the mobile cash transfer modality, it is also worth noting that the interest in the M-Paisa system is not only a question of age and generation. Age is not necessarily an obstacle to the understanding and use of M-Paisa.

III. A 10-point plan: Recommendations to strengthen future cash-based assistance programming for IDPs in the KIS

1. Keep (direct and/or mobile) cash distribution as a key modality option: cash injection can be the fastest way to avoid life-threatening situations during the winter, but it must be administered in parallel to in-kind assistance as beneficiaries struggle to understand the concept of M-Paisa in theory and in practice
2. Keep focusing on in-kind assistance, while improving the quality, diversity and adequacy of selected items, with a focus *first* on food aid, and *second*, on fuel for cooking and heating
3. Scale-up and replicate the mobile cash project, as a potential 'best option' in terms of security and transparency in a worsening economic and political Afghan context
4. Tailor M-Paisa training sessions to the beneficiaries – and especially the most vulnerable, as only a minority of IDPs have actually attended a session, and since training sessions have *not* been used to raise communities and households' awareness of the positive aspects of the M-Paisa technology
5. Develop training sessions, beyond livelihoods, in nutrition and health, needed to ensure stronger protection framework that minimises health risks in a context where children are particularly vulnerable to the harsh winter conditions
6. Develop specific programmes for three vulnerable groups: women, youth, and the illiterate. As an example, by finding culturally sensitive and practical methods of entrusting certain sums of aid money or products only to women, NGOs will enable them to better provide for their husband and children with fewer risks of having men diverting the assistance.
7. On the longer-run, exit the poverty cycle through relief/resilience activities. By making sure that beneficiaries can obtain skills that go beyond daily labour, NGOs can offer a real opportunity for the individuals to save money in the near future.
8. Promote information sharing and operational coordination with other stakeholders (donors and NGOs)
9. Set a multi-faceted monitoring system notably through a longitudinal monitoring of a panel of beneficiaries and non beneficiaries, and collecting data on local markets as a warning system to prevent inflation
10. Improve communication and transparency with communities and beneficiaries to ensure community buy-in and effective complaint mechanisms.

I. INTRODUCTION

Trends recorded in early 2014 confirm the rising humanitarian needs of Afghans displaced by conflict, natural disasters and man made disasters: 650,000 Afghans are known to be internally displaced³. Forced to leave their homes, IDPs gravitate for protection to urban centres.

Kabul ranks first in this forced migration scenario: the capital city holds 56% of the urban population with 80% of the population residing in informal settlements⁴. Within this population, IDPs are particularly vulnerable. A 2011 WB/UNHCR study showed that urban IDPs are “poorer than the urban poor”, living in informal, unplanned and illegal settlements, squatting in government owned or private lands. There are over sixty informal settlements in Kabul – the Kabul Informal Settlement Task Force records 62 Kabul Informal Settlements, referred to as KIS, in January 2014.

These sites have varying degrees of amenities ranging from a few dozen tents and no heating to relatively more comfortable dwellings made of mud and concrete. Harsh environmental conditions, poor living standards, little support from the government and weak kinship ties force many families into extreme poverty. The winter season further exacerbates the plight of IDPs, year after year, with annual records of health risks – including death of new-borns and children – further diminishing the resilience of Afghans in displacement and contributing to chronic poverty in the country’s capital.

1. Welthungerhilfe and Danish Refugee Council pilot project in the KIS

In this context of increasing internal displacement, urbanization and winter-related vulnerabilities, Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) are actively providing, in the KIS, targeted assistance to enhance the livelihood potential of IDP households. This is achieved through food and non-food items, direct cash assistance and in-kind donations. During the harsh winters, WHH and DRC work with members of the KIS Task Force to coordinate emergency response and a comprehensive winterization plan.

As part of these collective efforts, *Solidarités* International intervenes with cash for food or food voucher distributions; DRC with pure cash distribution and WHH with a pilot programme using mobile cash transfer mechanisms. To improve aid delivery and effectiveness, WHH piloted during the 2013/2014 winter a mobile-based cash assistance programme aimed at supporting IDP families living in the KIS using Roshan’s M-PAISA service. Of these types of assistance and delivery, which has been the most effective? What are the strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages of these cash-based assistance modalities? What lessons can be learnt for future programming for IDPs living in urban informal settlements?

To answer these questions, WHH and DRC have commissioned *Samuel Hall* to undertake an evaluation of the 2013/2014 winter’s cash interventions through a three-phased approach including a baseline, midline and endline survey of their winter cash assistance activities in the KIS through a field- and evidence-based, quantitative and qualitative research study.

This evaluation is both timely and important. As the winter season regularly shows, the affected communities suffer particularly from the lack of appropriate management of their assistance, finding themselves either short of the necessary items or having too much too soon of others. By providing

³ UNHCR, 2014. *Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement* – January Monthly Update

⁴ WB, 2014. *Afghanistan : Urban Land Management Reform in Kabul*

direct or mobile-based cash assistance, the hope is that each household will manage more appropriately and independently its expenses during the hardest months of the year by being able to react promptly to unplanned events such as a snowstorm or a particularly cold night rather than having to wait for outside support.

Previous research led by Samuel Hall for DRC in the KIS⁵ has found that there is very little risk of inflation when providing cash assistance to IDPs because of the relatively small size of the concerned communities compared to the capital's population and their spread over 62 sites. However, when these risks exist, they are concentrated in the winter with families needing more food and fuel.

This study builds on Samuel Hall's expertise on humanitarian and migration research, and our support to key humanitarian debates. Forthcoming reports in 2014 include *Humanitarian Assistance through Mobile Cash Transfer in Northern Afghanistan* (for DFID), and *Displacement Dynamics: IDP Movement Tracking, Needs and Vulnerability Analysis* (for IOM).

2. Objectives of the study

To build an evidence base to minimize the negative impacts of assistance and enhance its contributions, the objectives of this Evaluation of Cash-Based Assistance Programmes to Internally Displaced Persons in the Kabul Informal Settlements are to:

1. Evaluate the **impact of the pilot cash assistance implemented by WHH and DRC** in the KIS;
2. Analyse **distribution modalities** to inform future programming not just for WHH and DRC, but equally for the KIS Task Force as a whole;
3. Identify **advantages and disadvantages of cash distribution** in comparison to other emergency activities in the conclusions of the report.

Additionally, this evaluation provides clear and actionable recommendations for preferred assistance methods in the future.

3. Structure of the report

This report is structured as follows: a methodology section explains the different tools and sampling plan used during the preparative phases and the fieldwork; section 2 provides an overview of respondents' demographic profiles; section 3 examines the different distribution modalities (direct cash, in-kind, and mobile cash transfer) by assessing their actual and perceived impact, beneficiaries' use of the assistance and their preferred delivery methods; section 4 deals more specifically with the impact of the mobile cash transfer (M-Paisa) pilot survey with a focus on vulnerability variables (gender, literacy, age, and income). Finally the conclusion summarizes key findings and gives recommendations for the future phases of winter assistance.

⁵ Samuel Hall, 2013. "Cash Programme Review for IDPs in the Kabul Informal Settlements", commissioned by DRC

II. THE KIS CAMP CONTEXT

Every Kabul Informal Settlement has its specificity – whether in the duration of displacement, type of housing, population density or demographic composition – yet, there are more commonalities than differences among the 60+ sites. There are common vulnerabilities stemming from high poverty levels and from displacement. Since 2010, vulnerabilities of KIS inhabitants have been well known and documented⁶. The findings of this three-part evaluation confirm these findings. This chapter informs the reader of the context in the KIS sites surveyed, with a review of the profiles of KIS inhabitants and IDPs interviewed.

Profiles determine the types of interventions most suited, and hence inform programming. When considering the *type* of interventions, and particularly the choice between cash and non-cash, or the option of using mobile cash transfers, indicators such as education and literacy, as well as displacement patterns and social inclusion, are important. When considering the *amount* of cash interventions, indicators such as income and dependency ratios, access to health, food and water, and types of housing matter most.

After a quick review of the KIS sites, this chapter will provide a presentation of respondent profile according to:

- ✓ Displacement patterns
- ✓ Education and Literacy
- ✓ Income levels
- ✓ Health and Food Needs
- ✓ Housing Needs

All findings from this chapter stem from the initial baseline survey carried out in December 2013 with a population of 253 respondents who have benefited from mobile cash, direct cash and non-cash (food and fuel) assistance.

1. Background on 3 KIS sites and their inhabitants

The **Tamir-e-Millie Bus** IDP camp is located in district 8 of Kabul, on a hill in the West of the city, just outside the city boundaries and overlooking a main road. The houses are mostly made of brick and mud and some have a small courtyard in front. Its population is estimated at 71 households or 376 individuals⁷ and has received, this past winter, mobile health clinic services provided by SHRDO, three months of WFP food rations, WHH cash-for-fuel and stoves, blankets and tarpaulins, and winter clothing kits for children from Johanniter.

The much smaller **camp behind the new Parliament House** is situated in the South-West of Kabul, in district 6 near Darulaman Palace, on the large piece of land on which Afghanistan's new parliament is being built. Here one building in ruin serves as the centre of the settlement with two-dozen tents pitched around it. The population is composed of 30 households or 176 individuals. During the winter, WHH as provided basic health care, vaccination and community-based health care services, blankets and tarpaulins, and implemented two rounds of cash-for-fuel projects and distributed

⁶ WB/UNHCR (2010) ; Samuel Hall/NRC (2012) ; Samuel Hall/Solidarités (2013)

⁷ KIS Task Force (2014) *KIS 3W Winter Response Updated 4 March 2014*, available online: <https://afg.humanitarianresponse.info/document/kis-3w-5-march-2014>

stoves. In addition, CARE international distributed cold clothing packages for each household while WFP provided two months of food rations in January and February 2014.

The third KIS site surveyed, **Bagh Dawood camp**, is located in district 14 of Kabul, near the highway linking Kabul to Ghazni and Kandahar on lands belonging to the late Daud Khan in Paghman. There are actually three smaller encampments, across the area, that make out the settlement. The population is estimated at 141 households and 631 individuals (KIS TF 2014). During the winter, SHRDO has provided alternative day mobile health services, funded by WHO, WFP has distributed three rounds of food rations, while DRC distributed two-months of cash-for-fuel and WHH provided blankets and tarpaulins for each household.

The conditions near the new parliament are the most basic and fragile, with little shelter from harsh winter conditions. The other two locations can be considered relatively established, given that some have been living there for more than ten years and given the much larger population figures that constitute in and of themselves a safety net with a stronger presence and visibility. The greater population figures serve to attract more assistance and prevent pressures from third parties. Nevertheless, all locations suffer from the distance from the main centres of trade that makes it difficult for people to secure jobs. Overall, public entities and private companies who own the lands are strongly against any possibilities of long-term stay in the camp sites, thus making the life of the communities extremely precarious – and further complicating intervention modalities for UN agencies and NGOs who cannot provide long-term development support in these informal and illegal settlements, but can only focus instead on emergency and humanitarian assistance.

The profiles of the populations living in these sites can be generalized as:

- IDPs mainly displaced by conflict (62%), predominantly Pashtun (64%), with migration experience and a high rate of secondary displacement (79% lived previously in Iran or Pakistan);
- A vast majority of uneducated and illiterate respondents (79%);
- Close to three quarters (74%) earn less than 6000 AFA a month (appx. 105 USD) with an average household income of 3979 AFN or 70 USD, well under the poverty line;
- They suffer from health problems, and a difficult access to food, water, and housing.

These highlights will now be detailed using the findings from our survey.

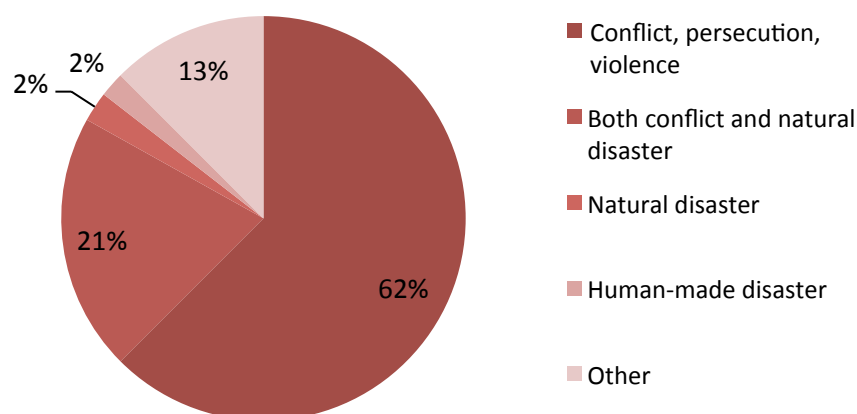
2. Displacement profiles

Internally Displaced Persons are individuals who are forcibly displaced, but, unlike refugees, have not crossed an international border to find sanctuary⁸. In Afghanistan, the International Displacement Monitoring Centre counts around 660,500 IDPs (both victims of conflict and disaster) excluding an additional 40,000 individuals in the KIS as of January 2014⁹. At baseline level, 88,1% of respondents identified themselves as IDPs. For these, the primary cause of their displacement was conflict and the related violence or persecution, followed by natural disaster.

⁸ <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c146.html>

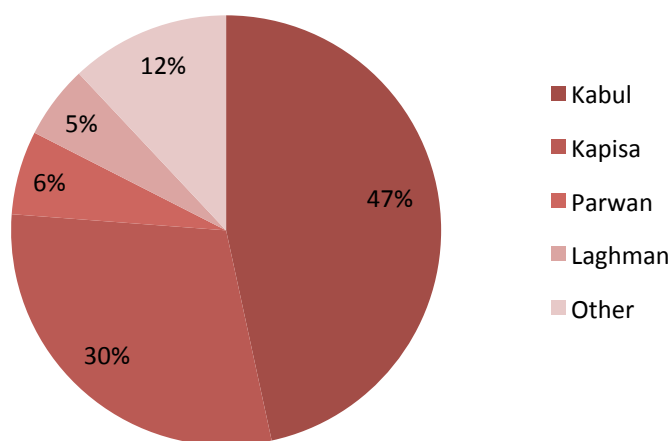
⁹ <http://www.internal-displacement.org/asia-pacific/afghanistan/>

Graph 1: IDP displacement causes in percentages



The duration of stay in the camps ranges from 3 months to 12 years, with peaks at 6 years (9.1%), 7 years (11.9%), 8 years (9.9%) and 10 years (16.2%). This indicates that the majority of IDPs in the locations surveyed have been displaced at the beginning of the foreign intervention and from areas around Kabul as seen in the graph below. These are areas where security remains problematic hence limiting return as a potential durable solution – and further emphasizing the need for support towards local integration.

Graph 2: Main IDP provinces of origin



In Tamir-e-Millie Bus people mostly originate from Kapisa and Laghman provinces or Surobi district in Kabul. In New Parliament (the camp near Darulaman Palace), IDPs were mostly from Wardak province, the Shomali Plains or Qarabagh district in Kabul. In Bagh Dawood, some also came from Takhar and Kunduz, provinces in the North of Afghanistan. The study also noted secondary displacement trends – with refugee returnees turned IDPs upon return. A majority – 79% – of IDPs reported having previously lived in neighbouring countries: 63% lived in Pakistan for some time while one in six lived in Iran during their migration, with an average stay of 9.5 years. Overall, only 21% do not report any secondary displacement.

Graph 3: Percentages of IDPs having lived abroad

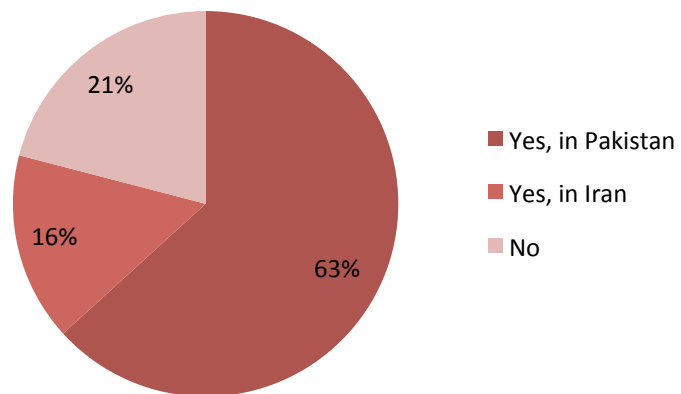


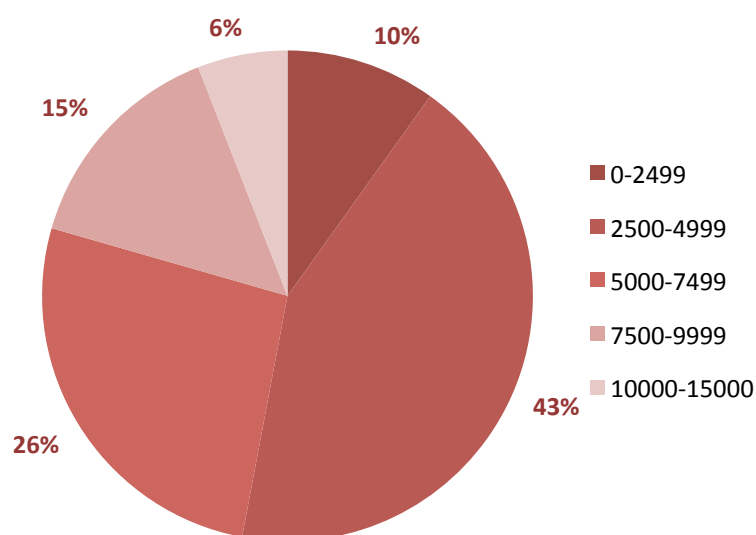
Image 2: Interviews in Parwan 2

3. Household Income

Employment in the three KIS sites is characterized by informal and unstable jobs - most men interviewed were involved in construction work as daily labourers, having major difficulties finding permanent work placements. Out of the 253 respondents for the baseline, none had any type of self-employment or entrepreneurial activity: all depend on the urban demand for day labour to make ends meet.

53% of the surveyed households had an income of less than 5,000 Afghanis per month – with an average income level of 3979 AFN or 70 USD, well under the poverty line. The economic situation of IDPs in the KIS is even more precarious during the winter, a period during which jobs in construction or street vending show a lower demand and lower revenue than during warmer seasons.

Graph 4: Household average income levels



Households survive on average on 70 USD per month to feed 7 household members (split between 2 adults and 5 children per household on average in the surveyed sample). The dependency ratio is very high: in displacement, women’s economic activity remains severely limited – a well-documented displacement-related vulnerability¹⁰, placing the burden of income generation on male adults alone. In effect, when respondents were asked to rate the economic participation of different demographic groups in the household, on average, men over 18 years of age contribute 90% of monthly income as opposed to 2% for adult women and 8% for boys under the age of 18. However, it is suspected that child labour rates are under-estimated as households are often reluctant to reveal children’s economic activity. Yet, households report an incidence of child labour at 8%, which, with a 5% margin of error can reach double digits, a non-negligible fact and a key concern for child protection actors.

¹⁰ Majidi, N. and Hennion, C. (2014) *Resilience in displacement? Building the potential of Afghan displaced women.*

Table 1: Contribution to the household income by household member type

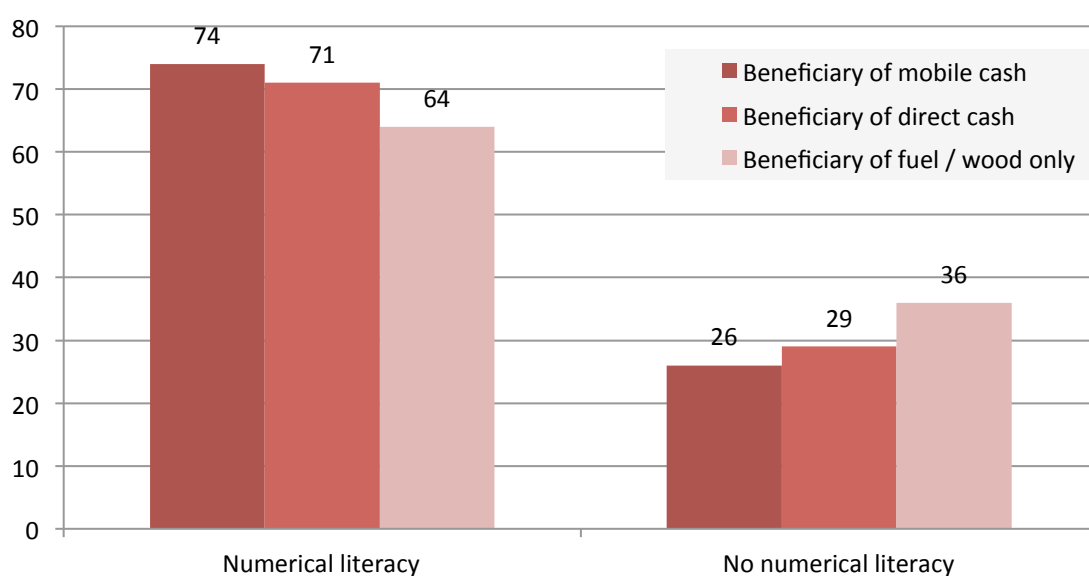
Contribution to household income – average	Afghanis	US Dollars	Percentage
Males over 18	3,594	63	90
Females over 18	62	1	2
Boys under 18	303	5	8
Girls under 18	20	0	0
Total	3,979	70	100

4. Education and Literacy Levels

79% of respondents are illiterate while 70% have a basic understanding of counting and using numbers for their daily lives. When asked whether they could identify numerical symbols, only half of the population surveyed responded positively. 47.6% of respondents cannot identify numerical symbols. Both text and numerical illiteracy are obstacles to a basic understanding of mobile cash transfer information (using M-Paisa, as piloted by WHH in Kabul), since interactive voice response (IVR) is currently not optimized for M-PAISA beneficiaries, as previously noted in a survey led by the research team for DFID in 2013¹¹.

As shown in the below table, in relative terms, mobile cash transfer beneficiaries through M-Paisa have a higher numerical literacy level than their direct cash or fuel beneficiary counterparts. Selection for the M-Paisa pilot initiative has strived to select the more literate – however, this is not sufficient, as one in four M-Paisa beneficiary receives information on cash received on their phone without being able to decipher the message received or the value of the assistance received, hence jeopardizing the impact of the assistance.

Graph 5: Numerical literacy by beneficiary type (in %)



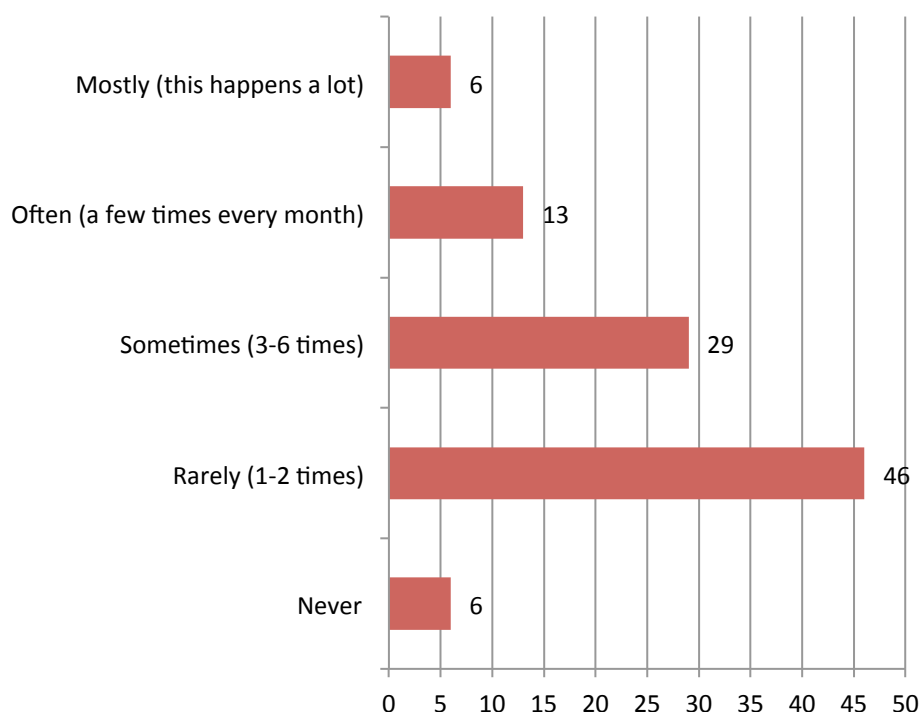
¹¹ Samuel Hall (forthcoming, 2014) *Humanitarian Assistance through Mobile Cash Transfer in Northern Afghanistan*, commissioned by DFID Afghanistan.

5. Food and Health Needs

The health profiles of IDPs in the KIS sites surveyed point to the need for enhanced assistance to build their resilience and their ability to access solutions for better health, for them and their children.

About half – 47.7% – of IDPs have frequent problems fulfilling their household’s food needs – and one household in five copes with these problems by going for entire days without eating. As a result, beyond the recurrent pattern of food insecurity, households’ coping strategies are of concern. In effect, when asked how they coped with their problems fulfilling their household’s food needs, respondents highlighted negative coping strategies consisting of reducing food quality and quantity in 55% of cases reported.

Graph 6: Problems satisfying food needs – frequency (%)



These negative coping strategies can have a direct effect on the health of all household members – mothers and children alike. Yet, 77% of households have not received any maternity or nutrition training. This points to recommendations for stakeholders to match potential in-kind and cash interventions with appropriate trainings to ensure that, if cash is injected in households, it will be directed to expenses that improve the health and nutrition of family members. This will strengthen child development and child protection.

Table 2: Household coping mechanisms – Access to food (in percentages)

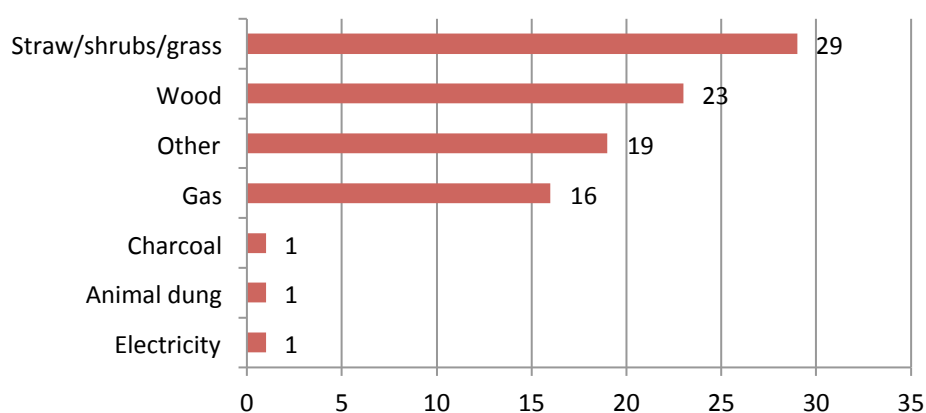
Has your household had to rely on the following strategies?	Percentages
Reduce food quality	28.5%
Reduce food consumption	26.8%
Entire day(s) without eating	20.2%
Food loan / on credit	16.2%
None	4.3%
Send children to work	2%
Begging	1.6%
Other	0.4%
Total	100%

Past studies have shown that IDP households in informal settlements are vulnerable to health hazards and dedicate an important amount of their income to health needs – especially during winter months. In the sample surveyed in this study, 77.5% of households had at least one sick or injured family member over a 3-month period preceding the interview. Of these, three quarters relied on a health service provider with mobile clinics (63%) in camps ranking first, then followed by hospitals (27.3%) and private doctors (5.7%). The choice is often dictated by financial considerations: IDP households in the camps surveyed cannot afford to rely on health services in urban centres – hospitals and private doctors are a last resort.

6. Housing Needs

IDP households in the Kabul Informal Settlements surveyed squat in government buildings (46.2%), live under tents (31.4%), and in makeshift housing (12%). All three housing arrangements pose challenges for households. With no electricity (96.4%) and an over-reliance on straw, shrubs or grass as their main source of fuel, households surveyed are particularly vulnerable during the winter season. Households are dependent on gas (15.5%), wood (23%), but mainly dependent on what they can find, whether straw/shrubs/grass (38.9%) or, in the “other” category, old shoes, cloths, paper and dirt, or even garbage (19.4%).

Graph 7: Cooking fuel used by households (%)



This confirms the need to ensure that fuel needs are covered – **not only for cooking but for heating**, to minimize health risks and longer run winter-related vulnerabilities.

III. ANALYSIS OF DISTRIBUTION MODALITIES

This section evaluates the impact of the WHH/DRC pilot cash assistance in the surveyed locations. The report examines specific indicators in three distinct areas: *vulnerability*, the *use of assistance* and the *experiences of beneficiaries*. Overall, both the short-term impact WHH and DRC assistance programmes have proven successful, while getting high levels of satisfaction among the targeted beneficiaries.

Table 3: Evaluation table

Evaluation area	Indicator	Baseline	Endline	Trend (in percentage points)
Vulnerability	Households who consider themselves to be economically well-off	12%	32%	+20
	Top concerns affecting IDP households	<i>Housing and shelter – no change between baseline and endline</i>		
	Households using the extreme forms of coping strategy: days without eating	41%	11%	-30
Use of assistance	Top 3 usages of direct cash beneficiaries at endline		Food – 83% Medicine – 54% Heating – 44%	
	Top 3 usages of in-kind beneficiaries at endline		Food - 93% Medicine – 34% Clothing – 28%	
	Top 3 usages of mobile cash beneficiaries at endline		Food – 87% Heating – 70% Medicine – 27%	
	Beneficiaries selling or exchanging their in-kind assistance		Almost none	
User experience	Respondents who trust “very much” NGOs	58%	80%	+22
	Respondents who are satisfied with their received assistance at endline		95%	
	Preferred assistance of all beneficiaries		Cash	
	M-Paisa beneficiaries who are satisfied with the assistance received	97% (midline)	96%	-1
	M-Paisa beneficiaries who favour mobile cash transfer for the future	4% (midline)	15%	+9

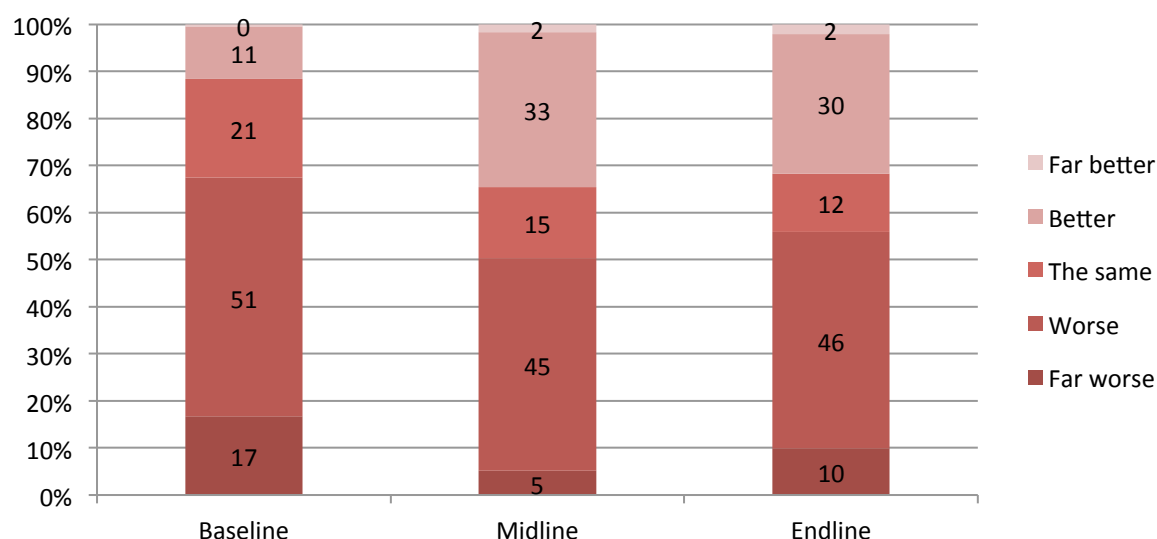
1. Vulnerability and poverty alleviation

All three interventions have alleviated short-term needs to some extent. Direct cash, mobile transfer and in-kind assistance made households feel more economically secure at the time of receipt, but food needs and unemployment still cause serious problems for most beneficiaries. We recognise that the interventions tested in this study were targeted at relieving short-term fuel needs, but the broader context is illustrative of how households prioritise their needs during the winter season. The findings reinforce prevailing assumptions about KIS household vulnerability and show that food insecurity and unemployment are endemic issues. As the report shows, food procurement is a priority activity for most households, regardless of the type of assistance they receive.

As a simple measure of *vulnerability*, all beneficiaries were asked whether their household’s economic situation had improved or deteriorated since last year. Before the start of the assistance programme, **only 12% said that they considered their situation better or far better. However, the figure rises to 35% after the first distribution and slightly decreases to 32% after the second.** Unsurprisingly, direct cash assistance had a significant impact on reducing perceptions of household economic status – the proportion of direct cash beneficiaries who consider their economic situation to have improved increased by 31 percentage points from the baseline (24%) to the endline (55%).

However, in a difficult and worsening socio-economic context, reality differs from respondents’ perceptions. Looking at economic status more closely, we find that many beneficiaries are concerned about poor levels of employment in particular. In fact, concerns about unemployment actually increased over the course of the intervention period from the midline (68%) to the endline (85%). This is probably related to a ‘slump’ in employment opportunities for day labourers during the winter season. These figures are in line with the top protection priorities highlighted in a previous *Samuel Hall* report on the challenges of IDP protection in Afghanistan¹².

Graph 8: Perception of household economic status % (n=252)



¹² SH, 2012. “Challenges of IDP Protection: Research Study on the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Afghanistan”, commissioned by NRC

Indeed, looking at other measures of *vulnerability*, we find that the interventions had a limited impact on relieving other longer-term issues such as housing or access to food, both of which remain predominant concerns from midline to endline.

Table 4: Main problems with living conditions %

Living conditions			
Midline (252)		Endline (251)	
Access to housing/shelter	50	Access to housing/shelter	48
Access to food	44	Access to food	46
Access to land	3	Access to land	4
Sanitation facilities	2	Access to water	1
Other	1	Access to electricity	1

In order to provide a more sensitive measure of impact on *vulnerability*, beneficiaries were asked whether they adopted household coping strategies. Chronic food needs are characteristic of many households in the surveyed areas:

- **Not Eating:** Encouragingly, the proportion of households that used the most extreme form of coping strategy – not eating for entire days – has decreased notably from 41% at the midline to only 11% at the endline. It is definitely a positive sign and a direct impact of the assistance provided by DRC and WHH, as highlighted in the focus group discussions conducted during the midline and endline phases;
- **Food Quantity:** Similarly, the proportion of households that reduce the quantity of their food intake has decreased by 15 percentage points, from just over half (52%) at the midline to 37% at the endline. Concurrent food aid delivered by WFP may account for these changes, but as shown later, cash-, mobile- and in-kind beneficiaries also use their assistance to address critical food needs.
- **Food Quality and Diversity:** As the table below shows, the proportion of households who are forced to reduce the quality and diversity of their food has remained the same (75% at midline and endline), but there are some positive shifts. As suggested in our focus group discussions, such an extreme strategy may have its root cause in households’ lack of knowledge of and education on food diversification (especially at a young age). This clearly points at the need of training in this field.

Table 5: Impact of assistance on coping strategies %

	Midline (252)	Endline (252)	Impact
Entire day(s) without eating	41	11	-30
Reduce the quantity of the food	52	37	-15
Purchase food on credit	38	17	-11
Borrow from a relative or friend	52	42	-10
Send household member to beg	4	2	-2
Reduce the quality of the food	75	75	0
Restrict consumption by adults in order for small children to eat	21	21	0
Send children to work/earn money	2	2	0

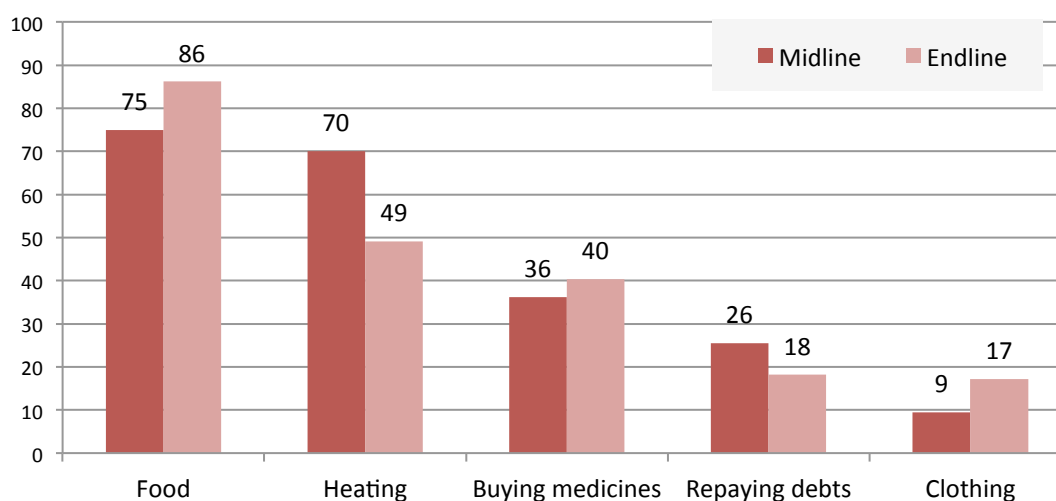
2. Use of assistance

All three interventions methods enabled respondents to acquire essential items during the winter period. Most respondents in each camp used the cash at their disposal to buy essential items to alleviate immediate needs, and reports of misuse (such as selling/exchanging goods) were almost non-existent.

General trends

Spending patterns reflect the underlying need for food and warmth in IDP camps during the winter. Although spending priorities have remained largely comparable from the midline to the endline, there are some noteworthy changes. Spending on food increased after from 75% at the midline to 86% at the endline, while expenditure on heating decreased notably from 70% at the midline to 49% at the endline. The increasingly mild winter may account for decrease in fuel expenditure. Compared to a previous survey conducted by Samuel Hall in the KIS for DRC¹³ that identified health, child protection and security as the main concerns of IDPs, this time the trend is more focused on basic needs such as food and heating, although health issues still feature significantly. Overall, the proportion of respondents who say that they used their assistance (whether cash, in-kind or mobile) to repay a debt decreased from a quarter (26%) to just under one fifth (18%) at the end line. These figures are encouraging given donor concerns that humanitarian assistance is often diverted for other non-essential purposes.

Graph 9: Spending priorities at endline for all beneficiaries % (En=181, Mn=180)



Specific trends (by type of assistance)

Caution should be exercised when comparing responses between beneficiary types due to small sample sizes, however some interesting differences emerge. Cash assistance is the most flexible form of assistance because recipients are able to spend money on whatever they like immediately. Indeed, at the endline survey, cash beneficiaries are more likely to spend their money on a wider range of needs than those who receive in-kind or mobile assistance. As we show later, this is one of the main reasons why people prefer to receive cash assistance compared to other means.

¹³ SH, 2013. "Cash Programme Review for IDPs in the Kabul Informal Settlements", commissioned by DRC

Table 6: Spending priorities at endline %

In-Kind		Mobile		Cash	
Food	93%	Food	87%	Food	83%
Buying medicines	34%	Heating	70%	Buying medicines	54%
Clothing	28%	Buying medicines	27%	Heating	44%
Heating	14%	Repaying debts	16%	Repaying debts	23%
Repaying debts	10%	Clothing	6%	Clothing	23%
Base	29	Base	70	Base	82

It is also interesting to note that those who receive cash assistance are also the most likely to repay their loans – 23% of cash beneficiaries use the assistance to repay loans compared to only 16% of mobile beneficiaries and 10% of in-kind beneficiaries. During focus groups, IDPs said that local shopkeepers often find out straight away when a new round of assistance is delivered to the community, so they insist on being repaid by their customers. Those who are forced to repay local shopkeepers are often obliged to open a new line of credit with the same people in order to provide basic needs – so the cycle of debt continues.

By comparison, those who receive in-kind assistance appear to be less susceptible to this practice and seem to enjoy greater freedom to spend their own money on essential items. With the money saved by not having to spend money on fuel, the significant majority (93%) of in-kind beneficiaries spent their own money on food. Since in-kind beneficiaries received fuel, instead of money, it is not surprising that only 14% spent their own money on additional heating.

With regards to the potential transactions and barter of non-food items, the evaluation found that the cases of reported reselling or exchanging of goods provided by the NGO are virtually non-existent. Only one respondent said that he sometimes resold the assistance. However respondents are often unwilling to disclose misuse or abuse of assistance because they do not want their benefactors to withdraw support. Last, it is worth noting that the strategy of reselling assistance is not necessarily a misuse or an abuse of assistance, as it can also be adopted as an emergency coping mechanism – *“where beneficiaries resell in-kind assistance under its market price to get some immediate cash and repay loans” (NGO Field Officer).*

Interestingly, several camp leaders complained that they could not resell or exchange their assistance because of the poor quality of some of the basic goods provided in the camps (most notable food items such as rice, sugar, and oil). They said that if they were to receive better quality goods from NGOs they would be able to fetch a higher market price. This is clearly an abuse of the system, but it shows that some consider assistance (whether monetary or in-kind) as a tradable commodity rather than a solution to short term problems.

“It is better to receive goods because with money we will have to pay our debts. It has happened that the shopkeepers find out we have received cash and come and collect it aggressively.”
~New Parliament IDP woman

One of the perceived advantages of mobile cash transfer is that it is less vulnerable to corruption or misuse than either direct cash or in-kind assistance. In order to test this theory, mobile-cash beneficiaries were asked how they received their mobile transfer and whether a commission was

charged by M-PAISA shop owners or other ‘facilitators’, especially since using mobile cash transfer requires basic literacy and training.

The survey data shows that of those who relied on another person (69 people in total) to withdraw their money using the mobile transfer system – whether the M-PAISA shopkeeper, family member, ‘NGO worker’ - 92% said that they were not charged a commission, and 8% said that they did not know whether they were or were not charged a commission. The extent to which this is typical of the situation in other camps is unclear, but the results suggest that corruption and abuse of the mobile transfer in the surveyed areas was very low. Should the pilot be expanded, a close monitoring should however be put in place, as the high percentage of beneficiaries who rely on other people may – on the longer-run – incentivize middle-men to divert assistance from proper recipients.

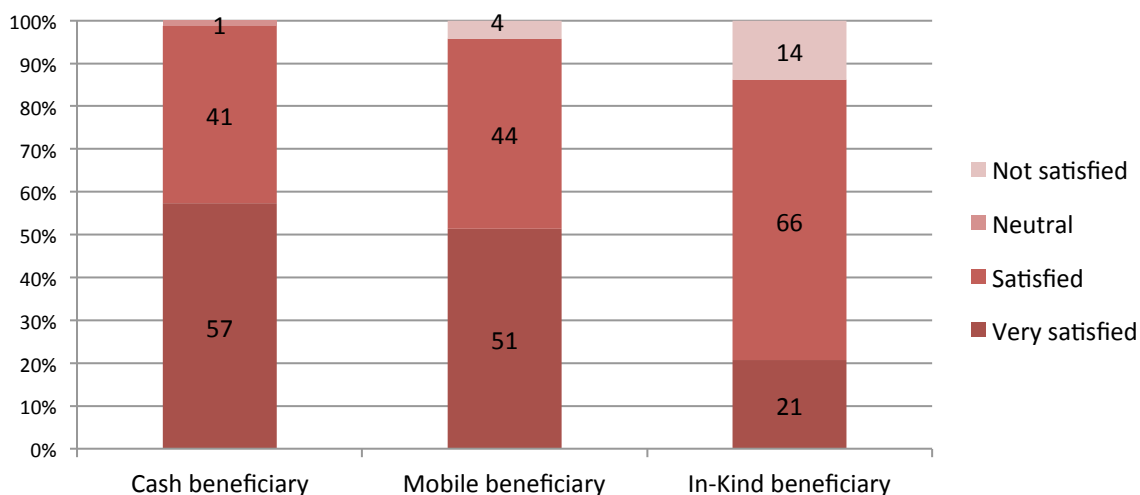
3. User experience

Overall, most respondents were satisfied with the assistance that they received, and levels of trust towards NGOs are high. In spite of high levels of satisfaction, many respondents would prefer to receive cash assistance in the future.

Levels of satisfaction with the assistance received

95% of respondents were either *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the assistance that they received after the last phase of intervention. Once again, caution should be exercised when making comparisons between beneficiary types, but there are some noteworthy differences. Those who received cash assistance are the most likely to be *very satisfied* or *satisfied* (98%) in total compared to the other two means of assistance. Those who received in-kind assistance are the most likely to say that they are not satisfied (14%); this dissatisfaction should naturally be taken with a pinch of salt, as the overall satisfaction rate is still very high (87%), but it confirms some findings of our focus group discussions: “Other people have money and we only have food. It is a good thing but sometimes the food is not good and this is not what our households need” (Shura Elder, Tamir-e-Millie).

Graph 10: Post-distribution satisfaction for all beneficiaries % (cash=82, mobile=70, in-kind=29)



In spite of the high level of satisfaction with the three types of assistance received, most participants would like to receive direct cash assistance in the future. As shown in the table below, during the

midline, respondents were more likely to say that they would like food assistance than they were at the endline, which suggests that once basic food needs have been met (i.e. at the end of the assistance programme), people prefer to receive cash only. The reason for this increase is twofold. Firstly, with the worst part of the winter slowly drawing to a close, respondents start looking past heating and food as the most essential items since they might be able to find more work and want to diversify their purchases. Secondly, many families prefer cash because it gives them the flexibility to identify, prioritise and address their own needs, rather than rely on perceived poor quality in-kind goods from NGOs.

Table 7: Preference for assistance in the future, from midline to endline %

	Cash beneficiaries		In-Kind beneficiaries		Mobile beneficiaries	
	Midline (84)	Endline (82)	Midline (22)	Endline (29)	Midline (74)	Endline (70)
Cash assistance	75	90	50	86	55	62
Food only	15	3	41	10	29	14
Fuel only	10	6	9	4	12	9
Mobile cash	0	1	0	0	4	15
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

At this stage another two important findings are worth noting:

- The quantitative survey does point out that (even) mobile cash transfer beneficiaries prefer direct cash over M-Paisa (or M-Hawala) and only a few beneficiaries said that they would like to receive mobile cash assistance in the future: 1% of the cash beneficiaries, none of the in-kind beneficiaries, and 15% only of the mobile cash transfer beneficiaries. The next section further discusses this point and develops some possible explanations;
- There is very little demand for a combination of assistance types. Qualitative research corroborated this preference, and highlighted the strong preference for direct cash transfer rather than any other means of assistance. In addition, focus groups have shown that respondents repeatedly voiced their preference for a single instalment rather than two or three.

Finally, and as discussed later in the report, beneficiaries’ preferences for types of assistance must be carefully balanced against the broader strategic goals of NGOs and the international community. In any event, one-size-fit-all approaches have systematically proven wrong in Afghanistan: 1) mobile cash transfer, direct cash transfer or in-kind assistance should all be considered as essential and valuable instruments in the humanitarian assistance toolkit; 2) their respective weight and role will depend on NGOs’ own objective assessment of beneficiaries’ needs and should be tailored to the specific socio-economic context where they are operating.

“We are not happy with in-kind assistance, we only want cash. The goods given to us are of low quality and there is corruption at the NGO level. It’s a business for NGOs to assist with in-kind and pocket some of the exchange sums. Only Afghans from the NGO come, the foreigners don’t know anything and we are afraid of voicing our grievances too much.”

~Tamir-e-Millie Bus, elder

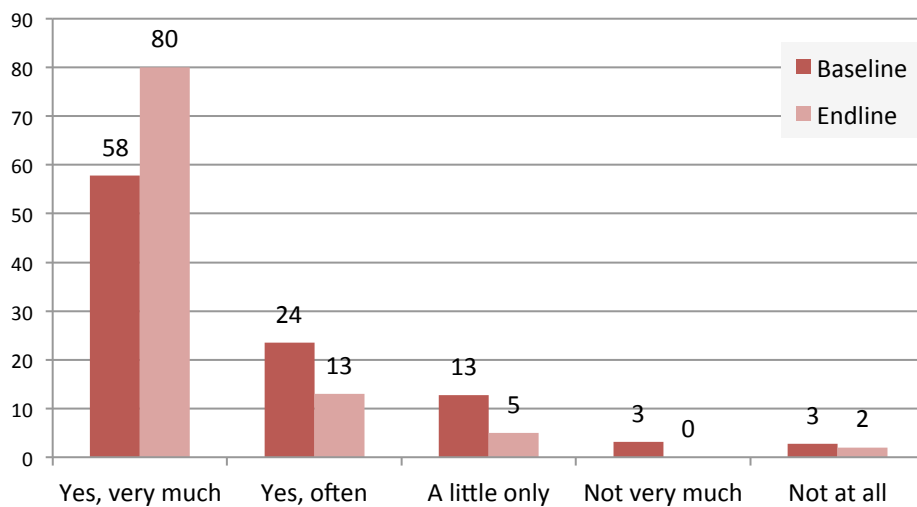
“It would be better to get the 6000 AFA in one go. The best would be to just get cash, then M-PAISA and finally in-kind assistance.”

~Tamir-e-Millie Bus, elder

Levels of trust in NGOs

The need to balance beneficiaries’ expectations with the broader development context raises some important ethical questions. Who really knows what is needed? Do people always know best? These issues are clearly beyond the scope of this evaluation, but they provide an informative context in which to examine the level of trust towards NGOs among assistance beneficiaries. Over the course of the assistance period, levels of trust in NGOs increased significantly. During the baseline phase, before the assistance interventions began, 58% of beneficiaries said that they trusted NGOs *very much*, while at the end of the assistance period the figure rose to 80%.

Graph 11: Trust in NGOs from baseline to endline - %



4. SWOT Analyses: direct cash assistance, fuel, and mobile cash transfer

The three tables below look at the advantages and disadvantages of each type of assistance provided in the KIS during the winter. In recent years, the use of cash as an alternative method of assistance to in-kind for fragile communities has increased amongst NGOs in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Table 8: SWOT analysis of direct cash assistance

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households are empowered to use their money however they see fit Corruption and financial mismanagement are more difficult IDPs have flexibility in prioritizing their household needs Respondents consistently rank it as their preferred choice Minimal inflationary risks 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries often focus on the short term Certain members might spend money on non-essential items (other than food, fuel and medication) Women might have less decision-making power as the man usually deals with the household's finances IDPs risk buying market goods which are more expensive than subsidized products Staff need to carry large sums of money in cash
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries can pool their resources to provide more expensive and/or better goods for a greater number of individuals IDPs can save some of the money they receive 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tensions and jealousies can easily arise, especially between the camp leader and his entourage, and other families There is no culture of saving in Afghanistan Cash can be used to repay debts, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty

Table 9: SWOT analysis of in-kind assistance

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDPs can resell the goods they receive less easily and they will not be worth as much The psychological reluctance to exchange it for different products can be greater NGOs know what basic products IDPs need and can buy them in bulk at much cheaper prices 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries may resell their fuel (or other NFIs) at poor terms of trade Depending on the weather, household needs and time of delivery, recipients might resell the goods or exchange them Theoretically, in-kind assistance is less likely to empower beneficiaries than cash
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs can manage supplies during the winter more easily and promptly according to unexpected events In-kind assistance can be mixed with other types of assistance to better tailor assistance to beneficiaries' needs 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The loss or misplacement of in-kind assistance is psychologically less problematic than cash for donors

Table 10: SWOT analysis of mobile cash assistance

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDPs receive a phone on top of the assistance package The possibility of fund mismanagement virtually disappear Empowerment of beneficiaries, on the short- and long-run Staff do not need to carry large sums of 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondents find the M-PAISA system unnecessarily complicated compared to direct cash assistance The majority of recipients did not receive appropriate training Acceptability issues are crucial and often under-estimated by NGOs
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<p>money in cash</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential significant economies of scale with the operator, if the pilot is replicated 	
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiaries can also be paid for other activities sponsored by the NGO • Beneficiaries can pool their resources to provide more expensive and/or better goods for a greater number of individuals • IDPs can save some of the money they receive 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash can be used to repay debts, without alleviating households' food shortage and chronic poverty • There is no culture of saving in Afghanistan • Beneficiaries do not use the full range of services offered by the M-PAISA system

“The police wanted us to leave from here but the army let us stay. There is a possibility that we will have to leave in the spring. God will help us; food is not a problem, what we need is proper shelter.”

~New Parliament IDP woman



Image 3: Bagh Dawood IDP children

IV. IMPACT OF THE WHH/DRC PILOT CASH ASSISTANCE

Given the comparatively recent introduction of mobile cash assistance in the KIS, a sizable proportion of the survey was dedicated to evaluating user perceptions to help implementers refine the technology for future assistance.

Overall, the WHH/DRC pilot project was successful, with an excellent technical implementation and remarkable satisfaction rates among all the surveyed beneficiaries. It clearly paves the way for a more ambitious programme – by increasing the geographic coverage and number of targeted beneficiaries and improving the robustness of the programme.

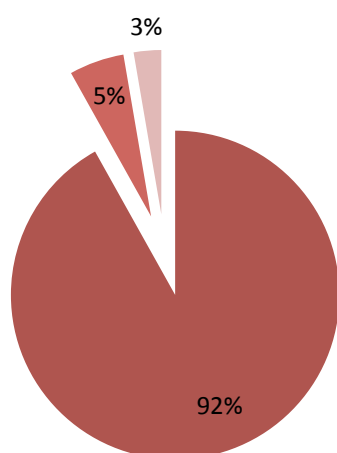
In this regard, the quality of the training needs to be better tailored to local communities as well as vulnerable subgroups of the population (women, lower-income, illiterate, and youth to a certain extent); likewise, WHH should develop a long-term approach for raising local communities' awareness toward mobile cash transfer assistance:

1. A successful mobile cash transfer pilot project

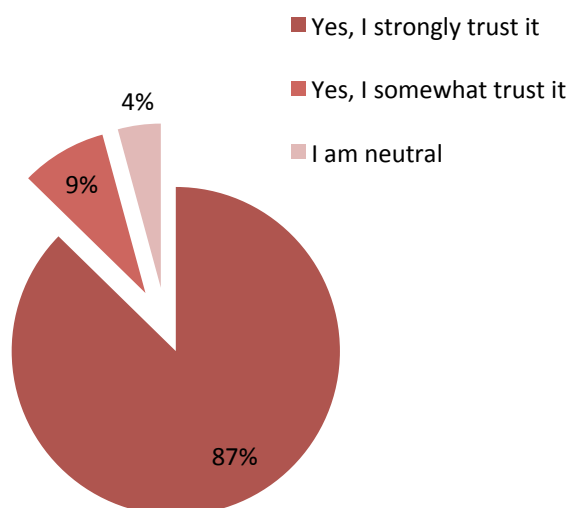
- **Successful technical implementation:** All the 71 mobile cash transfer beneficiaries reported receiving the 4,400 AFA that had been individually allocated by the project. Only two beneficiaries reported a different amount (2,500 AFA and 6,000 AFA), but further investigation showed that they were not actual beneficiaries but local community members who were interested in the process and wanted to be part of the research. Roshan, on the technical side, and the surveyed community leaders insisted on the fact that no major, or minor, incident had been reported and that both the first and second phases of the mobile cash distribution had been successfully implemented.
- **Excellent satisfaction rates:** Secondly, all the mobile cash transfer beneficiaries trust the M-PAISA system and 96% of them were either “very satisfied” (51%) or “satisfied” (45%) with this distribution modality. Such high rates should be taken with a pinch of salt, considering that a certain “acquiescence bias” may have distorted the responses: beneficiaries are *de facto* thankful to the NGO for the assistance they receive and they may be tempted to systematically provide the ‘good’ answer. More convincingly, however, these figures are in line with the positive trend observed between the two phases of the survey (+ 11 percentage points between midline and endline among M-Paisa beneficiaries when asked to specify their preference for future assistance). For NGOs, such positive trends indicate that pilot projects should be prioritized in the targeted communities, as beneficiaries’ acceptance clearly increases over time.
- **Key role played by training:** The success of the scheme depends more on the level of the training that beneficiaries receive. After the first instalment to the population targeted by mobile cash transfers, less than a third had been trained in how to use the M-PAISA system. The number was only slightly higher at endline (35%). Among those who were trained in how to use the M-PAISA system, less than half found it useful or very useful, although the proportion who considered it useful also slightly increased from midline to endline. As suggested before, training and awareness-raising sessions with community leaders and

beneficiaries can also shed light on the positive aspects of this transfer modality that can contribute to increase people’s trust and acceptance.

Graph 12: Trust levels for the M-PAISA system at
midline (n=252)



Graph 13: Trust levels for the M-PAISA system at
endline (n=252)



2. A paradoxically poor demand for mobile cash transfer

As already pointed out, mobile cash transfer beneficiaries prefer direct cash over M-Paisa and only 1% of the cash beneficiaries, none of the in-kind beneficiaries, and 15% only of the mobile cash transfer beneficiaries said that they would favour mobile cash assistance in the future over other modalities. It does seem paradoxical and counter-intuitive, as beneficiaries should prefer an assistance modality that not only offers a free cell phone but also represents the same *value* as the other two modalities. To further investigate this point, the review team conducted *ex-post* focus groups with beneficiaries that raise two key explanations:

- **Time for community buy-in:** Firstly, and more significantly, it takes some time for a new assistance modality, especially a relatively more complex one, to get accepted by local communities: *“(mobile money) is good but this is new, so we need to see what the NGO wants to do with it; but here we have always received blankets, fuel, and sometimes cash” (Male beneficiary, 48)* and *“we know how (in-kind) distribution works, but for the mobile cash, it has never happened here and you need to give some time to our community” (Male beneficiary, 31)*.
- **Lack of incentive:** Thirdly, the cell phone does not necessarily play a key role, as *“most (heads of household) already own one, so it is not so important” (Community leader, 54)* – even if our own assessment tends to nuance this recurrent qualitative finding for most female beneficiaries (see our analysis in the gender section).

- **Changing mentalities – traditional vs. modern interventions:** Finally and as shown in other recent research studies on mobile cash transfer¹⁴, the preference for more “traditional” types of assistance among vulnerable communities often come from people’s concerns about mobile cash transfer technology, which is seen as more complex than direct cash transfer; however, it should also be noted that if DFID mobile cash transfer beneficiaries (in Jawzjan, Samangan, and Faryab provinces) initially expressed some concerns about the M-Paisa technology, they ended up acknowledging that it could strongly mitigate the risk of corruption by providing people with a real control over their money.

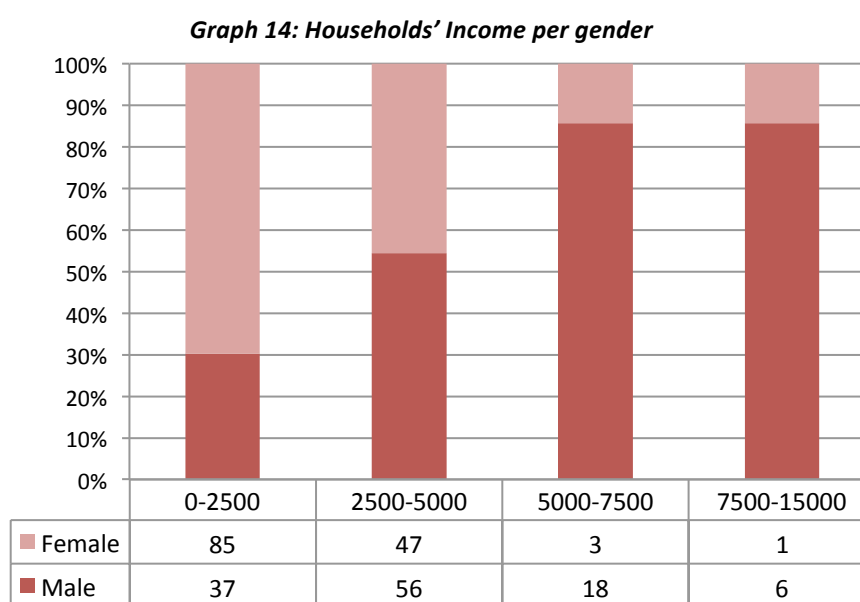
In this regard, there is probably some effort to make in terms of awareness raising and community mobilization around the mobile cash transfer technology: *“If NGOs working in the KIS want more buy-in from communities and beneficiaries, they have to explain them, step by step, why and how M-Paisa (Roshan) or M-Hawala (Etisalat) can reduce the influence of middle-men and avoid food diversion, for instance. It has not been done enough on this project, whereas DFID had specifically asked (the implementing NGOs) to convey this message” (Telecommunications Expert and ex-Roshan Sales Manager).*

Likewise, the paradoxically poor demand for mobile cash transfer in the surveyed KIS may be attributed to the novelty and lack of “local credentials” of this assistance modality; as such, to increase the local buy-in of such a clearly successful and necessary assistance tool, WHH should seek to improve its future mobile cash transfer programme through: 1) a more in-depth and long-term awareness raising approach with beneficiary communities; 2) training sessions that better take into account the socio-economic characteristics and cultural specificities of the targeted communities.

¹⁴ Samuel Hall, 2013. *“Humanitarian Assistance through Mobile Cash Transfer in Northern Afghanistan: An Evaluation of a DFID Pilot Project in Faryab, Jawzjan and Samangan”*, commissioned by the UK Department for International Development.

3. Vulnerability variable 1: Gender

A breakdown of the surveyed heads of household per gender clearly shows that female-headed households are at greater risk of poverty: 70% of the households (85/122) in the lower quartile are female-headed households. The focus groups confirmed this quantitative analysis and often highlighted the difficult – if not impossible – socio-economic integration of widows within their community: *“As widows, it is difficult for us to get a living and have a decent job. People help us in this community but it is more difficult for women, and especially widows, to make a living: the work of the dead husband cannot be replaced by children or women” (Female Beneficiary, 24, Tamir-e-Millie).*



In this perspective, the review team sought to identify if female-headed households' socio-economic vulnerability had a negative impact on their capacity to equally benefit from the pilot project:

- Satisfaction rates for the three types of in-kind and cash transfer modalities (by gender):**
 The below table shows the satisfaction rates of male and female beneficiaries by type of assistance modality. The review team only interviewed beneficiaries who had actually received one of the three types of assistance – in other words, direct cash beneficiaries were not asked if they were satisfied (or had been, in the past) with in-kind assistance. Aside from these excellent satisfaction rates – and the necessary *caveat* that was mentioned earlier about a risk of distortion or response bias – an important finding is that relatively more men favour cash assistance over in-kind assistance, whereas relatively more women tend to favour in-kind assistance. Our focus groups with female beneficiaries confirmed that cash is often considered as an intangible asset by many female household members – an asset that can be used to repay some debts or a loan, but that is less likely to be used for immediate basic needs, whereas fuel, food, blankets, and in-kind assistance in general can be more easily profitable to a household in need.

Table 11: Satisfaction rates for direct cash, in-kind, and mobile cash transfer (endline - by gender)

	Cash Assistance	In-kind/Fuel	Mobile Cash
Male	100%	93%	98%
Female	98%	100%	93%
Total	99%	96%	96%

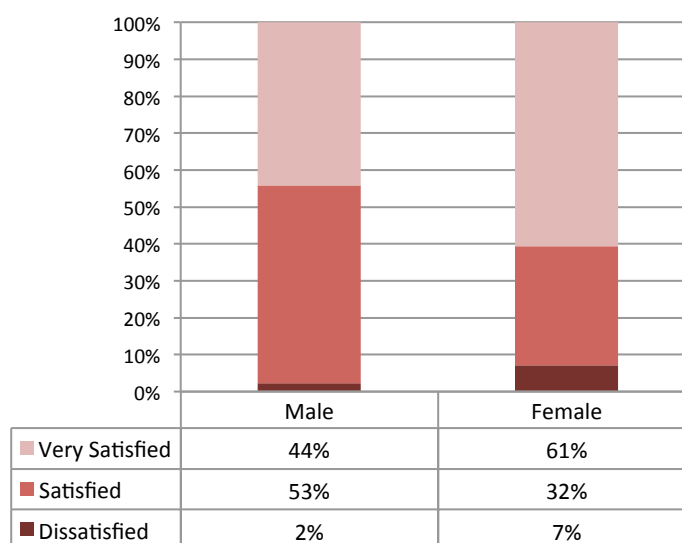
This assumption is corroborated by the following table: when asked which type of assistance they would prefer in the future, female respondents are relatively more inclined to favour in-kind assistance (either fuel or food) over direct or mobile cash assistance.

Table 12: Preferences for future assistance (endline - by gender)

	Cash Assistance	In-Kind	Mobile Cash
Male	85%	11%	4%
Female	74%	20%	6%

- Satisfaction rate for the mobile cash transfer initiative by gender:** As shown in the graph below, when asked if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the pilot project, there are minor differences between male and female mobile cash transfer beneficiaries, with 98% (male) and 93% (female) of respondents reported being either very satisfied or satisfied with the mobile cash initiative after the second phase of the distribution (endline). However a few (3) female beneficiaries showed a strong resentment towards the project – the review team did a brief follow-up phone interview with two of them and it appears that their main complain was about receiving money (either directly or via mobile) versus in-kind assistance: *“When NGOs give us money, it helps us reimburse our debts but we cannot feed our family” (Female Beneficiary, 32)*. As such, these opinions are not directed against mobile cash transfer *per se* but show some of the detrimental effects potentially associated with (mobile) cash distribution. It corroborates the hypothesis developed in the analysis of female and male preferences towards cash or in-kind assistance.

Graph 15: Satisfaction rate for mobile cash transfer per gender



- **Attitude towards mobile cash transfer (by gender):**

Owning a phone (all respondents)... For both midline and end-line, with minor differences, if 80% of the male respondents reported owning an individual cell phone, only 35% of female respondents said that they owned their cell phone. It points to two conclusions: 1) considering the role played by cell phones in the social and community inclusion process, men tend to hold the main “communications tool” of the family (be it for social, cultural, or economic reasons) and women are less likely to communicate outside of their immediate physical circle; 2) from this point of view, the mobile cash transfer initiative may represent an opportunity to socially empower female beneficiaries (especially vulnerable widows) by providing them with a cell-phone.

Understanding the concept of mobile cash transfer (M-Paisa beneficiaries only)... An area of vigilance for WHH is probably related to the relatively poor understanding of what M-Paisa (or mobile cash transfer) is. Based on the quantitative interviews and the focus groups that were conducted during the baseline, midline, and endline phases, there does not seem to be a clear *conceptual* understanding of the relationship between mobile phone technology and cash assistance. “People are happy to have a phone, they see that they receive money, but they don’t withdraw it themselves and do not always understand how interesting it can be for them and their families. Also, they don’t get why the NGO uses mobiles and not direct distribution” (Local Retailer, 25). In this respect: 1) female beneficiaries are generally less at ease than male beneficiaries, as shown in the below table; 2) the percentage of adequate answers remains extremely low for both the midline and the endline phases of the survey, with respectively 88% and 93% of female beneficiaries ignoring what M-Paisa or mobile cash transfer is.

Table 13: Theoretical understanding of mobile cash transfer (baseline & endline - by gender)

	Right answer	Wrong answer	I don’t know	Trend
Male (midline)	38%	4%	58%	-
Female (midline)	12%	38%	50%	-
Male (endline)	37%	7%	56%	-1
Female (endline)	7%	4%	89%	-4

Withdrawing money (M-Paisa beneficiaries only)... The low figures on beneficiaries’ theoretical understanding of M-Paisa are also confirmed when assessing respondents’ practical capacity to withdraw money: while almost half (endline) of male respondents report knowing how to do it, only 11% of the M-Paisa female beneficiaries said that they knew how to withdraw money. Moreover, when comparing the midline and endline results, the trends are clearly negative (-9 percentage points for male and -10 for female respondents): “For us, this technology is new and people are interested but also not used to it. So after the first training, they forget, little by little, how to do it. And after one month, they simply don’t know how to do it anymore” (Community Leader, 42).

Table 14: Practical knowledge of withdrawal operations (baseline & endline - by gender)

	Yes, and I have already done it	Yes, but I have never done it	No, I do not know how to do it	Trend
Male (midline)	50%	8%	42%	-
Female (midline)	12%	9%	79%	-
Total (endline)	33%	8%	59%	-
Male (endline)	42%	7%	51%	-9
Female (endline)	7%	4%	89%	-10
Total (endline)	28%	6%	66%	-7

Cashing in (M-Paisa beneficiaries only)... A significant difference between male and female mobile cash transfer beneficiaries is the delay in cashing the money. While a large majority (83%) of male beneficiaries will seek to immediately withdraw their cash (or have it withdrawn by someone else), more than half female respondents said that they had waited for more than two days before cashing in. Such a clear difference would require further research from WHH field officers, however it tends to confirm another finding with regards to the attitude of women towards cash in the surveyed areas: *“It is not good to have too much cash on you – even at home. So we asked the money to the NGO only we needed to spend it”* (Female Beneficiary, 62).

Table 15: Time before cashing in (endline - by gender)

	Same day	Next day	2 days later	More than 2 days
Male	83%	12%	0%	5%
Female	15%	19%	15%	51%

4. Vulnerability variable 2: Literacy

The mobile cash transfer technology is a relatively more complex assistance modality, as it requires a minimal level of understanding from beneficiaries. A minimal level of education is required to actually benefit from the scheme: attending training sessions, using basic numeracy and literacy skills, interacting with M-Paisa resellers, etc. In this regard, if the overall satisfaction rates of both literate and illiterate beneficiaries look quite similar (98% of “satisfied” or “very satisfied” among illiterate beneficiaries and 93% among literate beneficiaries - endline), one could argue that the lack of basic education may be an obstacle to M-Paisa beneficiaries. To validate this hypothesis, the review team broke down beneficiaries’ attitude towards mobile cash transfer assistance by level of education¹⁵.

Understanding the concept of mobile cash transfer (M-Paisa beneficiaries only)... Considering M-Paisa beneficiaries’ answers to the question what M-Paisa / mobile cash transfer was?, two key findings should be highlighted:

- 1) With only 12% and 14% of right answers for (respectively) the midline and endline survey phases, the quantitative survey indicates that illiterate mobile cash transfer beneficiaries have only a vague theoretical understanding of this transfer modality, despite the training sessions they had attended;
- 2) Comparatively, literate mobile cash transfer beneficiaries have a much better understanding of this distribution modality, with 57% (midline) and 43% (endline) of interviewees reporting understanding M-Paisa and being able to provide an adequate answer – as noted by one of our focus group participants, education is clearly a strong barrier to access for many beneficiaries: *“This (programme) is not for me. I can’t read and I cannot keep things in my mind. I don’t understand it but I trust it is good for this community and also for my family” (Male beneficiary, 43).*
- 3) Last, there is a negative trend between the midline and the endline (-14 percentage points) among literate respondents. It may suggest that if a better level of education is a key factor of understanding and ownership of the objectives and advantages of this assistance modality, it does not imply that the explanations and lessons learned during the initial training session will last more than a few weeks.

Table 16: Theoretical understanding of withdrawal operations (baseline & endline - by literacy level)

	Right answer	Wrong answer	I don’t know	Trend
Illiterate (midline)	12%	22%	66%	-
Literate (midline)	57%	17%	26%	-
Illiterate (endline)	14%	7%	79%	+2
Literate (endline)	43%	3%	54%	-14

¹⁵ The category of ‘literate’ encompasses: literate people with no schooling, primary school, secondary school, high school, up to higher education.

Withdrawing money (M-Paisa beneficiaries only)...

If we now focus on the practical understanding of mobile cash transfer assistance, similar conclusions can also be drawn. As shown in the table below, when asking beneficiaries if they have already withdrawn cash or could potentially do it, their answers clearly corroborate our first findings:

- 1) The lack of education is a key explanatory variable and it does undermine beneficiaries' capacity to use M-Paisa and withdraw cash – the midline survey shows that if 70% of literate beneficiaries report having the (actual) capacity to withdraw cash, it is the case for only 28% of illiterate respondents;
- 2) Overall, the comparison of the midline and endline surveys also confirms a negative trend, with a decrease by 8 percentage points for both literate and illiterate respondents: *"If you don't practice, you forget or you don't dare to do it alone"* (Female beneficiary, 28);
- 3) More specifically, literate people tend to "forget" more than illiterate people, with a sharper decrease in their capacity to actually or potentially withdraw cash through M-Paisa, from 70% to 50% between the first and second phases of the survey.

Table 17: Practical knowledge of withdrawal operations (baseline & endline - by literacy level)

	Yes, and I have already done it	Yes, but I have never done it	No, I do not know how to do it	Trend
Illiterate (midline)	20%	8%	72%	-
Literate (midline)	61%	9%	30%	-
Total (endline)	33%	8%	59%	-
Illiterate (endline)	19%	4%	77%	-5
Literate (endline)	43%	7%	50%	-20
Total (endline)	28%	5%	67%	-8

To conclude on education, there is no doubt that literacy plays a key role in beneficiaries' ability to understand, memorize and utilize the mobile cash transfer technology. For the moment, there is clearly some room for improvement, at three levels:

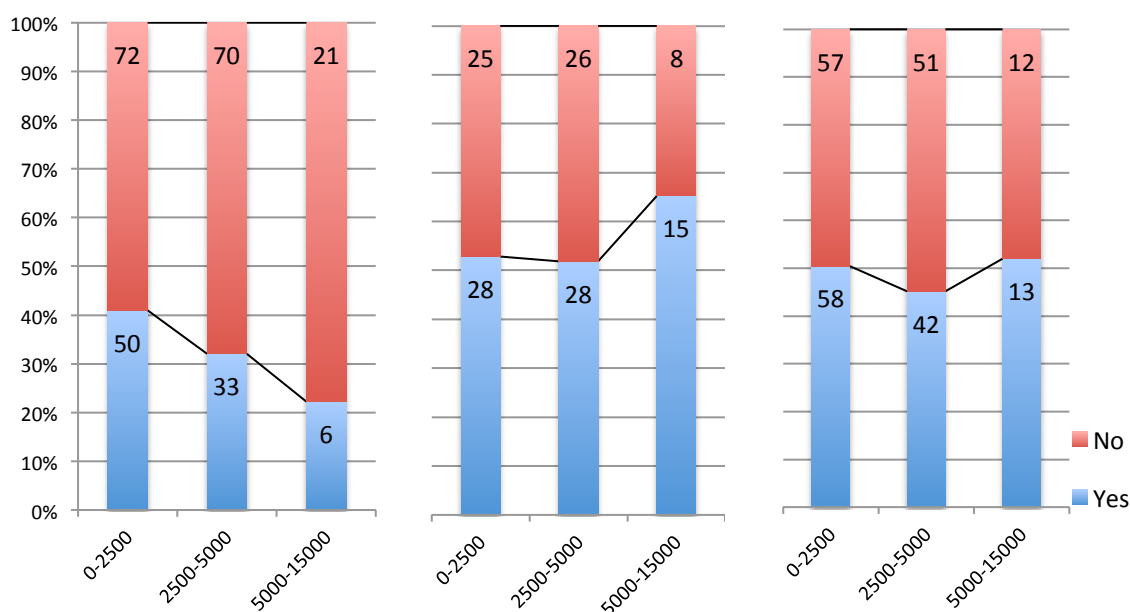
- 1) General improvement of the quality of the training sessions;
- 2) Pedagogic adaptation to different types of beneficiaries (literate vs. illiterate);
- 3) Refreshing courses through practical exercises (providing that WHH decides to launch a longer-term / multi-year mobile cash transfer programme).

5. Vulnerability variable 3: Household income

Income may be a determining factor of beneficiaries' capacity to optimize their participation in a mobile cash transfer programme. An increased economic vulnerability may lead households to a more limited access to information, socialization, and education – and hence to key variables to consider when assessing the implementation of the initiative.

A rapid assessment of the three assistance modalities suggests a relative homogeneity when it comes to targeting the most economically vulnerable households: the three types of assistance seem to target equally the poorest (poor among the poor, with an income lower than 2,500 AFA a month) and the 'best-off' (more than 5,000 AFA) a month. There does seem to be a slight difference, as suggested in the graphs below, with direct cash distribution beneficiaries, as it seems to prioritize poorest households. However, the sampling size of the "best-off category" is not representative enough to draw any definitive conclusions and our focus groups did not corroborate this latter hypothesis: *"The most important thing is to provide assistance to these communities and households. Not only for the poorest but also for the few of them who have a job or a small income – their situation is not that better in the end"* (Elder, Bagh Dawood).

Graph 16, 17, 18: Beneficiaries of Cash distribution / In-kind (fuel-wood) / Mobile cash (per income)



Focusing specifically on mobile cash transfer beneficiaries, both the theoretical and practical understanding of beneficiaries were assessed to validate the hypothesis that income is a key variable impacting beneficiaries' capacity to take the ownership and use mobile cash transfer.

Understanding the concept of mobile cash transfer (M-Paisa beneficiaries only)... A breakdown by income confirms that poorest beneficiaries tend to have more difficulties to understand what M-Paisa is, as only 12% of them (endline – 8% midline) can provide a satisfactory explanation, while 27% of the best-off (endline – 48% midline) gave the right answer. The negative trend between the two phases (-8 percentage points) of the survey corroborates what has already been observed before: as only a few beneficiaries are directly active in cash withdrawal, most of them tend to progressively forget what this technically more complex and intellectually more demanding assistance modality is about.

Table 18: Theoretical understanding of mobile cash transfer (baseline & endline - by income)

Income in AFA	Right answer	Wrong answer	I don't know	Trend
0-2499	8%	16%	76%	-
2500-4999	41%	0%	59%	-
5000 +	48%	8%	44%	-
Total (midline)	33%	9%	58%	-
0-2499	12%	13%	75%	+4
2500-4999	36%	0%	64%	-5
5000 +	27%	20%	53%	-21
Total (endline)	25%	9%	66%	-8

Withdrawing money (M-Paisa beneficiaries only)... The conclusions on beneficiaries' theoretical understanding of M-Paisa are not only confirmed but reinforced when assessing respondents' practical capacity to withdraw money: as shown in the table below, the midline survey suggests that poorest respondents are less likely to withdraw money themselves (5% only, to be compared with 30% for the second tier and 40% for the best-off) and the endline reveals that such a lack of practice finally had an extremely negative impact on poorest beneficiaries' ability to withdraw money, as almost 9 out of 10 reported ignoring how to withdraw money in practice (-44 percentage point between the mid- and endline phases).

Table 19: Practical knowledge of withdrawal operations (baseline & endline - by income)

Income in AFA	Yes, and I have already done it	Yes, but I have never done it	No, I do not know how to do it	Trend
0-2499	5%	50%	45%	-
2500-4999	30%	11%	59%	-
5000 +	40%	4%	56%	-
Total (midline)	26%	20%	54%	-
0-2499	7%	4%	89%	-44%
2500-4999	32%	4%	64%	-5%
5000 +	47%	13%	40%	+16%
Total (endline)	25%	6%	69%	-15%

6. Vulnerability variable 4: Age

As shown in Samuel Hall’s recent *Youth Participatory Assessment*, youth (15-24 in this survey and according to ILO’s definition) is among the most vulnerable socio-economic populations in Afghanistan: “the labour market is such in Afghanistan that youth often end up being under employed or working as trainees without proper compensation because of their age or lack of skills”¹⁶. On the other hand, one could expect from younger beneficiaries to be relatively more at ease with new technologies. As such, the review team assessed youth’s theoretical and practical understanding of the M-Paisa system.

The findings are not as clear as for gender, income, and education: 1) these vulnerable sub-populations are clear explanatory variables: female-headed and lower-income households, as well as unskilled beneficiaries are less likely to optimize their use of the mobile cash transfer modality (at least in its current form); 2) age seems to be a more complex variable and there is no clear positive correlation with an adequate understanding and use of the M-Paisa system.

However, our quantitative and qualitative assessments highlight the following:

- The two tables below show a better understanding of the M-Paisa system among the 15-24 year old sub-group, with 48% of the younger respondents at midline and 40% at endline who reported understanding the M-Paisa mobile cash transfer and its objectives: “For our generation it is easy and this assistance is better for us because we understand it and we can help other people in the community...” (Female beneficiary, 23). Likewise, a more significant percentage of youth know how to withdraw cash through M-Paisa: 52% (midline – and 38% at endline) say that they can/could use the M-Paisa system, whereas only 28% of the 25-34 year old cohort (and 37% at endline) and 40% of the 35-44 year old cohort (27% at endline) answered positively.
- But if youth tend to be more at ease with the mobile cash transfer modality, it is also worth noting that the interest in the M-Paisa system is not only a question of age and generation. Both table show contradictory trends that suggest that age is not necessarily an obstacle to the understanding and use of M-Paisa: “We want to understand this system. It looks interesting and the training showed us a lot of possible things to do with it. And also, we use the cell phone everyday, so we need to learn” (Male beneficiary, 54).

Table 20: Theoretical understanding of mobile cash transfer (baseline & endline - by age)

Age	Right answer	Wrong answer	I don’t know	Trend
15-24 (midline)	48%	16%	36%	-
25-34 (midline)	14%	36%	50%	-
35-44 (midline)	10%	25%	65%	-
45 + (midline)	14%	7%	79%	-
15-24 (endline)	31%	3%	66%	-17
25-34 (endline)	25%	6%	69%	+11
35-44 (endline)	0%	0%	100%	-10
45 + (endline)	33%	13%	53%	+19

¹⁶ See Samuel Hall Consulting (2013). “Afghanistan’s Future in Transition: A Participatory Assessment of the Afghan Youth”, research commissioned by DMOYA, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF; Kabul, 2013 – available at: <http://samuelhall.org/REPORTS/Future%20in%20Transition:%20A%20Participatory%20Assessment%20of%20the%20Afghan%20Youth.pdf>

Table 21: Practical knowledge of withdrawal operations (baseline & endline - by age)

Age	Yes, and I have already done it	Yes, but I have never done it	No, I do not know how to do it	Trend
15-24 (midline)	40%	12%	48%	-
25-34 (midline)	14%	14%	71%	-
35-44 (midline)	35%	5%	55%	-
45 + (midline)	29%	0%	71%	-
15-24 (endline)	34%	4%	62%	-14%
25-34 (endline)	31%	6%	63%	+9%
35-44 (endline)	18%	9%	73%	-13%
45 + (endline)	20%	7%	73%	-2%

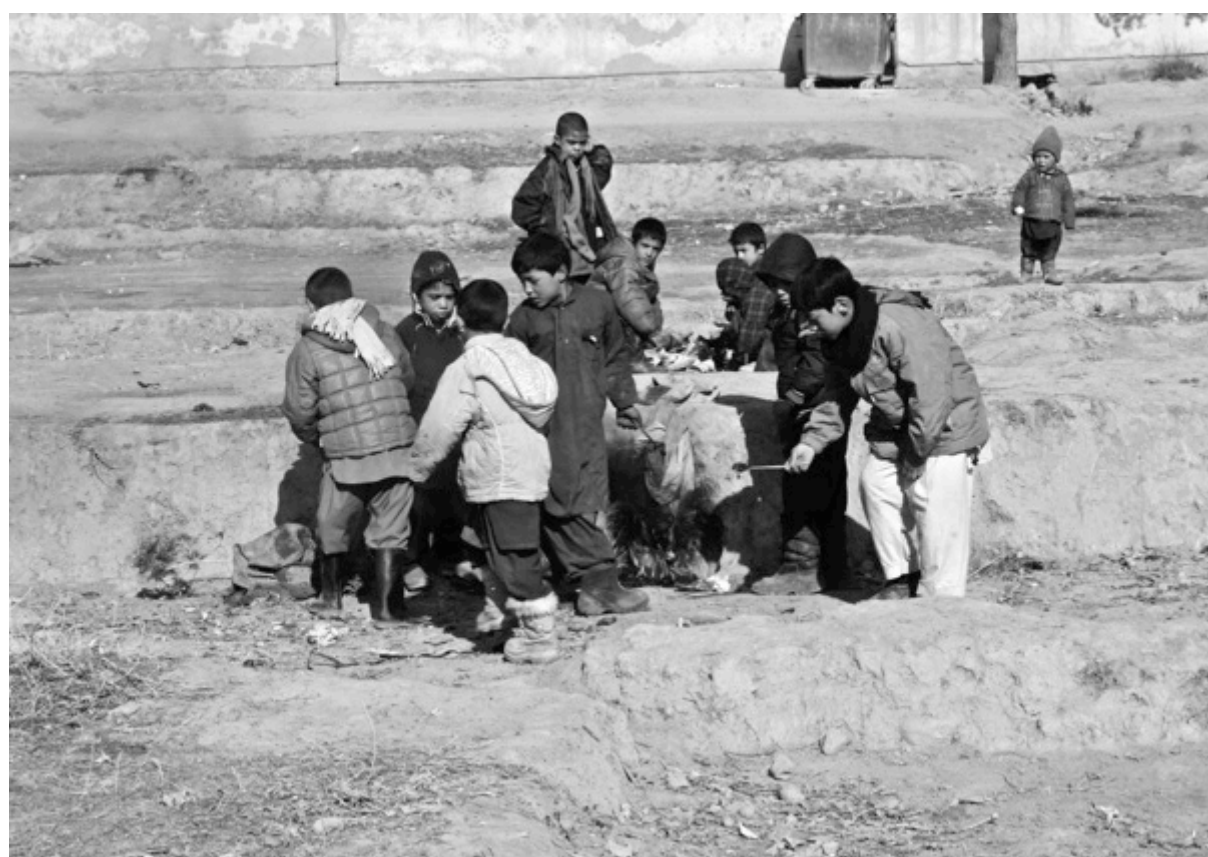


Image 4: IDP children in Bagh Dawood lighting a fire

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both WHH and DRC, with the support of OCHA, give IDPs in the Kabul Informal Settlements the much-needed means to survive the harsh winters of this region. Some methods and activities can however be improved and developed in order to reach an optimal service for the affected communities. The rapid assessment of location and inhabitant profiles, as well as the key findings of the comparative impact evaluation of the different distribution modalities bring us to a series of conclusions and strategic trade-offs.

1. Key recommendations for programming

Keep (direct and/or mobile) cash distribution as a key option: The current literacy and numeracy levels of the populations surveyed do not seem suited to mobile cash transfer methods, *or* would require greater adaptation and training to tailor M-Paisa to a largely illiterate, displaced and socially and economically isolated subgroup. However, the lack of diversification of income and high dependency ratios point to difficulties of households to gather sufficient cash to fulfil basic food needs – in this context, cash injection can be the fastest way to avoid life-threatening situations for men, women and children during the winter season. In these regards, the review team considers that: on the one hand, in-kind assistance and cash distribution should be considered as necessary instruments of the humanitarian toolkit; on the other, direct cash distribution and mobile cash transfer are not mutually exclusive and should be considered as complementary. Mobile cash transfer will naturally be effective in cases where telecommunications infrastructure currently exists, which could limit its utility in rural/remote areas but make it specifically relevant to urban settings (such as the Kabul Informal Settlements) – however, this study shows that some vulnerable subgroups of the surveyed KIS (women, lower-income households, illiterate or unskilled, and youth) still struggle to understand the concept of M-Paisa in both theory and practice. The second subsection precisely aims to identify beneficiary selection criteria for each modality (in-kind, direct cash, and mobile cash).

Keep focusing on in-kind assistance, while improving the quality, diversity and adequacy of the selected items – Identify the areas and families that are particularly at risk (specifically with regards to shelter) and offer them a comprehensive assistance package that includes a wide variety of food and non-food items with very little or no cash. So far most of the in-kind assistance has consisted of fuel, clothing and food: based on our socio-economic assessment, in-kind assistance needs should focus first and foremost on food aid, and second, on fuel for cooking and heating as the current makeshift solutions can negatively impact health levels. Last, it should be noted that the relatively poor quality and lack of diversity of food-items have been recurrently criticized – there might also be a significant margin for improvement here. Given the tendency of poor families to rely on reduced quality and quantity of food, and to borrow food from relatives and friends, or on credit, it can be assumed that cash injections will not be used towards alleviating food insecurity. However, it should be a priority as it can ensure long-term protection and a proper childhood development. As a result, in-kind assistance needs should focus first and foremost on food aid, and second, on fuel for cooking and heating as the current makeshift solutions can negatively impact health levels.

Scale-up and replicate the mobile cash pilot project: By nature the M-Paisa system presents robust guarantees in terms of security and transparency in a worsening economic and political context. WHH's pilot project in the KIS has proven extremely successfully and is probably better tailored to the fast-evolving security context (remote management, monitoring, accountability). Following this logic, the review team considers that the pilot should naturally lead to a more ambitious phase,

targeting more IDPs and KIS areas. However, replicating mobile-cash assistance in the KIS will only be strategically useful for beneficiaries or for their other adjacent activities if IDPs (and especially vulnerable subgroups) are made aware and trained in the proper use and benefits of M-Paisa. In particular, there is no doubt that the vulnerability variables that this study has identified play a key role in beneficiaries' ability to understand, memorize and utilize the mobile cash transfer technology.

Tailor M-Paisa training sessions to the beneficiaries (and especially the most vulnerable): WHH's interest in mobile-cash assistance in the KIS might not be strategically useful for their beneficiaries nor for their other adjacent activities unless IDPs are made aware and trained in the proper use and benefits of M-PAISA. In these regards, the training sessions have not been successful, as: 1) only a minority of IDPs have attended a session; 2) training sessions have not been used to raise communities and households' awareness of the positive aspects of the M-Paisa technology. Training sessions need to be drastically improved and better tailored to IDP communities. In particular, improving the lives of women, youth, lower income households, and unskilled/illiterate beneficiaries, through M-Paisa will require: i) a general improvement of the quality of the training sessions; ii) a pedagogic adaptation to different types of beneficiaries (and especially to the most vulnerable), and; iii) refreshing courses through practical exercises (providing that WHH decides to launch a longer-term / multi-year mobile cash transfer programme).

Adopt a specific approach towards women: Female headed households tend to be the most vulnerable (lower incomes and literacy rates). As such, in designing cash transfer interventions and/or in-kind distributions, it is important to take into account the safety of accessing the market, local financial institution, or M'Paisa reseller. More generally, and as discussed in the last section of this report, participation in mobile cash transfer programmes may be more difficult for them. It may also increase their risk of exploitation. If this is the case, extra support and training should be built into the programme schedule and budget.

Develop training sessions, beyond livelihoods, in nutrition and health. Findings show that a third component of aid – beyond cash and in-kind assistance – is training. Other reports – like the *Samuel Hall/Solidarités* 2013 report – provide a solid overview of the type of livelihood interventions and training to be considered. This research highlights another key area or protection concern: training in nutrition and maternal health are needed to ensure a stronger protection framework that minimises health risks, in a context where children have been widely reported to get sick and even die in the Afghan capital during the winter¹⁷.

Identify vulnerable subgroups of the population (such as women, youth, or illiterate) and develop specific programmes, using M-Paisa and/or combining different modalities – Samuel Hall would suggest the NGOs to focus on a variety of cash and in-kind assistance used in a complementary way and targeting both the men and the women separately in order to increase the chances of seeing households cope better during the winter. Women are the only group that consistently raised the need for combinations of assistance needs rather than solely cash. Even if they are a minority and some might not have expressed their point of view more openly, it is crucial to target those who have a better understanding of the family needs in terms of essential items. By finding culturally sensitive and practical methods of entrusting certain sums of aid money or products only to women, NGOs will enable them to better provide for their husband and children with fewer risks of having men diverting the assistance.

¹⁷ See Rod Nordland's "Afghan Refugee Children Perish in Harsh Winter" (*New York Times*, May 9, 2012) available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/10/world/asia/winter-killed-at-least-100-afghan-refugee-children-study-estimates.html?_r=0

On the longer-run, exit the poverty cycle through relief/resilience activities: What is provided by WHH and DRC, both cash and goods, is necessary for the communities in the KIS but it is not enough for them to considerably exit the poverty cycle they endure. Therefore, assistance alone is not as effective as when combined with other development activities such as reintegration into the labour market or medical support. Even though cash assistance (and direct cash assistance in particular) appears to have the biggest progress in terms of household financial perceptions, those do not show longer-term socio-economic impact. As highlighted in the KIS Task Force Report *“The KIS Task Force members realize that there is a risk of creating aid dependency when intervening for many years in a chronic emergency situation like the KIS. (...) As a first step to break the aid dependency cycle is to provide relief assistance based on vulnerability and/or restrict distributions to absolute essentials, as part of the action plan for the IDP policy”*¹⁸. In particular, Winter assistance by itself simply perpetuates a cycle of mere subsistence amongst IDPs in the KIS. Instead, by making sure that beneficiaries can obtain skills (for instance) in a variety of sectors that go beyond daily labour, NGOs can offer a real opportunity for the individuals to save money in the near future.

Promote information sharing and operational coordination with other stakeholders (donors and other NGOs) – It is crucial to coordinate upfront with donors as well as other humanitarian implementing partners operating in the KIS to further define and share common programming, standards, feedbacks, data, etc. It would help the Task Force optimise its actions towards IDPs living in the KIS.

Prefer objective community and context analyses – Surprisingly, this report seems to contradict the findings of the KIS Task Force post-distribution monitoring and evaluation conducted during the Winter 2013-14: *“when asked their preference, 82% of the respondents stated that they preferred receiving in-kind assistance rather than aid in form of cash (18%)”*¹⁹. By contrast, this report finds that on average beneficiaries prefer direct cash distribution (70%). Such a drastic gap between two contemporaneous surveys conducted in the KIS may simply be: 1) a change in preference based on what they know is possible; 2) a consequence of the quality of the direct cash distribution programme. However, the review team also considers that a certain “survey fatigue” and “a strong acquiescence bias” may negatively impact any research undertaken in the KIS, where multiple studies have been conducted over the past ten years and where respondents may be tempted to convey messages to the government or the NGO rather than reporting their actual perceptions, needs, and practices. Organisations operating in the KIS should prioritize *objective* assessments (of the communities, socio-economic context, and household profiles) over *subjective* needs assessments.

Set a multi-faceted monitoring system – 1) Regularly assess the socio-economic impact (short- and long-term) of the project through a longitudinal monitoring of a panel of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries; 2) On a monthly basis, assess the market prices of a basket of food and non-food items in IDP camps that have a representative number of beneficiaries (as well as neighbouring communities); 3) Collect data on local markets as a warning system to prevent inflation; 4) Rely on a triangulated M&E approach (internal, external, community-based) to fine-tune the impact assessment while creating a higher sense of empowerment among IDP communities and beneficiaries.

¹⁸ KIS Task Force, Kabul, 2014. *Heating Fuel and NFI - Winter Distributions in Kabul Informal Settlements, Post Distribution Monitoring and Evaluation.*

¹⁹ KIS Task Force, Kabul, 2014. *Heating Fuel and NFI - Winter Distributions in Kabul Informal Settlements, Post Distribution Monitoring and Evaluation.*

Improve communication and transparency with communities and beneficiaries – Communicate widely and transparently project’s purpose and criteria and establish dialogue and complaint mechanisms accessible and clear to all community members. Communities need to take the full ownership of the project and must be fully committed to its success, so that they can be fully associated to the implementation and the monitoring of the project. Likewise, NGOs should better Informing beneficiaries of their rights through awareness raising sessions that would lay out: 1) how beneficiaries are selected; 2) how much (cash or in-kind) they should receive with what frequency; 3) when they should receive the forecasted assistance (with expected dates); 4) who they should contact to complain about the programme.

2. Balancing interventions: (mobile) cash vs. in-kind

While there is significant evidence of the impact of in-kind and cash transfer programmes – both direct cash distribution and mobile cash transfer – on improving specific socio-economic outcomes, there is still limited evidence on how to prioritise one transfer modality over another. The objective of this second section is to help WHH and DRC better identify the assistance modalities they should be using in the areas where they operate. The quantitative survey suggests that the key vulnerability variables that determine the theoretical and practical understanding of the mobile cash transfer technology are: 1) gender; 2) literacy; 3) income. As shown in the table 22 below, however, these three variables are clearly interdependent: for instance, female-headed households are generally poorer than male-headed households, while education and income are almost systematically correlated. Finally, and based on the three *key vulnerability variables* that were defined in section four, three subgroups of beneficiaries can be defined:

- **Illiterate female beneficiaries with lower income (< 2500 AFA): IN-KIND ASSISTANCE**

In areas with high rates of illiteracy – as is the case in the Kabul Informal Settlements or IDP camps – programme recipients might not be able to use the mobile cash transfer technology on their own, implying that they might need help from other family members, friends, NGO field officers or M-Paisa reseller. This could potentially limit the use of the technology by programme recipients for informal private transfers or in accessing other mobile financial services. Moreover, as shown in the endline phase of the survey, illiterate people would need tailored and recurring training sessions to improve their understanding of the M-Paisa technology. For the NGO (WHH or DRC), there is clearly a cost-effectiveness issue here and one could legitimately argue that it is not worth spending money on a transfer modality that requires significant recurring investments (training sessions, refresher courses, etc.), when beneficiaries struggle with its concept and practical use. By contrast, the quantitative survey shows that: 1) beneficiaries do not resell in-kind assistance; 2) money (direct or mobile cash) is withdrawn and immediately spent; 3) correlatively, their lack of savings and lower social inclusion mechanically reduce poorer households’ trade terms and bargaining power. As NGOs can have better trade terms and benefit from significant economies of scale, the review team suggests favouring in-kind assistance with poorer households, to maximise the cost/volume of the humanitarian assistance while better taking into account beneficiaries’ situation and profile.

- **Illiterate male and female beneficiaries with higher income (>2500AFA): DIRECT CASH DISTRIBUTION**

As the second group of beneficiaries is socially and economically more included than the first one, we may assume that their resilience to emergency situations is higher. Their situation of chronic poverty can thus be more easily alleviated with direct cash assistance, as: 1) conventional material

distributions may not be appropriate in an urban cash-based economy with significant market activity; 2) urban populations are dependent on cash for their household expenses — such as rent, utilities, transportation and food — making cash transfer programmes appropriate; and 3) urban markets are likely to provide most, or all, of what beneficiaries need to recover from an emergency situation. On the longer run, cash may help ‘richer’ households access health and education services – hence alleviate chronic poverty issues and not only humanitarian issues. However, the review team would not prioritize mobile cash transfer technologies with this second group of beneficiaries, as their low literacy level is a major obstacle to their understanding of the M-Paisa system²⁰.

- **Literate ‘male’ beneficiaries with higher income (>2500AFA): MOBILE CASH TRANSFER**

The assumption that illiteracy is a major obstacle to the theoretical and practical understanding of the mobile cash transfer technology has been clearly validated in the three phases of the evaluation. Likewise, female-headed households and female beneficiaries, who are often the poorest and less educated, clearly face more difficulties with mobile cash transfer technologies – while subjectively favouring other assistance modalities (in-kind and direct cash). By contrast, literate male beneficiaries with higher incomes are more likely to adequately use M-Paisa, while offering interesting opportunities. As shown in table 22 and the graph below: out of the beneficiaries who had more than 5,000 AFA of household monthly income, only 14% were female respondents. Furthermore, *“there is no evidence that mobile cash transfer is more relevant than direct cash distribution with poorer households. First, poorer people are generally illiterate and less at ease with mobile cash technology; moreover, they withdraw the cash immediately and almost never optimise the M-Paisa system. On the opposite and on the longer-run, richer households may use other applications and maximise their use of the mobile phone, providing that NGOs keep training them” (M-Paisa Expert, Kabul)*. In this regard, mobile cash transfer can serve multiple purposes with its beneficiaries: it is not only an emergency/humanitarian instrument, but it can also alleviate chronic poverty issues with ‘richer’ and more literate households, by strengthening their financial and economic inclusion (through the M-Paisa the system). In a context such as the KIS (easy access, good security) where NGOs can easily access beneficiaries, mobile cash transfer should be prioritized for people who can optimize it – and not only people who can use it, after many efforts and with no real added value (compared with the other two modalities).

Table 22: Beneficiary subgroups and assistance modalities

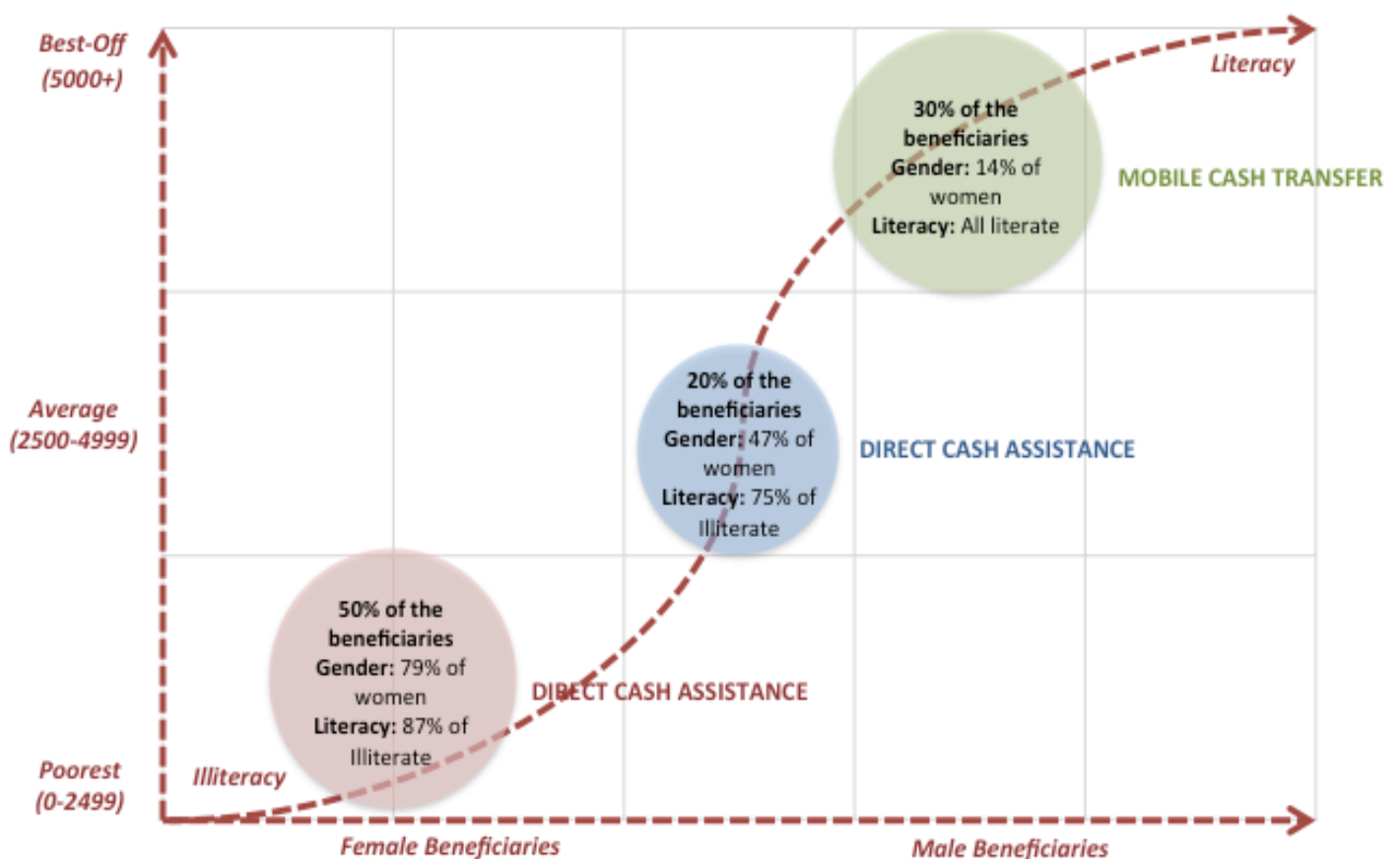
Monthly Income (AFA)			Level of Education (Baseline)	
			Illiterate	Literate
0-2500	Gender	Male	12	4
		Female	53	6
	Total		65	10
2500-5000	Gender	Male	36	24
		Female	48	4
	Total		84	28
5000-7500	Gender	Male	32	18
		Female	12	3
	Total		44	21
Total	Gender	Male	80	46
		Female	113	13
	Total		193	59

²⁰ And as it would be extremely cost-inefficient for WHH to spend time and money on training illiterate beneficiaries.

The graph below synthesizes the main findings of this section. When it comes to mobile cash transfer, the conclusions of this study are:

- The widespread growth of mobile phone coverage, cheaper mobile phone handsets and the development of M-Paisa services in developing countries may suggest that mobile cash transfer have (will) become the cornerstone of humanitarian assistance;
- However, if technical constraints can be easily overcome, especially in an urban context, the short-term impacts of the programme might not persist in the longer-term if the socio-economic characteristics (vulnerability variables: gender, literacy, and income) of the beneficiary households are not carefully assessed.
- In these regards, the review team would recommend a mix of in-kind, cash distribution, and mobile cash transfer to optimise the impact of the assistance programme while maximising its cost-efficiency (for the NGO).

Graph 19: Three-dimensional representation of recommended assistance modalities by vulnerability variables – gender, literacy and income



ANNEX: METHODOLOGY

1. Planning and sampling

The first stage of research comprised a detailed desk review of existing literature on assistance distribution in Afghanistan, and was supported by a number of key informant interviews with policy makers in government, civil-society organisations and international NGOs. The desk review and interviews allowed the research team to refine the scope of the study and identify potential information gaps through previous studies conducted by *Samuel Hall* researchers on migration and displacement in Afghanistan.²¹

The fieldwork was divided into three separate phases of three days each between late December 2013 and early February 2014 in order to contact the beneficiaries before the delivery of any assistance, after the first transfer and after the second (and last) transfer. By conducting the fieldwork over three distinct phases, we generate time-sensitive data that captures changes in beneficiaries' attitudes and behaviour:

- Phase 1 (Baseline) ran from December 22nd to 24th
- Phase 2 (Midline) ran from January 15th to 18th
- Phase 3 (Endline) ran from February 1st to 3rd

Each day, the team of seven surveyors overseen by a senior coordinator interviewed family members by first contacting the camp leader for approval, and then by crosschecking identities between the UNHCR tokens that IDPs showed and a list of beneficiaries provided by WHH and DRC in order to avoid any mistake. A broadly similar demographic composition was captured during each phase of the evaluation. The KIS sites in which the fieldwork was conducted were Tamir-e-Millie Bus, a camp near Darulaman Palace and the site for the new Afghan parliament, and Bagh Dawood; the first two were WHH locations while as the last one was covered by DRC. The NGOs provided the lists of their beneficiaries in each settlement and several small nearby locations (Parwan 2 and 3 and Nasaji Bagrami camps) were also surveyed in order to complement the sample size and draw comparisons between the groups.

²¹SH, 2012. *"Sustaining the Working Poor in Kabul Informal Settlements: An Evaluation of SI's Vocational Training Programme"*

SH, 2013. *"Cash Programme Review for IDPs in the Kabul Informal Settlements"*, commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council

SH, 2013. *"Humanitarian Assistance through Mobile Cash Transfer in Northern Afghanistan: An Evaluation of a DFID Pilot Project in Faryab, Jawzjan and Samangan"*, commissioned by DFID

SH, 2012. *"Challenges of IDP Protection: Research Study on the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Afghanistan"*, commissioned by NRC

2. Quantitative tools

The main quantitative tool – a household questionnaire – was divided into seven sections. Sections 1-3 focused on the individual profile of the interviewees along with their economic situation and displacement profile. Section 4 addressed livelihoods and perceptions of change in the households' coping strategies. Finally, sections 5, 6 and 7 each concentrated on the different types of assistance provided to IDPs – cash assistance, in-kind assistance and mobile-based cash assistance with some identical questions in every section to assess the respondents' use and preferences. Some questions were prompted in order to get a specific set of quantifiable responses from the interviewees, while as others were left unprompted so as to capture unanticipated responses. Each questionnaire took approximately half an hour to forty-five minutes. The two tables below provide a breakdown of interviews per camp, evaluation phase, gender and distribution modality – it should finally be noted that female respondents were not purposively targeted (with a specific quota) but the focus of this study on gender and an equal number of female and male interviewers naturally led the review team to conduct quantitative interviews with as many women as possible.

Table 23: Number of respondents per camp per evaluation phase

Camp	Number of respondents		
	Baseline	Midline	Endline
Tamir-e-Millie Bus	75	80	80
New Parliament	47	64	53
Bagh Dawood	84	84	84
Nasaji Bagrami	10	4	4
Parwan 2-3	37	20	31
Total	253	252	252

Table 24: Number of respondents per gender, distribution modality, and evaluation phase

BASELINE	Cash Assistance	Fuel / In-Kind	Mobile Cash	Total
Male		132		52%
Female		121		48%
Total (resp)		253		253
MIDLINE	Cash Assistance	Fuel / In-Kind	Mobile Cash	Total
Male	50	58	40	57%
Female	34	42	34	43%
Total (resp)	84	100	74	252 ²²
ENDLINE	Cash Assistance	Fuel / In-Kind	Mobile Cash	Total
Male	41	56	43	52%
Female	43	57	28	48%
Total (resp)	84	113	71	252 ²³

²² Some respondents benefitted from both cash assistance and in-kind, which is the reason why the total exceeds 252 (258).

²³ Some respondents benefitted from both cash assistance and in-kind, which is the reason why the total exceeds 252 (268).

3. Qualitative tools

During each of the three phases of the evaluation, three Focus Group Discussions were conducted with camp leaders and four to six other men in the communities. A total of 9 FGDs were conducted with 57 participants. This enabled the team to explore the current situation in the camps and potential sources of tension, relations with government and non-government actors and their opinions regarding assistance, in particular on the different benefits of each form of aid and the associated challenges.

Additional key informant interviews with development practitioners in Kabul gave perspective on the yearly challenges faced by the NGOs and international aid organisations in dealing with winterization strategies for IDPs and on the best mechanisms for effective relief in the camps. The format of these sessions was semi-formal, lasting approximately forty-five minutes.

4. Measuring impact

A set of indicators was developed in order to measure the comparative and time-sensitive impacts of these 3 types of assistance. Broadly, we assessed ‘impact’ in terms of:

1. Vulnerability – are people more or less vulnerable after receiving assistance?
2. Use of assistance – how did people use the assistance?
3. User experience – were beneficiaries satisfied with the means of distribution?

Table 25: List of indicators

Evaluation area	Indicator
Vulnerability	Households who consider themselves to be economically well-off
	Top concerns affecting IDP households
	IDPs’ most used coping strategy for the winter
Use of assistance	Top 3 usages of direct cash beneficiaries at endline
	Top 3 usages of in-kind beneficiaries at endline
	Top 3 usages of mobile cash beneficiaries at endline
	Beneficiaries selling or exchanging their in-kind assistance
User experience	Respondents who trust NGOs
	Respondents who are satisfied with their received assistance
	Respondents who mentioned the existence of corruption and diversion of assistance
	Preferred assistance of all beneficiaries
	Beneficiaries who appreciate the work of NGOs

5. Challenges and limitations

All three phases of the fieldwork ran smoothly thanks to the cooperation of WHH and DRC in providing the teams with exact names and ID card numbers of all the beneficiaries in order to avoid fraud. All communities were welcoming and elders always managed to set up a suitable area for the focus groups and interviews. Finding beneficiaries in Parwan 2 and 3 camps during the endline took additional time because many had gone to a presidential rally for the upcoming elections.

The most significant challenge was gaining the confidence of interviewees in order to generate honest answers. Many IDPs have been living in the KIS for many years, and are familiar with humanitarian and aid interventions.

As a result, getting people to speak openly about how they utilise assistance is often difficult because they are reluctant to criticise their benefactors or to admit that they misuse the assistance that they receive. Therefore we acknowledge potential underreporting of assistance misuse and underreporting of dissatisfaction with aid agencies. Qualitative depth interviews and focus groups provided important nuance on these subjects.

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