

Guidance for National Societies

**Conducting Monitoring and
Evaluation for COVID-19 Cash
and Voucher Assistance (CVA)**



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Background

The COVID-19 pandemic is having an impact not only on the health of people around the world but is significantly constraining people's ability to meet their basic needs and impairing their economic resilience. Given this is a disaster of unprecedented needs and many contexts have movement and access restrictions, CVA can be seen as a safer and efficient modality than in-kind, where conditions allow.

The purpose of this guidance is to enable National Societies to conduct appropriate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of their CVA programming during COVID-19. Whilst the restrictions in place may vary, it is likely that COVID-19 contexts will pose significant risks and difficulties to M&E due to restrictions on travel and movement of staff and volunteers, reduced availability of core M&E staff due to caring responsibilities or illness, or restrictions on group gatherings. In turn, the consequent reduction of M&E activities - while project delivery continues - increases the risk of poor project performance and reduces the visibility of potential risks (delivery, safeguarding, fraud, etc.).

Each country will have different set of COVID-19 restrictions and measures in place defined by its government. Similarly, each country may be experiencing a different level of threat or intensity of the emergency and its impact, at any given time. Therefore, the contents of this guidance can be adapted based on local context.

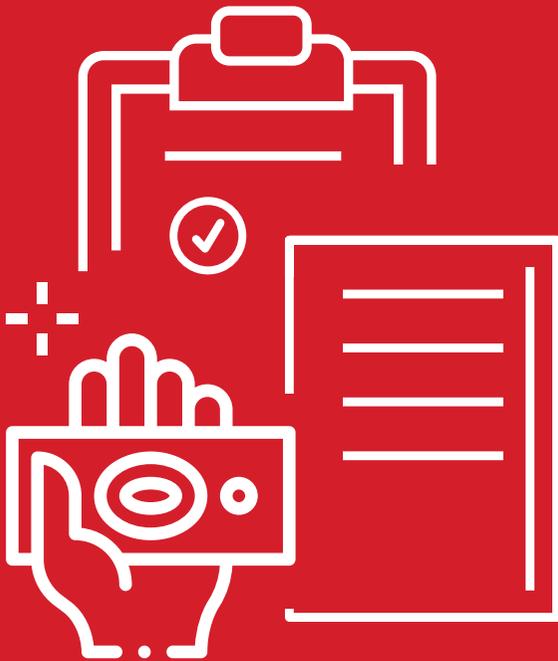
This guidance accompanies the **Guidance for National Societies on COVID-19 Sensitive Cash and Voucher (CVA) Programming Across the Project Cycle** and **Guidance for National Societies on conducting Market Assessment and Analysis during COVID-19 - How to adapt RAM/MAG**.

All COVID-19 guidance notes are also intended to be used alongside other Movement tools: **Cash in Emergencies Toolkit**, **Rapid Assessment of Markets Guidelines** and **Market Analysis Guidance**.

This guidance does not duplicate existing tools and guidance. The following considerations can be used as COVID-19 sensitive adaptations alongside existing guidance and tools in the **RCRC CiE Toolkit** and are designed to complement the CiE project steps that involve M&E. Relevant links to CiE steps and tools are provided in each section.

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Adapting M&E for COVID-19 CVA

In contexts experiencing COVID-19 restrictions or measures, the basic principles for adapting M&E are:

- **Carry out risk assessments** and ensure that the benefits of any monitoring activities outweigh the risks/costs. Focus M&E activities relating to activities with a high risk of fraud, poor targeting or health risks such as risks of not social distancing during implementation of project activities.
- **Train the staff and volunteers** of your organisation and those of your partners on social distancing and advice from government and health authorities.
- **Remote data collection** - do what you can via phone, SMS or online methods rather than face-to-face.

1

Prepare for monitoring and evaluation activities

Refer to **CiE tool 'Roadmap for M&E Planning'** for general guidance on preparing for monitoring and evaluation activities, factoring in the following:

- Use the **CiE tool M&E Work Plan Template** and **M&E Plan Template** (insert link:), but adapted for COVID-19:
- Take steps to proactively manage donors' expectations around the feasibility of conducting M&E activities. Reduced M&E is likely to entail increased risks and it is important that this is communicated in a transparent way with donors.
- If access to communities is still possible such that only preparatory work – such as training M&E staff and volunteers - is affected, try to do this preparatory work remotely.
- If adapting M&E to more remote data collection methods, ensure M&E staff and volunteers are well trained on remote data collection protocols such as conducting phone interviews.
- If face-to-face data collection is planned, ensure M&E staff and volunteers are well trained on social distancing requirements. Provide supplies for hand hygiene (alcohol hand-gel) and protection (depending on nature of the visit this could be a face-mask).
- Ensure all M&E staff and volunteers are able to share key messages and answer common questions on COVID-19.
- Take steps to gather contact information (especially phone numbers if available) of project stakeholders and gain consent for this particular use of personal data explaining how it will be used. This information is likely to be needed for monitoring activities later on.

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Adapt project logframes and plans

- Use the **CiE tool M&E Logframe Template**, but with COVID-19 considerations.
- Ensure that your objectives as expressed in the logframe accurately reflect your project's ambitions. For example, if the intervention aims to support a specific aspect of the population who have been affected by COVID-19 in a particular way, this should be reflected.
- It may be useful to track the project's adherence to health and safety guidelines through formulating indicators on safe distributions and encashment.
- There may be COVID-19 assumptions relevant to your project, for example around social distancing and the ability of people who are self-isolating to access markets. These can be stated in the logframe to ensure continuous monitoring of the COVID-19 context.

3

Focus on the most critical monitoring and evaluation activities

- Conduct an initial risk assessment on different M&E activities and adapt activities accordingly:
 - Consider which M&E activities can be conducted remotely rather than in person and consider postponing less critical or less time-sensitive monitoring activities.
 - For cash projects, critical issues may, for example, be around targeting, verification, markets or vendors. This will vary for each project and should in part be informed by the issues highlighted in the project's risk register.
 - COVID-19 is likely to entail particular risks of disruption to supply chains and to financial services due to COVID-19 and therefore it may make sense for particular emphasis to be placed on monitoring those aspects.
- If no feasible ways can be identified for conducting the critical monitoring activities, a decision needs to be taken whether or not the project can proceed, taking into account risks in terms of fraud and community accountability.
- Using the **CiE Tools Survey Sample Calculator Template**, and **Brief Sampling Guidance**, build flexibility/pragmatism into sampling strategies.
 - For example, if not all recipients are contactable by phone, consider purposefully sampling those who are. At the same time, it may be necessary to draw a larger sample size, recognising that a larger than usual proportion of target interviewees may be contactable.

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Adapt monitoring methods

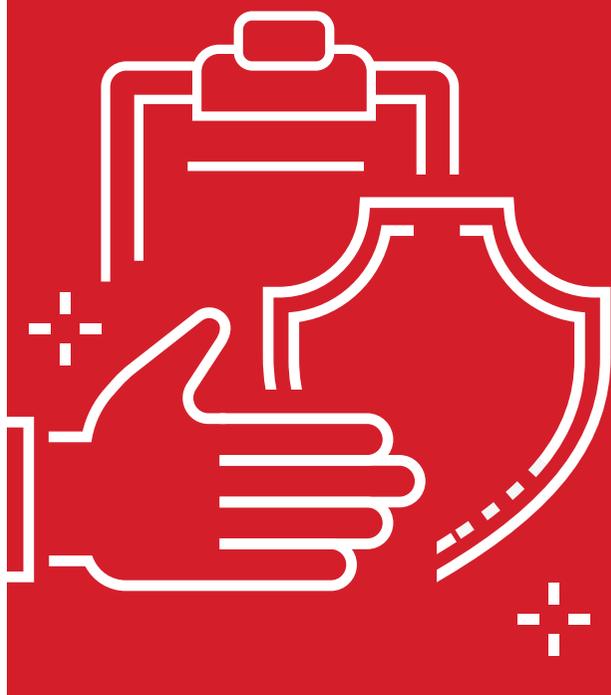
This section identifies the most common types of monitoring for cash projects, assesses the risks that COVID-19 may entail for each type, and offers suggestions for mitigating and adapting methods for monitoring.

Refer to **CiE tools 'Roadmap for Programme Monitoring'** and **'Roadmap for Market Monitoring'** for general guidance on each different type of monitoring, factoring in the following:

Type of monitoring	Typical methods and associated risks due to COVID-19	Mitigation and Adaptation for COVID-19 contexts
Baseline	Household survey → Risk of transfer of infection if carried out face-to-face.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If proceeding with face-to-face surveys, conduct visit maintaining social distancing (no touch, safe distance of 1-2m). Conduct visit outside in wide-open, well ventilated space rather than inside the household. • Consider building-in baseline questions into either needs assessments or registration questionnaires. • Alternatively, seek to measure the change brought about through the project through incorporating questions into post-distribution monitoring questions which enquire retrospectively about change.
Encashment and Distribution	Primary data collection (e.g. visits to markets and vendors) → Risks of infection transmission as above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure any site observation or exit interviews are conducted following social distancing. • Adapt observation tools/checklists to incorporate monitoring of compliance with social distancing, crowd control and hand sanitation guidelines. • Consider replacing in-person exit interviews with phone interviews
Prices	Primary data collection (e.g. visits to markets and vendors) → Risks of infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use existing market data where available, for example Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) or information on prices gathered by local authorities or national Cash Working Groups. • If existing data collection is not available, consider sharing online surveys with suppliers or, if available, check online supermarket apps for prices. • Limit scope of monitoring to critical markets and commodities, especially those most impacted by supply chain shortages or labour-related impacts of Covid-19.

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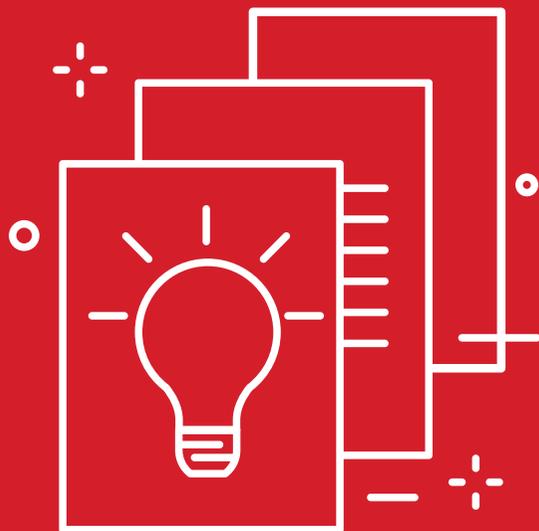
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Type of monitoring	Typical methods and associated risks due to COVID-19	Mitigation and Adaptation for COVID-19 contexts
Vendors	In-person interviews → Risks of infection transmission as above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out phone surveys instead of in-person visits. Be flexible about when you call and aim to arrange calls at times which suit the interviewee. • Identify back-up/replacement traders to survey so you can draw on these if your preferred interviewees are not available to answer the phone.
Post-distribution	Focus group discussions (FGD) → Risk that Individuals/staff/volunteers with COVID-19 attend the meeting and spread the infection to others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switch to individual interviews, maintaining social distancing. • If possible, conduct monitoring remotely, such as by phone. • Build in Covid-19 specific questions, such as ability to maintain social distancing when purchasing commodities.
Post-distribution	Face-to-face methods such as FGD → Risk of spreading infection. Methods that require physical interaction (such as feedback boxes) → Risk of spreading infection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk-assess all feedback and complaints channels. • Aim to put in place channels which do not require staff/volunteer presence, such as SMS, WhatsApp number, hotlines, social media chat boxes, feedback surveys over phone – as long as these can continue to be monitored/ staffed and the feedback loop with communities can be closed. • Note that channels that are only remotely accessible are often the least accessible to deprived and marginalised groups; therefore, assess these channels from an inclusion perspective and where necessary take steps to build greater access to these channels through specific project activities. • For any channels that are based on face-to-face interaction, maintain social distancing and conduct any information gathering activities outside.

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Adapt evaluation methods

Many of the same risks and challenges relating to data collection outlined above apply to carrying out evaluations as well. While the most appropriate approach to evaluation will be determined by a variety of factors, including the specific context, the scale and objectives of the project and the prevalence of COVID-19 infections in the project areas, the following can help in making an informed approach to evaluation.

Also refer to **CiE tool 'Roadmap for CTP Evaluation'** and adapt accordingly.

- As with all data collection exercises, the activity should only proceed if the benefits outweigh the costs and if the risks are acceptable. Steps should be taken to mitigate risks, particularly minimising face-to-face data collection in favour of remote interviews. Where face-to-face evaluation activities, these should be adapted, for example by holding individual interviews instead of group discussions.
- Where the context is rapidly changing, it may make sense to conduct an evaluation earlier rather than later in order to assess the continuing relevance of the project and to identify any needed changes. Sometimes these evaluations are framed as 'real-time' or 'mid-term'.
- Seek to integrate evaluation activities into other activities. For example, if post-distribution monitoring is taking place, it might not be necessary to administer separate evaluation questionnaires.
- If donor demands constitutes the main motivation for conducting evaluations, consider negotiating alternative ways of satisfying donor requirements, for example lighter touch evaluations or smaller scale case studies.

Other useful guidance

- **CVA in COVID-19 Contexts: Guidance from the CALP Network**
- **Save the Children's COVID-19 Program Framework and Guidance**
- **The Spider Tool: A self-assessment and planning tool for child led initiatives and organisation**
- **CVA & COVID-19 : Remote Market Assessment & Monitoring**