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Social Protection in Emergencies: Strengthening the Normative Framework for Cash Transfer Delivery

Collaborative Analysis Between Humanitarian
and Governmental Actors in Guatemala



Grupo Multisectorial de
**TRANSFERENCIAS
MONETARIAS**
GUATEMALA



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This report was drafted by Celia González Otálora, with contributions from Maria Jimena Peroni Galli.

The document reflects the process and results of the collaborative analysis designed and facilitated by CashCap-NORCAP, promoted by the Cash Working Group in Guatemala, and with the active participation of UNICEF, the Ministry of Social Development, and the Executive Secretariat of CONRED.

Authorship and acknowledgements

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AAH: Action Against Hunger

ASP: Adaptive Social Protection

COMUSAN: Municipal Commission for Food Security and Nutrition (Coordinadora Municipal de Seguridad Alimentaria)

CONRED: National Coordination Office for Disaster Reduction (Coordinadora Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres)

CRS: Catholic Relief Services

CVA: Cash and Voucher Assistance

CWG: Cash Working Group

HCT: Humanitarian Country Team

IRC: International Rescue Committee

IRP: Institutional Response Plan (Plan Institucional de Respuesta – PIR)

MIDES: Ministry of Social Development (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social)

MINFIN: Ministry of Public Finance (Ministerio de Finanzas Públicas)

NORCAP: Norwegian Capacity

NPDRR: National Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction (Política Nacional para la Reducción de Riesgos)

NRF: National Recovery Framework (Marco Nacional de Recuperación - MNR)

NRP: National Response Plan (Plan Nacional de Respuesta - PNR)

OCHA: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

SE-CONRED: Executive Secretariat of CONRED (Secretaría Ejecutiva de la CONRED)

SP: Social Protection

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

WB: World Bank

WFP: World Food Programme

Introduction

This document reflects the process and results of the collaborative analysis carried out between humanitarian and government actors on the normative framework for the use of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) to respond to emergencies and disasters through the social protection (SP) system in Guatemala.

The process was promoted by the Guatemala CWG, designed and facilitated by CashCap-NORCAP, with the active participation of UNICEF and coordination with the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) and Executive Secretariat of the National Coordination Office for Disaster Reduction (SE-CONRED), in order to promote linkages between CVA humanitarian programmes and SP.

The [full report](#), available in Spanish, has 5 associated products:

- [Joining forces: Humanitarian Cash Transfer Programs in Guatemala and Exploring Potential Links with Social Protection.](#)
- [Summary of evidence on the use of cash transfers.](#)
- [Key aspects of adaptive social protection systems in Guatemala.](#)
- [Overview of emergency and disaster response operations and financing in Guatemala.](#)
- [Overview of processes for developing and modifying normative instruments in Guatemala.](#)



Participant using an ATM to receive a cash transfer.

© 2024 / Action Against Hunger (Huehuetenango, Guatemala)

Why was this analysis done?

Emergencies, social protection and cash transfers

Guatemala faces significant exposure to natural hazards and the effects of the ongoing climate emergency (European Commission, 2021). The country's high disaster risk constitutes a national challenge due to its substantial human and material impacts. This risk can also drive migration, exacerbate poverty, and contribute to other adverse social phenomena (CONRED, 2023).

The lack of international political will to effectively address climate change exacerbates regional inequalities (Carranza et al., 2023), heightening threats to survival and livelihoods and resulting in severe impacts on community development and well-being. The projected medium- and long-term effects of climate change are expected to not only intensify the frequency and severity of these phenomena but also significantly increase the number of people affected (NRDC, 2022).

SP plays a crucial role in the sustained reduction of vulnerability and provides essential support during crises. It is mandated to address poverty and vulnerability, regardless of their origins. Since most crises are predictable, recurrent, and/or protracted, they should be integrated into the SP mandate rather than treated as isolated events. Furthermore, in large-scale crises, SP can significantly contribute to adapting to and mitigating the impacts of shocks on the population (TRANSFORM, 2020).

In this context, strengthening social protection systems is crucial for enhancing the coverage, speed, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness of emergency responses. Under this premise, **CVA emerges as an effective tool that enables SP to adapt to emergency situations and better support affected communities.**

For these reasons, it is essential to shift the paradigm towards developing systems that anticipate and adapt to various risks, with a strong emphasis on climate change and environmental protection. This shift presents an **opportunity to enhance collaboration between government SP and humanitarian actors to strengthen the National Disaster Risk Management System**, with SP systems understood as fundamental elements of disaster risk management, while humanitarian actors should support the state in improving response quality and addressing gaps where appropriate and feasible.



Global evidence supports the use of cash transfers as an effective SP tool both in regular times and for emergency response.

Associated product: [Summary of evidence on the use of cash transfers. \(in Spanish\)](#)

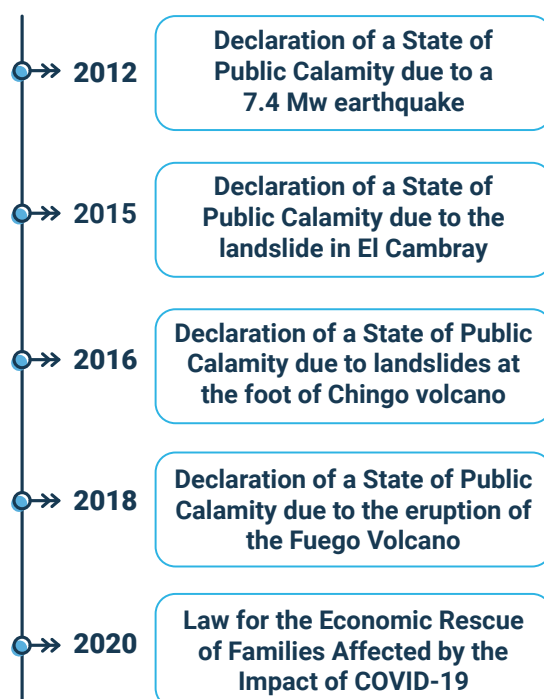
Process steps for conducting the collaborative analysis

The importance of understanding the normative framework

Access to SP for the Guatemalan population is hindered by multiple barriers, which are particularly severe during emergencies. These barriers are especially critical for specific groups, such as individuals affected by slow-onset disasters and foreign populations facing vulnerability.

Nevertheless, MIDES has valuable experience in using CVA, during emergencies, notably through the Bono Familia program implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF and WB, 2022). This experience presents an opportunity to enhance SP, allowing it to adapt and respond more effectively to crises.

Chronology of MIDES experiences in the use of CVA in emergencies



Institutionalizing CVA as a tool within SP for emergency and disaster response would enhance the quality, coverage, speed, and sustainability of the response. However, achieving this requires addressing significant barriers within the normative framework. **The analysis reveals that the lack of a robust normative framework affects resource availability and operational capacity, restricting access to fundamental rights for the affected population and impeding the effective application of humanitarian principles.**

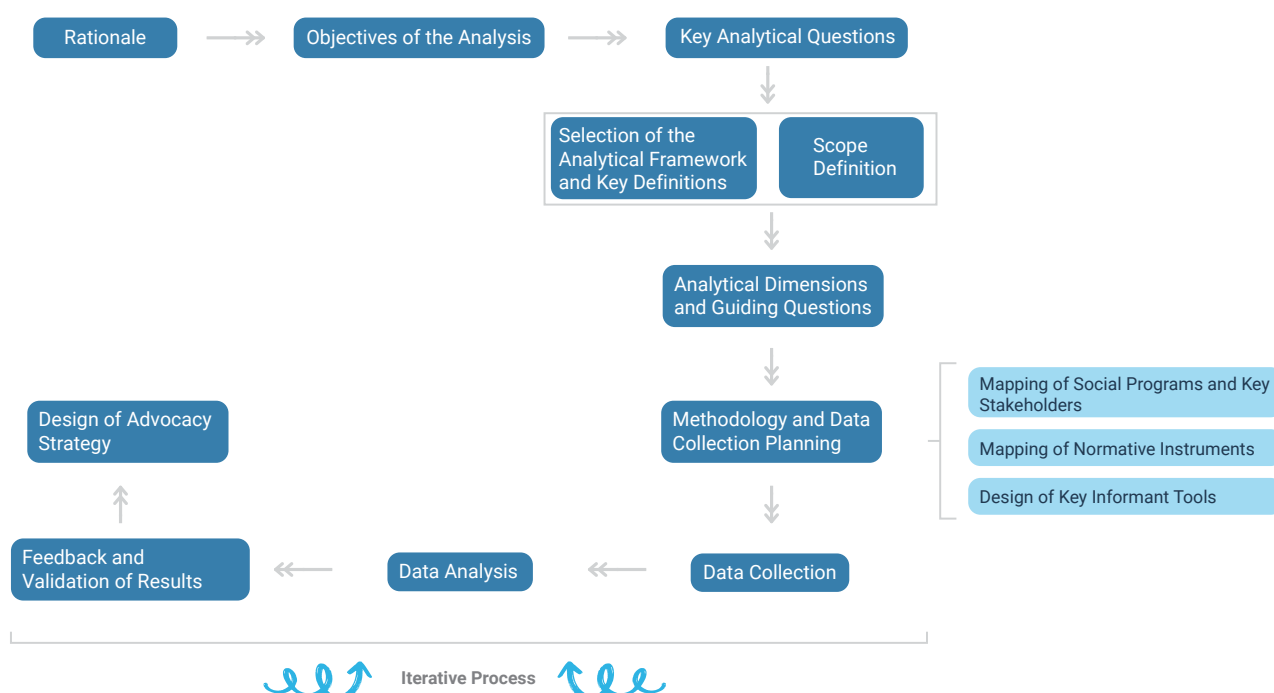
Therefore, it is crucial to address the barriers imposed by the current normative framework in Guatemala to ensure that CVA can be effectively utilized as a SP tool during emergencies. The collaborative analysis identifies various factors contributing to the inadequacy of the national normative framework, which hampers effective resource mobilization and the ability to support populations affected by crises.

How was the analysis done?

The analysis was carried out through a collaborative effort involving both humanitarian and government actors. This collaboration encompassed the design of the analysis, participant selection, data collection, processing, and ultimately the feedback and validation of results.

Validation was achieved by presenting the key findings to MIDES, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), and the new executive that assumed office in 2024.

The Cash Working Group led the initiative, designed and facilitated by CashCap-NORCAP. UNICEF played an active role, while coordination with MIDES and SE-CONRED ensured alignment and engagement throughout the process.



This approach draws inspiration from previous successful collaboration experiences carried out by CashCap- NORCAP in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Importantly, this analysis constitutes the third iteration of collaborative analysis facilitated in the region, reaffirming its ongoing commitment to promote inter-agency collaboration.

Previous experiences in the region have been the creation of a [field manual for collaborative market assessments](#) carried out jointly with the Shelter Cluster at the regional level, as well as an [exercise to identify linkages of cash transfers with the social protection system](#) in Colombia.

Analysis objectives

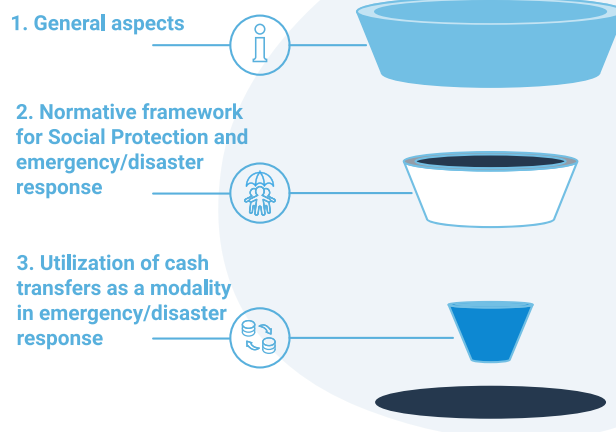
To create a proposal to enable the modification of the normative framework in Guatemala to formally incorporate CVA as a modality of SP in emergency response, through a collaborative analysis between governmental and humanitarian actors, identifying key normative instruments, enabling factors, and current barriers.

The questions this analysis seeks to answer are the following:

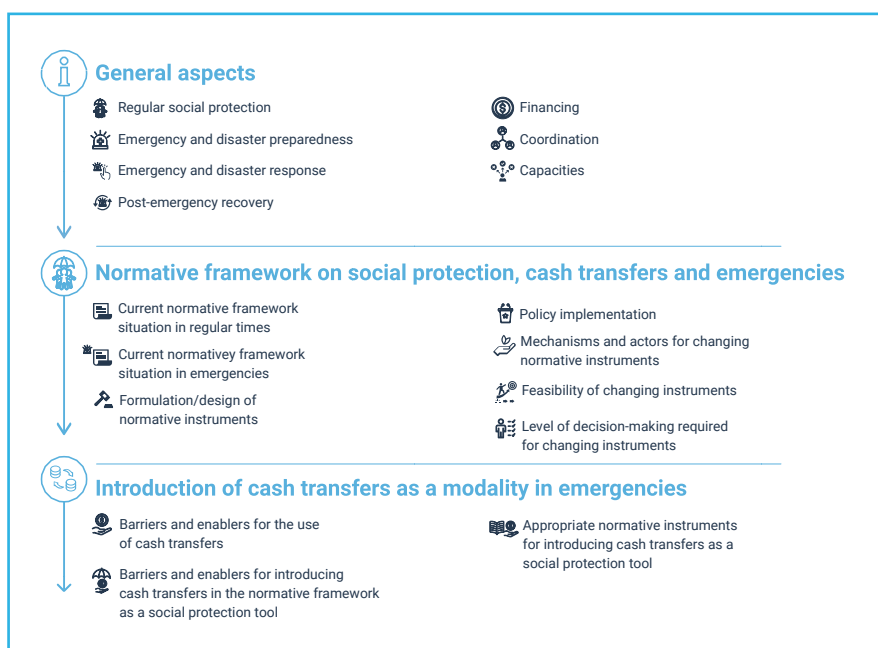
- What **barriers and facilitators** exist in the current normative framework in Guatemala for the use of CVA as an emergency response modality?
- What **policy instruments** would be most appropriate to promote the use of CVA as a mode of SP response in emergencies?

Analysis framework

For a comprehensive understanding of the normative framework, it is also essential to have a solid understanding of the context. For this reason, the elaboration of the conceptual framework and the dimensions of analysis has followed a “funnel” logic, starting with a broad focus on the general aspects, and gradually narrowing down to areas that are more specific and detailed.



The analysis framework developed comprises three levels, with guiding dimensions associated with each one. Each dimension of analysis in turn has several guiding questions.



Analysis framework levels and associated dimensions.

Defining what a normative framework is:

No standard definition of the concept of normative framework was found, so a definition was developed based on the adaptation of various bibliographical sources:

Normative framework: Set of laws, regulations, strategic and programmatic guidelines, of a mandatory or indicative nature, that govern a country, state or institution. (ECLAC, 2021) (Government of Mexico, n.d.).

What instruments constitute the normative framework?

Normative instruments are products that encapsulate normative content in a written document (WHO, 2017). For this exercise, it was agreed to categorise the instruments into four levels:

- 1. Legal level:** A set of norms, laws or codes within the framework of which an activity can be carried out or a policy developed (United Nations, n.d.).
Main instruments: legislative decrees, *legislative agreements*.
- 2. Regulatory level:** A system of norms and means of enforcing them, usually established by a government to regulate a specific activity (United Nations, n.d.).
Main instruments: governmental *agreements*, *ministerial agreements*.
- 3. Strategic level:** A set of policy instruments designed in line with legal and regulatory frameworks, with the aim of achieving specific objectives (self-created definition).
Main instruments: public policies/policies, plans, strategies.
- 4. Programmatic level:** A set of instruments related to specific programmes (self-created definition).
Main instruments: *programmes*, *projects*, *procedures*, *programme operational manuals*.

Scope of analysis

WHAT: What type of policy instrument should be analysed?

It was agreed to analyze existing instruments across four categories: legal, regulatory, strategic, and programmatic.

WHEN: For which type of situations is the analysis to be carried out?

This question was examined from two perspectives: the type of emergency and the type of declaration.

- **Type of emergency:** While regulations primarily focus on rapid-onset emergencies, it was decided to also include slow-onset emergencies to provide a comprehensive overview of the normative context for both types.
- **Type of declaration:** A comparison was deemed relevant between emergencies accompanied by a State of Public Calamity declaration and those without such a declaration.

FOR WHOM: What is the population of interest of the analysis?

It was validated that the analysis should focus on the population affected by level III¹ and IV² disasters, according to the NRP criteria.

WHERE: To what geographical level is the analysis to be carried out?

It was agreed that the analysis would be carried out from the national level down to the municipal level, given that this is the level where regulations are operationalised for emergency response.



Although the existing regulations do not explicitly state to cover exclusively the national population, it was proposed to include specific questions for foreigners in the analysis to show whether there are differences depending on the population group.

¹ Situation that requires support from other localities or from the departmental, regional or national level in order to be addressed (NRP, 2023).

² Situation that requires national and even international support in order to be addressed (NRP, 2023).

What are our findings?

Barriers in the normative framework

The main problem identified is that there are currently no adaptive social protection mechanisms in Guatemala, particularly for the use of CVA.

- **Lack of Integration in key instruments:** CONRED's primary strategic instruments, specifically the National Response Plan (NRP) and the National Recovery Framework (NRF), do not incorporate SP or CVA for emergency response and recovery. Consequently, these instruments fail to provide the Ministries with adequate normative support to institutionalize the delivery of CVA in their Institutional Response Plans (IRPs). This results in unclear role and responsibility definitions and, more critically, increases the risk of receiving findings and sanctions from the General Comptroller's Office.
- **Funding mechanisms do not consider SP:** The lack of a robust normative framework highlighting the role of SP in emergencies and disasters affects the establishment of specific funding mechanisms for Adaptive Social Protection (ASP).
- **Inadequate coverage for slow-onset emergencies:** The normative framework primarily addresses the management of rapid-onset emergencies but lacks specific provisions for slow-onset emergencies.
- **Practical exclusions:** Although the normative framework does not explicitly exclude any population group, practical exclusions do occur (e.g., foreign residents in the country).



These issues have underlying causes and consequences detailed in the [problem tree included in the full report](#), which synthesizes the barriers identified at the normative framework level, the underlying factors, and the outcomes of these barriers.

Opportunities in the normative framework

- **Update of the National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR):** The NPDRR update in December 2023 presents an opportunity to revise CONRED's instruments, and thus incorporate SP into the normative framework.
- **Space to advocate for SP in recovery processes:** The NRF emphasizes that recovery plans should address not only the rebuilding of damaged housing and infrastructure but also livelihood recovery. This focus creates a strategic opportunity to incorporate SP during the NRF update process.
- **Need to update ministerial IRPs:** The need to update the IRPs for ministries with SP responsibilities, which are currently outdated, offers a valuable chance to address and overcome identified barriers. This will be especially relevant following the updates to the NRP and NRF, ensuring coherence with the NPDRR.
- **Experience of SP entities in emergencies:** Ministries with SP competencies have substantial experience in designing emergency and disaster response programs, providing a solid foundation for integrating SP into these efforts.
- **Revising Ministry of Public Finance's (MINFIN) Disaster Risk Financing Strategy for Contingent Credit Access:** Given that contingent credits are a commonly utilized financial tool in Guatemala, updating MINFIN's strategy offers a strategic opportunity to integrate SP into the financing framework, allowing for the allocation of resources to SP when credit activation is necessary.
- **Investment Estimates for SP:** UNICEF estimates that the investment required for SP for children up to 2030 is 1.2% of GDP (UNICEF, 2023). This provides clear guidance on necessary public expenditure for this important segment of the population, facilitating the planning of strategic actions to strengthen SP and enhance its role in assisting children during emergencies and disasters.
- **Articulation of SE-CONRED and the HCT:** SE-CONRED's role as co-lead of the HCT offers an opportunity to influence the modification of CONRED's normative framework, enhancing coordination and effectiveness.

Recommendations

- **Advocate for the revision of CONRED's strategic normative instruments**, specifically the NRP and NRF, to include SP, and particularly CVA, as a response and recovery tool.
- **Revise the IRPs of relevant Ministries** to align with CONRED instruments once the SP and CVA are incorporated.
- Encourage Ministries responsible for SP to consider establishing an **institutionalized program that can be activated during emergencies and disasters and/or facilitate the expansion of existing programs**.
- **Ensure the inclusion of SP in the next version of MINFIN's Disaster Risk Financing Strategy** to secure funding if the contingent credit mechanism is triggered, and explore alternative funding sources.
- **Update the normative framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to clearly classify emergencies**, defining specific actions and funding mechanisms for each type, with particular attention to slow-onset disasters.
- **Review and adjust the eligibility criteria for social programs** to ensure access for groups facing additional barriers to SP, such as returned Guatemalan citizens and individuals with Refugee Status residing in Guatemala.

Additionally, the main report outlines further recommendations addressing the structural weaknesses within the normative framework.



Participant in the Bono Familia programme
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Conclusions and next steps

To understand the reasons for the absence of ASP mechanisms in Guatemala, numerous weaknesses in the current normative framework were identified, along with their underlying causes and resulting consequences. These factors explain how a weak normative framework hinders effective resource mobilisation and diminishes the capacity to serve the population and guarantee access to their rights.

The recommendations and opportunities identified are intended to guide the way forward. Next steps include:

- **Foster active coordination between the ministries responsible for SP, particularly MIDES, humanitarian actors and SE-CONRED.** This articulation will focus on updating the key response (NRP) and recovery (NRF) instruments, adapting actions based on the type of emergency. These updates will align ministerial IRPs with a new normative framework that recognises CVA as a SP tool in emergency and disaster situations.
- **Active coordination between the ministries responsible for SP, especially MIDES, and MINFIN, to integrate SP into the Disaster Risk Financing Strategy.** This will facilitate the request for contingent credits and explore alternative financing sources for ASP.
- **Enhance internal coordination within SP Ministries, particularly MIDES,** to develop the necessary instruments and mechanisms ensuring that CVA are an effective modality for addressing affected populations during response and recovery phases, with program eligibility criteria designed to mitigate the risk of excluding vulnerable groups.
- **Consolidate participation spaces in strategic processes** to establish effective dialogue between humanitarian and government actors. This will promote common objectives and create a shared language, facilitating the adoption of the new normative framework and the appropriate use of its tools.

These recommendations aim to strengthen the normative framework, thereby enhancing both the social protection system and the disaster risk reduction system in Guatemala. By promoting greater coordination between humanitarian and governmental sectors, these measures will improve the quality of response and recovery across various types of emergencies and disasters, ensuring effective access to the fundamental rights of the affected population, especially those facing the greatest vulnerability.

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The complete bibliography consulted for the analysis is provided in the [extended version of the document](#).



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