

## Humanitarian cash transfers and gender specific needs: Experiences as a Mercator fellow

How are gender specific needs and impacts considered in humanitarian cash transfer programming? This is a question that engaged **MIA Alumna**

**Corinne Duriaux** with increasing intensity throughout her Mercator Fellowship year. The [Mercator Fellowship on International Affairs](#) is a Swiss-German joint program that promotes 25 young professionals from all fields who aspire to positions of responsibility in international affairs and consists of work placements and seminars (see more details below).



*MIA Alumna Corinne Duriaux at a seminar with all Mercator fellows in Berlin*

After working with a health organization in Geneva on cash transfers, the Mercator Fellowship gave Corinne the opportunity to pursue her interest for this topic while attaining vital professional experience in the field. Cash transfer programming is a modality that increasingly gained ground in humanitarian assistance: Instead of traditional in-kind distributions (e.g. food parcels or blankets) beneficiaries receive physical cash or e-money and decide themselves how to spend it.

For her first Mercator placement Corinne supported **UNHCR in Jordan** with the transition of its cash distribution to mobile wallets. By leading the monitoring exercise of a pilot project with 250 refugees, she witnessed how mobile money for refugees can be a vital steppingstone towards financial inclusion in their host communities. Interestingly, the payments were usually transferred to the so-called “head of household”, in most cases to a man. The question how we can ensure that such programs consider the needs of all persons in the household remained unanswered in Jordan and led her to join **Plan International in Ghana** and **CARE in Turkey**, two NGOs that are known for their gender-responsive programs. Both aspire to

mainstream gender considerations throughout the project cycle as it is the only way to make sure that the voices of all persons are heard: This includes arrangements such as consulting with both women and men during assessment and monitoring visits, maintaining a well-managed feedback and complaints mechanisms or providing a safe space to express preferences about who in the household should receive the cash assistance.

The last Mercator placement brought Corinne back to Switzerland, where she joined the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** and conducted a study on the gender-responsiveness of its cash-based programs. The desk research as well as a field visit in Nigeria once again showed again the importance to systemically consider gender specific needs and impacts when designing and implementing projects. The report and recommendations that resulted from her study were shared with all ICRC delegations and contribute to the institution's efforts in the area of diversity and inclusion.

The **Mercator Fellowship on International Affairs** is run by Mercator Foundation Switzerland and the Swiss Study Foundation in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the respective institutions in Germany. During the course of the 13-months program, the fellows work in different international organizations, globally active NGOs, non-profit organizations or business enterprises. Fellows select a practical issue on which to focus in their projects; this in turn determines the work placements they choose worldwide. In addition, seminars are provided aimed at developing leadership skills and core competencies. More information can be found here:

<https://www.mercator-kolleg.ch/#/> (Swiss site) and  
<https://www.mercator-kolleg.de/en/> (German site)