



Livelihoods and GBV in Protracted Crises: Lessons from the Levant

This brief presents the main findings and recommendations from a 2018 study of livelihoods programming and gender-based violence (GBV) in communities affected by the Syrian crisis in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan.¹



CHILD MARRIAGE RATES ARE 4X HIGHER IN SYRIA NOW THAN BEFORE THE CRISIS and more than a third of Syrian refugee women between the ages of 20 and 24 had been married before the age of 18.⁷

ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN CONFLICT ZONES ARE

90%

MORE LIKELY TO BE OUT OF SCHOOL WHEN COMPARED TO GIRLS IN OTHER, CONFLICT-FREE COUNTRIES. Girls are often kept out of school due to concerns about safety.⁸

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most widespread abuses of human rights worldwide, affecting one third of all women in their lifetime. GBV is often even more prevalent in crisis-affected settings, as factors such as displacement, high levels of violence and militarization, eroded justice and security systems, and the breakdown of social networks and infrastructure increase vulnerabilities in both public and private spaces.

Not only does GBV negatively impact a survivor's physical, psychological and economic well-being, it also perpetuates intergenerational cycles of violence, undermines social fabrics and resilience, and thwarts sustainable and inclusive recovery processes.

Crises disrupt economic life, displacing individuals from their employment, assets and livelihood networks. Many are compelled to adopt new strategies to provide for their families, with different impacts on women, men, girls and boys.

Socio-economic factors – such as limited economic opportunities,² poverty,³ male control over decision-making and assets,⁴ and women's insecure access to and control over property and land rights⁵ – tend to increase the risk of GBV.

Livelihoods programming in crisis-affected settings seeks to address many of these risk factors and therefore has great potential to reduce the likelihood that an individual will experience or perpetrate violence.

This transformative potential is often unrealized, as many livelihoods programmes do not systematically integrate GBV prevention and response into programming.⁶ Furthermore, while income generation is crucial to addressing vulnerabilities, gender-blind livelihoods programming can actually increase GBV-related risks. For example, women's involvement in paid work may challenge social norms and gender roles, potentially disrupting intra-household relationships. Backlash from male partners and others that hold discriminatory attitudes may occur, particularly in contexts where violence is normalized.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for harmful acts (physical, sexual or psychological) that are threatened or perpetrated because of socially ascribed expectations and roles of males and females.

Forms of GBV include: sexual violence, including intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, early or forced marriage, gender discrimination, denial of resources (e.g. education, food and freedom) and female genital mutilation.

1 For more information, see "Livelihoods Programming and its Potential to Reduce Gender-based Violence for Refugee and Displaced Women and Girls: Lessons Learned from the Iraq/Syria Crises," which summarizes research carried out by Nahla Hassan on behalf of UNDP in 2018.

2 Available from <http://www.endvavnow.org/en/articles/300-causes-protective-and-risk-factors-.html>

3 Available from What Works to Prevent Violence, "What do we know about violence against women and girls and what more do we need to know to prevent it? A Summary of the Evidence."

4 Available from <http://www.endvavnow.org/en/articles/300-causes-protective-and-risk-factors-.html>

5 Ibid.

6 For more information, see "Livelihoods Programming and its Potential to Reduce Gender-based Violence for Refugee and Displaced Women and Girls: Lessons Learned from the Iraq/Syria Crises," which summarizes research carried out by Nahla Hassan on behalf of UNDP in 2018.

7 Available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/humanitarian-action/facts-and-figures>.

8 Plan International, *A time of transition: Adolescents in humanitarian settings*, 2016, p. 67.

LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMMING IN THE REGION

Major types and promising examples:

Cash-based programmes are labour-intensive, short-term interventions that aim to address the immediate needs of displaced and vulnerable host communities. They tend to inject cash, relieve immediate hardship and boost self-confidence. While these interventions may effectively help recipients meet their most urgent needs, they have limited impact on sustainable economic self-reliance.

PROMISING EXAMPLE

The 3x6 approach undertaken by UNDP Jordan takes a multi-faceted approach to increasing active citizenship, savings and new business creation. It also works on increasing social cohesion and resilience-building by engaging 3x6 participants in activities that can reduce the burden of the crisis on some municipalities.⁹

Job creation programmes encompass a wide range of activities that focus on improving the capacities of vulnerable populations in both displaced and host communities, increasing their employability potential. There are a variety of approaches, including any combination of job placement, internships, vocational and/or soft skills training, microcredit, business development services to medium, small and micro-enterprises and Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLA).

PROMISING EXAMPLE

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) livelihoods centres in Lebanon takes a holistic approach and provides multiple services to beneficiaries. Job-seekers can take advantage of intensive counselling services, training and short-term cash-for-work projects, while employers can access accurate labour market information and receive technical assistance aimed at removing obstacles to expanding job opportunities. GBV protection principles are mainstreamed through the work of the livelihoods centres to ensure that clients receive services that provide them with safe, dignified opportunities relevant to their skills and to the needs of the labour market.¹⁰

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS for GBV-transformative livelihoods programming:

- **The impact of livelihoods programmes goes beyond income generation**
Gender-transformative livelihoods programmes improve the psychological well-being of participants, strengthen women's agency and enable beneficiaries to meet their families' basic needs. Providing livelihoods services to GBV survivors promotes self-reliance and is one way to enable victims of domestic violence to leave violent relationships.
- **Go beyond numbers**
Interventions that merely "count women" as beneficiaries will fall short of having transformational impact. Develop strong qualitative and quantitative indicators which capture changes in gender equality and women's empowerment over time.
- **Break silos and improve coordination**
Systematic and meaningful interaction between livelihoods and gender portfolios can bridge the existing gap between livelihoods and GBV programmes. An inter-agency working group or cluster focused on mainstreaming GBV considerations within livelihoods may help foster a community of practice for effective GBV-responsive livelihoods programming.
- **Engage women and girls & men and boys**
The meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making promotes more effective, context-specific programming, and also provides a platform for female leadership development and coalition building. The empowering engagement of women and girls throughout the project cycle, including participatory design, implementation and M&E, provides a space for them to determine their own goals, opportunities for livelihoods or income generation, as well as risk factors and mitigation strategies. Support for women's organisations and groups can provide solidarity along with opportunities for peer learning and support.
Engaging men and boys in gender equality is important too – the inclusion of male partners and community leaders in GBV prevention and response reduces the risk of potential backlash regarding changes to social norms. Their engagement as participants, allies and ultimately change agents, is a key determinant of the sustainability of interventions. For example, the most promising models of safe spaces in crisis-affected settings not only offer psychosocial and other services to women and girls, but they also engage men in discussions about gender roles and family wellbeing.
- **"Do No Harm" approaches must be conflict-sensitive and gender-transformative**
Gender-sensitive conflict-analysis is a critical tool that can be used to explore power relations and ultimately design programmes that do not trigger or exacerbate tensions or inequalities.
- **Power imbalances exist between and also within groups**
An individual's experience of violence and discrimination is affected by a multitude of factors, including their age, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, and HIV status. To address disparities within groups and to ensure that no one is left behind, take an intersectional approach that considers how different aspects of identity relate to vulnerabilities.
- **Tackle root causes and challenge social norms**
Stereotypes and norms about what constitutes "women's work" restricts their ability to engage in certain employment opportunities and the labour market more generally. Gender-transformative livelihoods programming can help transform harmful norms and can be used as a strategic entry point to influence long-standing cultural and structural barriers to gender equality more broadly. Livelihoods interventions should: incorporate community mobilization and other components to address discriminatory norms, attitudes and practices; strengthen and consolidate women's voices; and empower women's organizations and male allies.
- **Address women's time poverty**
In a nationwide survey carried out among Syrian women in Jordan, childcare and household chores were the primary rationale for not engaging in paid employment.¹¹ Gendered divisions of labour within the household restrict the time women have available to participate in the productive economy. To counter this, support initiatives that provide affordable quality childcare or support time-saving through safe and accessible water, sanitation and energy.
- **Advocate for changes in the operating environment**
Social change is a long-term process that requires reliable and sustained support. Projects of less than 12 months may meet emergency needs of refugee and host populations but make it difficult to establish trust between the project staff and communities, and are unlikely to have lasting impact. Engage in systematic advocacy with donors to extend project durations to 12 to 18 months.

9 The 3x6 approach consists of three organizing principles: 1) inclusiveness; 2) ownership; and; 3) sustainability, and six fundamental steps implemented in three distinct phases: 1.1) engaging; 1.2) generating income; 2.1) savings; 2.2) joint venturing; 3.1) investing; and 3.2) accessing markets. For more information on 3x6, see <http://earlyrecovery.global/documents/undp-global-toolkit-3x6-approach-building-resilience-through-jobs-and-livelihoods>.

10 Finding Economic Opportunities in the City: Lessons from IRC's Cash and Livelihoods Programmes in Cities within Lebanon and Jordan. International Rescue Committee: August 2016, available from <https://www.rescue.org/report/finding-economic-opportunity-city>

11 Available from http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_jor_report_working_women_jordan_and_syrian_refugee_womens_labour_force_participation_and_attitude_towards_work_august_2016.pdf

UNDP's project, **'Ending Gender-based Violence and Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (2018-2020)'**, is testing new approaches to prevent and address GBV. It aims to generate new evidence on the benefits of investing in GBV prevention not only in terms of reducing GBV, but in relation to other development goals, such as health, social cohesion and economic empowerment.