



GBV in Emergencies and Livelihoods

Livelihoods are broadly defined as the capabilities, assets and strategies people use to meet basic needs and—in crises—to survive. In humanitarian settings, a lack of sufficient income or assets can increase Gender Based Violence (GBV) risks because without income or assets, women, girls and families may resort to negative economic coping strategies such as transactional sex, marrying girls early, or travelling to unsafe areas to look for food, firewood, water or economic activity. Further, household tension and conflict may increase due to economic pressures, exacerbating intimate partner violence (IPV). This evidence digest highlights selected key research and evidence in relation to livelihoods and GBV programming focussing on two areas where there is an emerging evidence base. The first is economic strengthening interventions to prevent GBV, and the second is cash transfer to reduce GBV risks in emergencies. Links to relevant GBV and livelihoods research, guidance and tools are included at the end for those who want to explore the issues further.

Select evidence on economic empowerment to prevent GBV

Increasingly, livelihoods interventions are seen as strategies for GBV prevention and mitigation in emergencies as it is recognised that participation in well-planned, targeted livelihoods interventions can lead to an increase in women and girls' safety, access to resources, opportunities and decision-making power. If combined with gender transformative program components, livelihoods interventions also contribute to changing social, cultural and gender norms that underpin GBV.

Summary of reviews

[What Works Evidence Review: The relationship between poverty and intimate partner violence](#) (A. Gibbs, N. Duvvury and S. Scriver 2017)

This evidence review shows how poverty is a key driver of women's experiences of IPV. As well as the economic costs of IPV, such as women's decreased productivity, poverty leads to increased dependency on a male provider and lower bargaining power in the household, making women vulnerable to controlling behaviours and inhibiting their ability to leave violent relationships. Women's economic empowerment interventions have therefore been central to IPV prevention approaches. Findings from this evidence

review suggest interventions to strengthen women's livelihoods through microfinance or other similar approaches have improved outcomes in reducing IPV when they are combined with gender-transformative interventions. Additionally, evidence suggests cash transfers can have small positive effects in reducing forms of IPV, although they may increase men's controlling behaviours. Finally, the review looks at women's involvement in paid work and found it to have mixed effects on women's vulnerability to IPV. The findings from this review reinforce the need to design women's economic empowerment interventions in ways that minimise potential harm by combining economic empowerment interventions with those that focus on transforming gender norms, such as training to promote gender equality, including equitable decision making and division of resources within the household.

[A global comprehensive review of economic interventions to prevent intimate partner violence and HIV risk behaviours](#) (A. Gibbs, J. Jacobson and A.Kerr 2017)

This evidence review is based on a comprehensive review of 45 published evaluations of economic interventions that sought to prevent IPV and/or HIV risk behaviours. Overall findings include unconditional cash transfer interventions showed either flat or positive outcomes; economic strengthening interventions had mixed outcomes, with some negative, flat and positive results reported; and interventions combining economic strengthening and gender transformative interventions tend to have positive outcomes. This review found no clear evidence on the impact of microfinance alone on women's experiences of IPV. Some studies have reported reductions in IPV as a result of microfinance programs,

while other studies suggest involvement in microfinance can increase IPV under specific circumstances, such as situations where women's participation in paid economic activity is an exception to the norm or living in a conservative area. However, a subset of microfinance programs that include gender transformative programming at the same time as economic strengthening had a positive effect on IPV. Therefore, microfinance interventions have improved outcomes in reducing IPV when they are combined with promoting gender equality, including equitable division of decision making and resources within the household. Three studies looking at vocational training combined with gender transformative training also found positive (though non-significant) reduction in IPV amongst participants. The review concludes that broad-based cash transfer interventions have widespread positive benefits for women and emphasise the need to combine all economic strengthening interventions with gender transformative interventions. It also highlights the need for further research on specific populations, including female adolescents and female sex workers in order to develop a greater understanding of how to best achieve benefits from economic strengthening interventions for women.

Adolescent girls

[Empowered and Safe: Economic strengthening for adolescent girls in emergencies program review](#) (Women's Refugee Commission, 2014)

This program review analysed outcomes, processes and lessons from 11 integrated programs that included a component of economic strengthening for adolescent girls. The review found the evidence base for economic strengthening as a strategy for reducing GBV-related risk against adolescent girls in humanitarian settings is

limited; however age- and developmentally-appropriate economic asset-based interventions for vulnerable girls, delivered as part of an integrated approach to health, protection and empowerment, could play an important role in GBV prevention in emergency contexts. Interventions facilitating access to safe and dignified livelihood opportunities can directly reduce girls' immediate risk of exposure to forms of GBV for which economic insecurity is a key determinant, such as exploitative sex. Building girls' economic and social assets can facilitate their increased bargaining power, decision-making, autonomy and self-confidence in the longer term, which, when combined with an enabling and supportive environment, can lead to greater empowerment for girls and reduced risk of future GBV. The document makes recommendations for practitioners, which include using formative research to ensure context-specific interventions, as well as defining intended changes and measurement strategies from the outset. It also suggests using a holistic, integrated approach to building girls' economic and social assets and using market-based livelihood strategies that are tailored to girls' age, developmental stage and circumstances.

Select evidence on cash transfer to address GBV

Cash transfer involves the direct transfer of resources – conditional or unconditional - to households in the form of cash or food/vouchers. Studies from development contexts have shown well-designed cash transfer programs directed to women can positively impact women and girls' protection and empowerment. In development contexts, cash transfers have been linked to reductions in IPV, early and forced marriage, and negative coping strategies. Conversely, in a small number

of studies cash transfers may increase risk of violence through either male backlash due to male partners feeling threatened by women usurping their traditional 'identity' as a provider, or by making women targets for others, including their partners, seeking to take the cash. Cash programming is increasingly used in humanitarian settings and it is critical to ensure that GBV considerations are integrated into cash-based programs so that these interventions do not inadvertently increase safety risks for girls and women. As yet, there is little solid evidence on the effectiveness of cash programming to prevent GBV in humanitarian contexts.

Summary of reviews

[Humanitarian Cash Transfer Programming and Gender-Based Violence Outcome: Evidence and Future Research Priorities](#) (Cash Learning Partnership, 2018)

This research reviewed 28 studies of cash transfer and GBV programming and presents evidence regarding the impact of cash transfers on risk or exposure to GBV. It found cash transfers are promising tools to reduce GBV; however, this relationship is complex and there are large gaps in understanding of what program design components are necessary in diverse settings. The evidence reviewed indicates that cash transfer has a positive effect on IPV, the most common finding being that a reduction in income-related tension, frustration, and fighting led to a reduction in IPV. Across the studies, IPV tended to increase when there were not enough resources to meet basic needs, when there was unemployment, and when heads of households felt powerless to provide for their families. There is strong evidence for the positive impact of cash transfer on household decision-making, which can be a proxy measure for the mitigation of IPV. Commonly, multi-purpose cash grants targeting women led to women having a

greater say in how income was spent, though in some cases this led to their partners feeling emasculated, thus increasing threat or exposure to violence or fighting.

This review found no evidence that supports or rejects gender-based targeting in cash programs. When engaging in gender-based targeting, it is important to address how cash may increase pre-existing vulnerabilities. Evidence suggest that where women are targeted, men should also be involved in programming. Further, complementary¹ and multipronged programming is suggested as essential for achieving better GBV outcomes. More research is needed on how best to link cash transfers to complementaryⁱ programming and the best combinations of cash transfer with other services and activities.

Whether cash transfers in humanitarian settings reduce negative coping mechanisms, such as engaging in exploitative sex, was poorly understood. Among Syrians in Jordan, women were found to face a high risk of harassment on their way to cash distribution centres and conversely, there was reported evidence of grants being used for girls' transportation to school, mitigating their risk of harassment on the way to school. Another study on Syrian refugees in Jordan indicated that some participants were able to use their cash assistance to avoid sexually exploitative or abusive relationships.

Four studies reviewed looked at the impact of cash programming on the prevention of early and forced marriage. Of these studies, 50% were positive and 50%

neutral. While cash programming can help delay or prevent early and forced marriage in acute cases where it is seen to alleviate family desperation, it does not change the beliefs and norms underlying the practice. This highlights the importance of integrating cash interventions and GBV programming to address structural factors underpinning GBV.

[Tackling the Integration of Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response and Cash-Based Interventions](#) (Cash Learning Partnership, 2018)

This paper looks at key findings from current practice on integrating cash and GBV programming. It found that while there has been progress on integrating cash and general protection, integrating cash and GBV programming represents a new area of programming. The review identified that while there are some resources available and momentum is building, collaboration between cash and GBV actors is still minimal; both sectors remain siloed within agencies and across communities of practice. This siloing is hampering development of shared understanding of roles and responsibilities and successful approaches, and of maximizing human and financial resources. The review identified anxiety about integrating cash and GBV programming as an inhibiting factor to relevant actors building the skills to collaborate effectively.

Positively, there is buy-in for mainstreaming GBV considerations into cash-based interventions with good practices emerging. There is a need to develop and institutionalise guidance in order to scale up effective approaches. The

¹ Complementary programming refers to the combining of cash transfer with other activities, such as gender transformative discussions and GBV case management.

review finally highlights the poor practices in cash and GBV programming, including: a lack of gender and protection analysis; pervasive one-size-fits-all cash programming, despite evidence that cash complementary activities and services for gender-transformative and protective outcomes; lack of training of cash staff in the basics of GBV, including a survivor-centred approaches; and lack of understanding by GBV staff of the basics of

needs to be tailored to meet specific needs; missed opportunities by cash and GBV actors to pair cash with cash programming. Recommendations are suggested for cash actors, GBV actors and donors to help build on existing good practices and address the poor practices identified.

Case study

[Cash Transfers in Raqqa Governorate, Syria Changes Over Time in Women's Experiences of Violence & Wellbeing](#) (International Rescue Committee, 2019)

This study is an assessment of an emergency cash assistance program in Syria. The aim of the study was to better understand the influence of conditional cash transfers on protection outcomes for women, including experiences of GBV and other aspects of women's wellbeing. The study found that women find cash an acceptable form of aid, and indeed it is widely preferred by women. It also found that cash helps women and families to meet basic needs and reduce negative coping; however, programs must be designed to reduce risks to women related to the changing household dynamics caused by the cash program. Lessons and recommendations arising from the study include the need to ensure complementary approaches to cash transfers in addition to ensuring referral to GBV response services within programs. The authors also recommend including a minimum level of risk monitoring to minimise and prevent risks to women and girls throughout the cash transfer cycle and testing of different design and delivery elements to understand how they affect positive outcomes for women and girls. Finally, the authors highlight the importance of improved communication about cash transfer programming with recipients and communities, and of developing clear exit strategies after cash assistance ends, including ensuring that beneficiaries are aware of alternative available economic opportunities.

Additional Research, Practical Tools and Resources

Standards for programming

[IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Intervention in Humanitarian Action](#) (2015)

[The Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Minimum Standards](#) (forthcoming)

Sphere Handbook: [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response](#) (2018)

General GBV livelihoods resources

[Choices, chances and safety in crisis: a model for women's economic empowerment](#) (2019)

[Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in shock-sensitive social protection](#) (2019)

[Guidance on Livelihoods Programming in Emergency Response and Recovery Contexts](#) (2018)

[Social protection and resilience: Supporting livelihoods in protracted crises and in fragile and humanitarian contexts](#) (2017)

[Women's Protection and Livelihoods Assistance to Central African Refugees and Chadian Returnees in Southern Chad](#) (2016)

[A Double-Edged Sword: Livelihoods in emergencies](#) (2014)

[Examining the Link between Gender-Based Violence & Livelihoods in Displacement Settings](#) (2011)

[CLARA: Cohort Livelihoods and Risk Analysis Guidance and Tools](#) (2016)

[EAŞE Tools and Resources](#)

[Preventing Gender-Based Violence, Building Livelihoods: Guidance and Tools for Improved Programming](#) (2011)

[Building Livelihoods: A Field Manual for Practitioners in Humanitarian Settings](#) (2009)

[Empowered and Safe: Economic Strengthening in Emergencies Theory of Change](#) (2014)

Cash transfer resources

[Collected Papers on Gender and Cash Transfer Programmes in Humanitarian Contexts](#) (2018)

[Optimizing Benefits and Mitigating Risks of Integrating Cash-based Interventions and GBV Programming: Case Studies from Irbid and Mafrag, Jordan](#) (2018)

[The impact of cash transfers on women and girls](#) (2017)

[Cash & Voucher Assistance and Gender-Based Violence Compendium: Practical Guidance for Humanitarian Practitioners](#) (2019)

[Toolkit for Optimizing Cash-based Interventions for Protection from Gender-based Violence: Mainstreaming GBV Considerations in CBIs and Utilizing Cash in GBV Response](#) (2018)

[Guide for Protection in Cash-Based Interventions Tips for Mainstreaming Risk and Benefits Analysis Tool](#) (2016)

[The Cash Learning Partnership](#)

The GBV AoR Help Desk

The GBV AoR Helpdesk is a technical research, analysis, and advice service for humanitarian practitioners working on GBV prevention and response in emergencies at the global, regional and country level. GBV AoR Helpdesk services are provided by a roster of GBViE experts, with oversight from Social Development Direct. Efforts are made to ensure that Helpdesk queries are matched to individuals and networks with considerable experience in the query topic. However, views or opinions expressed in GBV AoR Helpdesk Products do not necessarily reflect those of all members of the GBV AoR, nor of all the experts of SDDirect's Helpdesk roster.

Contact the Helpdesk

You can contact the GBViE Helpdesk by emailing us: enquiries@gbviehelpdesk.org.uk, and we will respond to you within 24 hours during weekdays.

The GBViE Helpdesk is available 09.30- 17.30 GMT, Monday to Friday.