



ICRC

CASE STUDY REPORT

CASH FOR LIVELIHOODS IN PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

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CONTEXT AND SCOPE

One of the worst effects of many conflicts, which often disproportionately affects women more than men is sexual violence. On top of its physical and psychological effects, sexual violence also leads to long-term negative and economic and social consequences: women and men who suffer from sexual violence are often rejected and stigmatized by their families and communities, leading to a loss of social support, assets, and livelihoods.

The ICRC's Protection, Health, and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) departments have continuously supported these victims/survivors of sexual violence alongside those "at-risk" of sexual violence. In 2013, the British Red Cross Society (BRCS) conducted a feasibility study in one country for an Economic Security (EcoSec) project to assist victims/survivors to improve their social and economic situation after the severe negative consequences suffered from sexual violence. This feasibility study led to a joint ICRC/BRCS Cash for Livelihoods project in 2015, supporting victims/survivors. The project's positive results led to the project's continuation and expansion. This case study report will elaborate on the details, outcomes, successes, difficulties and recommendations from the project so far. This document is based on primary quantitative and qualitative data, as well as multiple ICRC and BRCS reviews.

PROJECT DESIGN

This EcoSec project is an addition to the activities carried out by the Protection, Health, and MHPSS departments. Protection analyse the patterns of violence, particularly sexual violence, and makes interventions to different stakeholders. Health supports the local structures that provide medical care to victims of violence. MHPSS supports MHPSS services which provide counselling in the affected areas, facilitating psychological support to victims of violence, particularly sexual violence. These counselling services also provide temporary shelter, clothes, and food to victims/survivors in difficult economic circumstances.

Management and Protection select priority areas in the affected areas according to the reported levels of sexual violence from multiple sources (PCP cases, counselling services and other actors). After receiving psychosocial support from the counselling services, and after asking for their consent, a selected number of victims/survivors are referred to the EcoSec department. The project's implementation is then managed solely by a small EcoSec team.

The EcoSec team then conducts an individual economic assessment of each referred case. The victims/survivors who are capable of working and who are economically vulnerable, according to various pre-set criteria, are selected for the project.¹ These victims/survivors join assistance programmes which also include "at-risk" of sexual violence groups and other vulnerable persons such as civilian casualties.

The project has two main components. The first is a series of trainings on money management, income generating activities (IGAs), and how to work with financial institutions. These trainings are participative in nature and rely on group discussions as many among the beneficiaries are illiterate. The second is a USD 500 unrestricted cash grant, paid in 3 instalments through mobile money or local cooperatives. This monetary assistance is intended to cover immediate needs, but also to start new IGAs in order to have medium-term sustainable outcomes as well.

Given the sensitivity of sexual violence, the project maintains an important level of discretion, to include other beneficiaries such as "at-risk" female-headed households to avoid social re-stigmatization, prevent false cases at the counselling services, as well as to ensure the beneficiaries security in a context with high levels of criminality. Here is a list of some of the measures taken to ensure discretion:

- The ICRC staff working on the project is limited to a very small number.
- The programme includes "other types of beneficiaries" such as female-headed households deemed "at-risk of sexual violence" and civilian casualties to avoid re-stigmatisation of victims/survivors
- The counselling staff do not know who has been selected and participates in the program.
- All of the documents, lists, and databases related to the project are kept in restricted and confidential folders.
- The meetings and trainings are held at non-public places, such as churches or schools, and on market days, providing the beneficiaries an 'excuse' to go to town and making their movements more anonymous.

¹ One of the project's limitations, which is faced by most livelihood projects, is that it is not possible to assist victims that are not able to work (e.g., the elderly or persons with physical or mental disabilities) with livelihoods support. Unfortunately, there are also no existing government social safety net programs the ICRC is not in a position to substitute the government in such long-term social safety net programs.

- The authorities are informed of the nature of the project (not that it targets victims/survivors), but the names of the beneficiaries are not shared.
- The total number of beneficiaries who are victims/survivors is relatively small per area compared to the area's population.
- Mobile phones are provided systematically to allow any issues to be dealt with quickly.

WHAT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGES DID THE PROGRAMME MAKE?

The project has already seen three iterations implemented since 2015. A first iteration was implemented in 2018. So far, 748 victims/survivors have been assisted. Given the estimated average household size of 6, the project has benefitted approximately 4'500 individuals. New iterations are already under way in 2019, with the aim of assisting at least 260 more victims/survivors in both rural and urban areas.

The project consistently improves the beneficiaries' lives in a significant and holistic manner:

- ▶ The unrestricted financial assistance allows the beneficiaries to cover most of their essential expenditures. Not only are food and EHI/NFIs purchased, but other essential expenditures such as health fees are also covered.
- ▶ Many of the victims/survivor's children, who had dropped out as a result of the worse household economic situation, are able to go back to school.
- ▶ The cash grant and the trainings allow the beneficiaries to start new economic activities, which lead to increased revenues. These improved revenues in turn lead to less debts, new savings, and asset accumulation.
- ▶ Given that the beneficiaries normally had no mobile phones or accounts at financial institutions before, these two assets provided by the project improve the beneficiaries' communication and their financial inclusion.
- ▶ The beneficiaries' self-report that these economic benefits also improve their personal well-being. The beneficiaries report feeling better as they are less anxious about their day-to-day expenses and their future.
- ▶ The beneficiaries also report during the individual interviews and the group discussions that their families and communities also notice all of these changes, leading to restored and improved social relations.
- ▶ The change in occupation which is often made as a result of the project also has prevention/protection benefits as the victims/survivors are far less likely to work as daily workers in remote fields where sexual violence is more likely to happen.

Objective 1: Social Well-Being.	Objective 2: Food Consumption.	Objective 3: Living Conditions.
100% of beneficiary households reported that their personal well-being and social relationships improved as a result of the project.	2 meals per day were consumed by the beneficiary households after the project, compared to an average of 1.2 before. Dietary diversity increased as well.	89% average increase in EHI/NFI ownership by the beneficiary households. Some beneficiaries were also able to construct or repair their homes.

Objective 4: Debt Reduction	Objective 5: Asset Accumulation.
46% of beneficiaries reduced their debt levels by at least 80%. 50% of the remaining debts were productive - obtained for investments in their livelihoods.	100% of beneficiary households accumulated productive physical assets such as land or animals. 100% of beneficiary households started saving money, mainly at their new local cooperative accounts.

Table 1 - Quantitative results from the third iteration of the project in (2018-2019).

WHAT WERE THE MAIN FACTORS OF SUCCESS?

- ▶ The project complements the existing ICRC activities to prevent and alleviate the effects of sexual violence.
- ▶ The cash grant is appropriate to allow the beneficiaries to both cover their immediate needs as well as to invest for their future well-being.
- ▶ The series of trainings provided improve the beneficiaries' capacities in terms of money management and investing, empowering the cash grant.
- ▶ The economic improvements lead to improved personal well-being and social support, which in turn reinforce the beneficiaries' social assets and resilience.

- ▶ Several of the project's benefits (reduced debts, savings, asset accumulation, income diversification, and improved capacities) strengthen the beneficiaries' resilience to future shocks.
- ▶ The systematic provision of mobile phones allows for continuous two-way communication between the ICRC and the beneficiaries. It also improves the beneficiaries' general communication.
- ▶ The opening of mobile money or local cooperatives accounts strengthens the beneficiaries' financial inclusion.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN CONSTRAINTS?

- ▶ The volatile security context can lead to delays to the project's implementations as access to the field can fluctuate.
- ▶ The Mobile Money system is less developed and used than in other neighbouring countries. The system lacks liquidity and the network coverage can be limited in rural areas.
- ▶ The EcoSec, Log and Administration departments used the mobile money system for the first time thanks to this project, which naturally has been a learning experience.
- ▶ There were internal doubts, concerns and misunderstandings about this novel approach to alleviating the suffering of sexual violence. Nonetheless, the project's outcomes quickly became their strongest argument.
- ▶ One of the main concerns regarding the project was that the assistance could further stigmatise the victims/survivors. On the contrary, the multiple assessments show that the beneficiaries' personal and economic improvements lead to less social stigmatisation and improvements in their relationships with family members and the community. Including other types of beneficiaries within the programme such as "at-risk" of SV female headed households and civilian casualties also reduced these risks.
- ▶ The project's discretion prevents the project to be conducted at a large scale.

WHAT WERE THE LESSONS LEARNT?

- ▶ The systematic provision of mobile phones allows for effective two-way communication between the ICRC and the beneficiaries. It also permits communication after the project's official completion if needed.
- ▶ The mobile phones also allow a certain level of remote management in case access to the field becomes restricted. Beneficiaries can still be reached, while money transfers are still possible remotely.
- ▶ The series of trainings provided complements and bolsters the cash grant, leading to positive medium and long-term financial decisions. These trainings should be a condition to the monetary assistance.
- ▶ The opening of accounts at local cooperatives or through mobile money not only facilitates the multiple cash transfers, but it also furthers financial inclusion. It allows the beneficiaries to save money safely.
- ▶ The improvements in capacities and revenue leads to its own 'multiplier effect' in terms of food consumption, living conditions, and essential expenditures, including health and school fees.
- ▶ Internal communication and persuasion within the ICRC itself is key when it comes to new and novel programmes, particularly if it is related to sexual violence and to the still sensitive cash modalities.
- ▶ It is important to have a strong psychosocial support partner that can refer victims/survivors to the EcoSec department. The ICRC-supported counselling services and a major NGO partner have worked as referencing partners.
- ▶ Discretion is more sensitive in rural settings. Urban settings provide a higher level of anonymity and would allow for higher caseloads to be managed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequently, it is recommended to continue and expand this programme. Despite the project's positive outcomes, further improvements are always possible and should be sought (e.g., as health remains an issue and important expense, it is planned to add a training for the beneficiaries on hygiene, nutrition and disease prevention in 2019). This project type could also be expanded to other contexts with high levels of sexual violence and where strong psychosocial support institutions exist and would be able to refer SV cases to existing programmes supporting other "vulnerable" and "at-risk" groups.

Finally, this Cash for Livelihoods project type can be replicated to assist other vulnerable groups. The project was replicated at a small scale for ICRC Physical Rehabilitation Project (PRP) beneficiaries in 2018, with similar positive outcomes. This PRP project will be continued and expanded in 2019. Nonetheless, other similar projects targeting other vulnerable groups such as weapon wounded or ex-detainees could be envisioned as well. This project's discretion would be less relevant with such groups as well, allowing for possibly larger caseloads of beneficiaries to be assisted.

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