



# WOMEN'S PROTECTION AND LIVELIHOODS

Assistance to Central African Refugees and Chadian Returnees in Southern Chad

Program Evaluation Final Report, November 2016



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## I. WOMEN'S PROTECTION AND LIVELIHOODS PROGRAM

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There are currently over 107,000 displaced people, over half (54%) of whom are women, from CAR in Southern Chad as a result of the ongoing conflict in CAR which began in December 2012 and continues today<sup>1</sup>. During humanitarian crises, women and girls' exposure to gender-based violence (GBV) is significantly heightened<sup>2</sup>, often more so during displacement.

The IRC's Women's Protection and Livelihoods Program in Southern Chad contributed to GBV response, to safely restore livelihoods and to prevent and reduce the risk of GBV, including sexual exploitation of women and girls, or spending time in areas where they are more vulnerable to search for provisions, which could expose women and girls to further risks of violence.

The Women's Protection and Livelihoods Program combined provision of comprehensive services for GBV survivors, namely case management, psychosocial support and clinical care, community awareness on GBV, with cash transfers and income-generating activities. The program was carried out between September 2014 and September 2016 in two sites in Southern Chad, Maingama and Kobiteye. Specifically, the program acted to:

- Train community outreach workers;
- Raise community awareness on gender-based violence and available services;
- Conduct safety audits in two sites;
- Establish women's centers in two sites with activities and safe spaces, including:
  - recreational and group psychosocial activities for 3,071 women and girls;
  - case management and psychosocial support to 542 survivors of GBV at women centers
- Provide dignity kits to 4,327 women and girls
- Equip and train 34 service providers, including health staff (clinical care for sexual violence survivors), police and religious leaders;
- Establish partnerships with other organizations to provide comprehensive health and GBV services;
- Engage in gender discussion groups in which 256 couples participated;
- Provide 250 vulnerable women with livelihoods support:
  - Unconditional cash transfers in the first year of the project to complement World Food Program food rations;
  - Skills training on income generating activities (IGAs) and cash transfers as support to implement a business plan in the second year of the project.

The vulnerability status of the 250 women selected for livelihoods support was determined by community members who were given guidance as to how to select beneficiaries. Beneficiaries had to meet at least one of five key criteria:

- A survivor of GBV with poor access to basic food items
- Female head of household with four or more children under the age of five
- Older women with poor access to basic food items
- Widows with young children under the age of five

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<sup>1</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/sub-saharan-africa/chad/figures-analysis>.

<sup>2</sup> 2015 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, <http://gbvguidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-IASC-Gender-based-Violence-Guidelines-lo-res.pdf>.

- Women and girls at risk of forced marriage

The IRC engaged both women’s protection and empowerment (WPE) specialized staff and livelihoods staff to assure the two components of the program were implemented successfully. However, the IRC aimed to establish an integrated approach bringing together the women’s protection and livelihoods components throughout the program cycle. In this way, staff could answer questions on both components for the beneficiaries, fill in for each other when needed and have a better understanding of how various aspects of programming needed to work together.

## **II. LEARNING AND EVALUATION OBJECTIVES**

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The Women’s Protection and Livelihoods Program in Southern Chad included a learning and evaluation component. While the use of cash transfers has increased in the last decade, most focus on livelihoods and food security in recovery settings. There is limited evidence on the impact of cash transfers on women and child protection, including exposure to GBV, especially in acute crisis contexts. As a result, there is a lack of appropriate guidance, standards and tools, potentially exposing women and girls to further harm when gender dynamics and vulnerability to violence are not integrated into the design of cash transfer programming.

The program’s primary learning objective was to contribute to available knowledge and practical experience in the cash transfer domain, as well as their link with women’s protection, specifically:

- What types of potentially harmful livelihoods activities and coping strategies may increase violence or exploitation of women and girls?<sup>2</sup>
- What were the main positive and negative features of cash distributions and women’s protection services provided?
- Were the implementation modalities (cash transfer and women’s protection) well-integrated and appropriate for the context? Were the women’s protection and livelihoods activities integrated well?
- To what extent were risks adequately mitigated (fraud and extortion of beneficiaries by program staff, government officials, camp officials, and other community members)?
- What key lessons can be drawn to inform GBV risk mitigation in the future?
- What is the change, if any, between women’s perception of safety, the risks of GBV they face and their survival strategies before and after the receiving the cash and in-kind transfers and support income generating activities?

## **III. EVALUATION METHODS**

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The Women’s Protection and Livelihoods Program evaluation used mixed methods, including surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups. Data collection happened at three moments:

- A baseline in April 2015
- A midline in November 2015
- An endline in September 2016

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<sup>2</sup> This question was explored in the baseline and midline evaluation reports. Notably, respondents said that they felt most insecure when traveling outside of the sites (64.3% report feeling insecure), when accessing services (50.3%), and during incomegenerating activities (50.3%).

An international consultant led the first two data collections. The endline data collection was led by an IRC Research Officer.

Methods and sampling varied over the three data collections:

**Table 1: Data Collection Methods and Sampling**

METHOD	SAMPLING		
	Baseline (April 2015)	Midline (November 2015)	Endline (September 2016)
<b>Surveys</b>	456 participants chosen at random from the proposed beneficiaries in 1500 (162 and 294 in Kobiteye Maingama)	242 participants among the 250 beneficiaries (82 in Kobiteye and 160 in Maingama)	-
<b>Focus groups</b>	6 focus groups (8 participants per group, 3 groups by sites Kobiteye and Maingama) with leaders of women's associations	-	6 Focus groups with 60 participants total (8-12 participants per group, 3 groups per site (Kobiteye and Maingama))
<b>In-depth questionnaires with beneficiaries</b>	12 women leader respondents, from local women's associations.	28 beneficiary respondents (8 in Kobiteye and 20 in Maingama)	30 beneficiary respondents (15 in Kobiteye and 15 in Maingama)
<b>In-depth questionnaires with IRC staff</b>	-	-	4 IRC staff interviewed (2 in Kobiteye, 2 in Maingama)

The changes over three periods were due to the following factors:

- **Change in focus:** The baseline focused on the overall context, including when and where beneficiaries perceived to be more at risk of GBV, and demographic background of participants. The midline focused on initial perceived outcomes and feedback from beneficiaries on the first set of activities. The endline focused on implementation successes and challenges and recommendations. Data collection tools were adapted in consequence.
- **Correction in number of actual beneficiaries:** The baseline sampling was based on the assumption that there would be 1,500 beneficiaries of the monetary component. The evaluator selected 456 respondents for the baseline survey. By the midline, the number of beneficiaries was corrected to 250. Of these 250, the evaluator surveyed 242 beneficiaries.

## IV. RESULTS - SUCCESSES

### A. IMPLEMENTATION

#### Key Findings:

- **Integration of Women's Protection and Livelihoods Components** – Staff from both the WPE and the Livelihood teams received the same training and started integrated activities together from the beginning of the project. They reported feeling very much part of one team and said the activities were complementary and targeted toward the same beneficiaries: women and girls in the communities where they worked. One example given was that information on GBV services was provided during IGA training.

Project staff understood the role of cash and IGAs in reducing risks of GBV and empowering women. **Perhaps most importantly, livelihoods staff reported feeling comfortable in providing referrals to GBV survivors.** In past experience, it was difficult for staff from sectors outside of women’s protection to be comfortable talking about or engaging with the GBV project activities.

*“Everyone supported both aspects of the project [GBV and livelihoods] and if someone wasn’t there someone else could assure the interim....We even did the same project training at the beginning”*

- **Community sensitization** – While adoption and understanding of the concepts was slow, **acceptance of community sensitization increased over time, particularly as project staff built up trust in the community.** The Women’s Protection Officer and volunteer community workers organized outreach activities almost every day on site using door to door visits and an approach called “educational chats”. For the latter, people were invited to gather outside of the women’s center and the WPE team facilitated discussions around gender issues including joint decision-making in the household, early marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). This approach seemed to work for both the staff and community members interviewed. Respondents recommended additional sensitizations specifically targeted at men.

*“[The staff] should do sensitization sessions especially with the men who are in the site because they are the ones responsible for all of the threats, theft, violence, and injury which happens in the site”*

#### **Additional Findings:**

- *Staff-Beneficiary rapport*- Respondents said that GBV staff were welcoming and responsive to beneficiaries. Having staff that were approachable was considered to increase access and reduce social barriers to services.
- *Beneficiary selection process* – There was strong community engagement during the beneficiary selection process which seemed to increase acceptance of the selection.
- *GBV services as a resource* – Respondents had a good awareness of the existence and location of the response services and said they could turn to GBV services if they were at risk.
- *Cash distribution method* - Respondents thought that the cash distribution was effective and convenient. Many said that they appreciated being informed in advance of when they could expect the distributions.
- *IGA training* - Participants in the IGA training felt that it was very useful and particularly valued the opportunity to learn basic accounting and money management skills.
- *Response to complaints* – Project staff set up a complaint mechanism to respond to problems with the activities. The mechanism that was set up consisted of community leaders, women’s association leaders and elected beneficiary representatives who were part of a committee that responded to complaints. Individuals were selected by the beneficiaries themselves based on their ability to remain impartial and to keep respondents confidentiality. The committee involved other groups in the community, such as the local police, to prevent them from coercing beneficiaries to pay them for services that are part of their job or to otherwise exploit or harm beneficiaries.

## **B. OUTCOMES**

### **Key Findings:**

- **Immediate effects** - There was an overwhelming positive response to the effect the project had on beneficiaries. **Respondents talked about a wide range of immediate positive outcomes that resulted from the project** including: better psychological well-being, more control over and independence in their lives, better health, an improved standard of living, improved business skills and being able to pay for school fees for themselves or their children, amongst others. Respondents noted a reduced exposure to sexual exploitation thanks to alternative sources of income and an increased feeling of control, as well as positive behavior change by integrating better with the community or taking better care of themselves and their families.

*“With the arrival of this project, there has been a large improvement for my family. My family eats two or three times a day and even their housing, clothes, meals have really changed.”*

- **Decrease in harmful coping mechanisms and risk of sexual exploitation** - When provided with other means of supporting themselves, respondents reported that there already was or would be a reduced exposure to sexual exploitation, including early marriage, and harmful coping mechanisms. Many felt that these changes would be long term and that beneficiaries would be protected from previous harmful practices.
- **Decrease in risky activities** – After receiving cash transfers and IGA training, respondents described a decrease in activities that put them at risk of harm, including sexual and physical violence, such as spending time on the road or outside of the camp looking for wood.

*“Receiving the money from the NGO will change [a woman’s] decisions to not have sexual relations with men to earn money or food. It is up to her to manage her money, to do her IGA, and to take good care of her family...”*

#### **Additional Findings:**

- **Long term effects** - Most groups thought that the results of the project would have long term effects on the beneficiaries’ lives, either through being lifted out of poverty and not returning to her previous circumstances, or by reducing their exposure to sexual exploitation thanks to new livelihood options.
- **Family relationships** - Most respondents were the head of their household and in that role, stated that their participation in project activities did not negatively affect their relationships at home.
- **Risk mitigation factors** – Respondents seemed to agree with the project theory of change in citing project activities including IGAs, GBV sensitization, and saving money as factors that would reduce risk of harm to women. Many beneficiaries use the IGA as their main source of income which provides an alternative means of support and protection from possible coercion or exploitation.
- **Increase in GBV awareness** – Project staff in particular reported that there was an increased awareness of types of GBV, consequences, available services and how to access them as well as increased knowledge of reproductive health and IGAs.

## **V. RESULTS – REMAINING CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

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## A. IMPLEMENTATION

### Key Findings:

- **Transparency and verification of beneficiaries** – There were challenges around how to best determine who should be selected as a beneficiary. Project staff did their best to engage the community in order to reduce tension and increase community support. To do this they relied on existing community leaders and **there were reports that these leaders selected personal friends, family members or acquaintances who fit the criteria regardless of whether they had the greatest need as compared to other women.** Staff did not independently verify the vulnerability status of beneficiaries or otherwise ensure that the selection process is transparent, but later recognized that doing so would have helped the community to accept the selection process and reduce the risks of exploitation, bribery or corruption.
- **Community engagement and confidentiality** – There was difficulty determining how best to target survivors of GBV as beneficiaries of the cash transfers while also engaging the community in the selection process. In respecting the principle of confidentiality of services provided, the identities of people who meet the criteria (in this case, survivors of gender based violence) could not be disclosed or discussed in any way. However, community engagement and transparency in the selection of beneficiaries is also recommended for the success of cash transfer and economic recovery projects. As a result, despite the fact that the project was intended to target GBV survivors, it is unclear what proportion of the beneficiaries actually were survivors of GBV. **The challenge is to devise mixed selection processes and communication strategies which would maintain the confidentiality of beneficiaries that have been identified by GBV response staff while also involving community members in the selection process to encourage community acceptance and minimize tensions.**

*“The people in the community are aware that [beneficiaries] received money from an NGO because when they come back they buy good things to feed their family and they are happy with their children. They also tell their friends that they’ve received aid from an NGO.”*

- **Risk Mitigation** - The reduction of the inherent risk associated with project activities and particularly cash transfers in very low resource settings was a challenge. **The fact that beneficiaries had cash in an environment where there was little cash circulation immediately made them a target for theft, threats, injury and even death.** There were at least two incidents of cash or IGA materials being stolen, sometimes during the cash distributions. Many questions remain for how to reduce the risk for beneficiaries while following the original objective of the project.

*“The bad things that could happen [to a woman who receives a cash transfer] are theft, threats, injury.....”*

### Additional Findings:

- **Insecurity at distributions** - Beneficiaries reported feeling insecure during cash distributions. One distribution location was changed to reduce risk of breach of confidentiality and robberies.
- **Confidentiality** – Respondents gave mixed reviews on how confidential the distributions were. Many said that because of the mechanism of distribution as well as the obvious positive change in the standard of living of beneficiaries, the distributions were not confidential and put them at higher risk of harm.

- *Housing/safe-keeping of cash* – Respondents identified poor quality housing, such as the canvas tents many beneficiaries used as shelter, as a factor that put them at increased risk for theft or injury. If strangers, neighbors or others living in the camp are aware that beneficiaries have received a cash distribution and that tents are easily torn or cut open, it would not be difficult for them to attack or steal from beneficiaries. Respondents reported feeling more insecure in their own homes after receiving the cash.
- *Social stigma* – Despite efforts, respondents and staff stated there was still stigma associated with utilizing GBV services.
- *Exploitation by community leaders* – There were reports that community leaders pressured beneficiaries to give them some of the cash they received in exchange for being selected as a beneficiary. According to project staff, at least some cases of this happening were reported directly to them. Staff then raised the concerns during monthly reunions which served as a platform of exchange between the project staff and members of the community. Decisions on how to prevent these incidents were made together at the meetings to avoid tension and encourage community ownership of the project.
- *Sensitization materials* – Staff would have liked to have had more visual materials (“boites à images”, videos) so that the information would be more appropriate for illiterate populations.
- *Violation of Privacy* – The safe space tent in Maingama was damaged which would violate the privacy conditions of a safe space.
- *Problems with mobile cash company* – There were sometimes long delays on the distribution days. Tigo (the mobile telephone service provider engaged to distribute cash) often arrived late, and lacked liquidity and smaller bills during distributions.
- *Available GBV services* - IRC provided and/or referred to a holistic range of services. However, several staff mentioned that some partners had to be dropped from the referral pathway because they did not respect protocols or did not provide sufficient services. One staff reported that legal services were difficult to follow up on or unavailable. On the protection side, a staff member stated that police ask bribes from perpetrators to drop the charges.

## B. OUTCOMES

### Key Findings:

- ***Diversification of IGAs*** – At the beginning of the project and for most of the implementation period, the majority of beneficiaries selected the same IGA, selling condiments and spices at a table in the local market. **The influx of tables selling similar items likely flooded the market with more supply than there was demand for and reduced the possibility for women to earn income and change their economic circumstances.** Towards the end of the project some women had started to diversify, but this was in areas that required long term investment to see effects such as raising livestock or farming fields. Women thought that the IGA training they had received was still beneficial to them even after having to change their IGA.

*“The training helped me to change each time my business wasn’t going well. I had to change to another [IGA] to bring in revenue to take care of my household”.*

- ***Sharing of cash*** - Cash and other income was often shared with neighbors or extended families both voluntarily and as a protective factor against potential harms and to reduce tension and jealousy amongst their neighbors. To a degree this is to be expected in communal societies where social networks are large and diffuse and there are strong religious beliefs which encourage giving to charity or helping others in

need. The sharing of cash likely diluted the positive effects of the activities but also worked to reduce risk and increase community acceptance of some women as beneficiaries and not others.

*"I am on good terms with my neighborhood, nothing bad now. When I receive a cash transfer, I take care of my children and sometimes I help my neighbor with 500 francs since we live in the same situation."*

#### **Additional Findings:**

- *Lack of cash circulation* - Cash circulation was a large problem in creating income in the camp even when women were managing their money well and putting it back into their IGA.
- *Long term impact*- Some respondents stated that the long term impact of the project was uncertain either because the amount of cash distributed was not sufficient to lift them out of the cycle of poverty or because the IGA they had chosen was not actually generating income for them.
- *Social norms* – There were strong social norms around encouraging single women to seek husbands, regardless of livelihood opportunities available, both as a protective factor and to increase her integration into the community.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **A. Intersection of Women’s Protection and Cash Distributions**

- *Conduct a risk assessment with beneficiaries* – Identify advantages and risks of different cash distribution options. Note that options that mitigate risks may be costlier to implement, and the ability to decide on appropriate trade-offs will depend on the quality of the risk assessment.
- *Take into account beneficiary preferences in cash distribution modalities* – In the Women’s Protection and Livelihoods Program, cash was distributed on given days, and beneficiaries would gather to receive the cash. Other cash distribution options include:
  - Mobile money that can be distributed or used more discreetly in contexts where this is feasible.
  - In locations where mobile money cannot be used (as was the case in Kobiteye and Maingama), ask beneficiaries about preferences for cash, cash vouchers, or a combination of both, considering trade-offs between flexibility and risks. For example, cash could be provided to purchase items that women prefer to buy with cash, and the remainder could be provided in cash vouchers.
  - Discuss with beneficiaries about their preferences on frequency and timing of distribution – For example, distributing smaller amounts of cash at more frequent intervals could be a safer options. Beneficiaries may also prefer to have a distribution early on a market day, allowing them to make purchases more quickly and lowering the risk of being targeted for robberies.
- *Incorporate risk mitigation in IGA training and activities* – The baseline evaluation report indicates that a majority (50.3%) feel most insecure while conducting income-generating activities. Discussion and development of appropriate risk mitigation strategies and safety plans as part of the IGA training could be a helpful addition.
- *Coordinate the different components of training* – To reinforce the identity of staff as one team, the training should integrate components from the different sectors, women’s protection and livelihoods, together and ensure that all staff are trained in both components. This approach would strengthen programming and enable all members of the team to address the issues of GBV.

## A. General

- *Overall Recommendations* – Main respondent priorities were continuation of the project, incorporation of healthcare, and improving on housing as many of the tents did not offer very good security against thefts or other attacks or were greatly affecting their quality of life in other ways.
- *Extend program to more beneficiaries within community*– Both staff and beneficiaries stated repeatedly that the number of beneficiaries was small compared to the population of the camp. This created tension and likely reduced the impact of the project on the setting. On the staff side, this seemed to affect morale as to how meaningful the results of all of their work would be. On the beneficiary side, this created guilt, possibly increased risks of violence and compelled women to share the amount they received during distributions.
- *Targeting beneficiaries*
  - Community involvement in beneficiary selection tends to allow for more informed selection (based on the premise that community members know each other better than an external organization) and higher satisfaction in the selection. However, community-based targeting works best when there is external facilitation and verification of the selection, when community members are aware of selection criteria, and when community members have an opportunity to see and validate the list. These processes tend to reduce the risk of elite capture of the selection process.<sup>3</sup>
  - To ensure both confidentiality and inclusion of GBV survivors in the livelihoods beneficiaries, an option could be a two-tiered approach, where the community is asked to select a certain number of beneficiaries based on established vulnerability criteria (but excluding the most sensitive criteria), while the IRC staff select the remainder confidentially and without sharing the criteria for selection process, which would include for instance women and girls at risk of exploitation (including early marriage), GBV survivors or women engaged in high-risk activities.

## B. Cash Distributions

- *Assume that beneficiaries will share, potentially reducing the expected impact of the program on livelihoods* – Many beneficiaries shared the cash distributions with extended family or neighbors and so the positive effects on their immediate households may have been diluted. While this is positive for mitigating risk and increasing the integration of beneficiaries in the community it should be considered both during the program planning phase and when estimating the potential impact of the project.
- *Assess the cash distributor thoroughly and set clear expectations* – Some respondents said that the cash distributor did not have sufficient cash on hand, and not in smaller bills, on the days of the distribution. This risk can be mitigated by agreeing on time tables of notification for delivery dates in the contract, as well as assessing the cash distributor's cash flow.

## C. Income Generating Activities

- *Market assessment* – A better market assessment is needed to determine which IGA's would be the most lucrative for beneficiaries. While technically a market assessment was done, this consisted mostly of comparing the prices of basic goods within the site and did not provide a foundation for supporting beneficiaries in their choice of IGA.
- *Literacy level of training materials* - Assuring training materials are appropriate for a non-literate or low-literate group is essential for success of the IGA training. Much of the IGA training seemed to require participants to be literate or semi-literate and incorporating visual images or films to assist in understanding the concepts covered in the training will make comprehension and retention stronger.

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<sup>3</sup> Himmelstine, Carmen Leon. Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2012. "Community Based Targeting: A Review of CBT programming and literature".

- *Facilitate Trade with town* – Several respondents requested support for trading with the nearby town to solve the problem of cash circulation within the camp. Occasionally town members would come to the camp to purchase goods as they were sold much cheaper in the camps than in the towns and this seemed a natural response to the problem of supply and demand within the camp. Suggestions included either setting up transport or money for transport to the town or possible setting aside a market in the middle.

#### **D. GBV Response Services**

- *Increase the number and frequency of sensitizations* – As mentioned, many respondents felt that the sensitization sessions had a positive effect on the men in the camp and that the project should continue engaging with men in the target areas to increase knowledge about gender based violence and reduce stigma towards survivors. While it is unlikely that sensitization sessions would address root causes of GBV, longer-term and more structured engagement, for instance through an intervention such as IRC’s Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP), would be an important complement to program activities aiming at addressing the consequences of violence and exploitation.