



Advancing Economic Empowerment for GBV Survivors:
Innovating and Localising Integrated Programming

What Works? Integrating GBV and Economic Recovery Programming: Cross-cutting Findings and Recommendations from Pilot Programmes in Jordan, Lebanon, Niger and Uganda

Across the globe, displaced and conflict-affected women and girls are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence (GBV) and economic marginalisation rooted in gender inequality. GBV and economic marginalisation can compound each other. GBV inhibits access to safe, sustainable employment, livelihoods, and financial autonomy for both survivors and those at risk due to psychological trauma, physical impact of having been exposed to GBV, stigma, gender norms, legal status, or by limiting their movement outside their homes. Further, the lack of opportunities for economic self-reliance can also push survivors to remain in abusive or vulnerable situations to meet basic needs and expose them to further risks.

Jointly with local actors, the **Danish Refugee Council (DRC)** and the **Women's Refugee Commission (WRC)** partnered to pilot a new, innovative, and participatory approach to address the need for more evidence on localised and integrated models to GBV and Economic Recovery programming¹.

The programme established Local Anchor Groups (LAGs) in the four contexts of implementation: Jordan, Lebanon, Niger, and Uganda. The LAGs are a coalition of local actors, international non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies and government ministries who work together to enhance learning and capacities across both GBV and economic recovery sectors. Using global guidance tailored for the programme, the LAGs developed localised Theory of Change (ToC) models to reduce GBV risks and advance economic empowerment of displaced GBV survivors in their communities. Read more about the LAG model as an approach to localised and integrated programming [here](#). In the final year of the programme, a few LAG members were selected in each country to receive flexible funding to implement an integrated GBV-Economic Recovery programme, based on the LAG's common ToC.

What works? Best practices for integrated programming

DRC supported seven local organisations to implement programmes based on their respective ToCs: *Arab Women Organisation (AWO)* and *Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD)* in Jordan; *Key of Life (KoL)* in Lebanon; *Association Education pour la Paix et le Progrès (EPP)*, *Coordination des ONG et Association Féminines Nigériennes (CONGAFEN)* and *Union Rufin Asiri* in Niger; and *Youth Empowerment to Act (YETA)* in Uganda. Read more about the pilot programmes in our summary brief [here](#).

Based on the preliminary findings from the pilot programs, integrated programming shows promising outcomes for GBV survivors:

Integrated psychosocial support and economic recovery skills building enable survivors to not only recover from GBV but also help them build their self-confidence.

Survivors from the programmes in Lebanon and Uganda shared similar accounts of improved self-confidence, mental health and well-being, and belief in their potential to become economically independent. Some attributed these outcomes to the holistic approach of the programme; the combination of activities gave them tools to overcome challenges in their mental health, strengthen familial relationships and community bonds, and see potential economic opportunities. Likewise, participating

survivors in Uganda shared that they were more self-reliant and independent by the end of the programme, being able to provide for themselves and their families to support basic needs on their own, which further empowered them.

“The program had a positive impact on my life, as I gained new skills that boosted my self-confidence and improved my work performance. I became more aware of how to take advantage of the opportunities around me and started applying what I learned in my daily life. This helped me enhance my relationships and develop ideas for small projects...”

– Lebanese woman and GBV survivor, 39 years old

Connecting survivors to opportunities and resources combined with skills building enables survivors to earn income.

In all pilot programmes, survivors gained a range of skills through training, such as vocational, business development, financial literacy, or marketing skills. The survivors who participated in programmes that integrated start-up capital for small businesses or career days to connect survivors with employers reported better economic outcomes, such as employment, business development, income generation or self-reliance compared to survivors in programmes which did not incorporate similar opportunities.

¹Integrated programming is defined as “Joint analysis, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of activities that support mutually reinforcing Protection and Economic Recovery outcomes and overall objective. It combines complementary Protection and Economic Recovery programme activities which collectively contribute to achieving mutually reinforcing outcomes and a common programme objective.” DRC Integrated Programme Guidance: Protection and Economic Recovery (2022). Women’s Refugee Commission, 2022.

“The impact has been especially positive at home, I now work with a calm and clear mind. Getting out of the house, making friends, and feeling part of society has transformed me. Before, I felt marginalized, but today I am confident in myself and my abilities.”

– Syrian refugee woman and GBV survivor in Lebanon, 42 years old

Integrating community-level action and individual programming helps survivors by generating more support for their empowerment in the broader community.

In communities where the programmes were implemented, several positive impacts were reported, such as: improving the community’s understanding of GBV and gender equality; reducing tensions at the household or community level; engaging employers to commit to fostering safe workplaces for women; or increasing a survivor’s engagement with their community. Evidence from the literature demonstrates that engaging men and boys in the community, in particular, is conducive to positive outcomes for GBV survivors to achieve empowerment².

“I was hopeless before the training but now I’m confident of myself. I can get my own money, buy food, clothes, educational materials for my kids. I now know that what a man does, I can do, and even better.”

– South Sudanese refugee woman and GBV survivor in Uganda, 25 years old

Longer-term programming is needed to achieve GBV and economic recovery outcomes to support survivors to make effective and sustainable positive changes.

All four programmes were implemented and evaluated over 3-5 month periods, which means that these evaluations only examined short-term results and benefits and could not examine long-term impacts and longer implementation. Local partners piloting the programme expressed the need for further support to adjust their ToC’s programme models according to evolving protection risks and needs. Longer-term programming also allows for longer evaluation periods to capture the efficiency and sustainability of programme outcomes for participants.

“I am a 42-year-old Syrian woman. Life was pressing down on me from all sides, and I felt there was no space to find support and understanding for my feelings. When I turned to the Arab Women Organization, I didn’t expect to find such a sense of safety and support. Thanks to the counseling sessions, I have become stronger and more able to face challenges. I felt that I wasn’t alone; there were people who listened to me and helped me overcome the pain. Now, I feel like a new person, filled with hope and strength, and ready to build a better life”

– Syrian refugee woman and GBV survivor in Jordan, 42 years old

²A Way Forward: Landscaping Report on Integrated Gender-Based Violence and Economic Recovery Programming.” Bhanja, Aditi. Rep. Women’s Refugee Commission, 2022.

Recommendations

“Aligning the [integrated] approach vis-à-vis the donor requirements is what is kind of challenging. But if donors are open..., it would really make a lot of sense in giving integrated services to GBV survivors.”

– LAG member in Uganda, 2024

→ **Support more flexible funding that allows for integrated and localised programme models**

for GBV survivors that build on both global and local expertise, local knowledge and community trust. This requires moving beyond stand-alone programmes and fostering more cross-sector and cross-organisation collaboration for better outcomes.

→ **Support long-term funding for integrated programmes**

to ensure impactful and sustainable outcomes for GBV survivors and women and girls at risk. This programme provides further evidence that drivers of GBV and economic recovery needs are better addressed through longer-term holistic and contextual approaches. These require time to adjust according to evolving needs and risks and to measure and document impact. Investing in longer-term programming should also reduce costs for donors in the long run since reduced protection risks and increased self-reliance can lead to decreased demand for humanitarian programming. Donors should ensure that the budget and timeline adequately account for both the programme and evaluation.

→ **Increase funding and support for integrated GBV and Economic Recovery programming for women to reduce GBV risks by addressing the root causes of GBV.**

This programme focused on GBV survivors, but integrated programming is effective in tackling the root causes of GBV and should be expanded to women more broadly.

→ **Support for GBV programmes that support GBV survivors in all their diversities.**

This programme focused largely on women, aged 18-60 years, and older adolescent girls, aged 17-18 years. Donors should support more capacity-strengthening for local actors and enable an integrated programming focus for survivors with disabilities and of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics.

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