

The study recommended:

Parallel, coordinated sector programming in:

- Community-based protection: actors including World Vision can extend technical capacity across sectors to strengthen community safety nets.
- Livelihoods: potentially through Cash for Work as well as value chain development, for more sustainable cash flow and resulting decreased household stress.
- Youth life skills: including for out-of-school youth, to challenge gender stereotypes and help young people with positive life choices.
- Safe places and ways to talk about violence: Opportunities to talk safely about violence and vulnerabilities (for women and for men) is key to addressing them.



Integrating gender-based violence (GBV) awareness in cash process:

Women were less likely to identify violence against them and their children than men. A significant step for cash programming would be inclusion of GBV awareness including legal rights, referrals and counselling support.

A long-term strategy for cash as a social protection tool in Iraq:

Donors are working less in Northern Iraq than previously and there is pressure on government to restore reliable welfare services. All partners have accountability to current cash recipients to resolve social welfare responsibilities transparently.

Setting genuine gender outcomes:

The study found women were less likely to be working or to control cash resources, were less happy, and defined home violence less broadly, than men. For strengthened gender results within cash transfer projects, and also more broadly, goals and indicators require a strengthened gender lens.

Specific situation analysis of social protection needs:

The study offers evidence that violence and rights abuse against women and children is happening, but it has not measured extent or type of violence. Issues affecting women and children merit specific and separate research, using methodologies sensitive to current community reluctance to talk about situations and root causes.

Donor commitment across sectors to support the above:

With criteria for cash programming that takes into consideration vulnerable ages for early marriage, child labour and school dropout, and flexibility of programming to connect with positive social initiatives for gender inclusion, adolescent/youth empowerment and reducing gender-based violence.

Understanding Cash-based Programming and Protection In Northern Region of Iraq

A World Vision Innovation Fund Research Project

November 2018



About The Study

In July 2018, World Vision commissioned a **Cash and Protection Study** to measure the impact of their Iraq humanitarian cash for food transfer program on protection outcomes, particularly for women and children. Although projects surveyed used different modalities for cash distribution, comparisons based on differing modalities were not considered within the scope of this study.

The study used a survey and interviews about perceptions of safety and protection from violence in different settings: the home, the local neighbourhood, and the community more broadly based on 4 key questions. The study also used **Most Significant Change** methodology to identify women's and men's representative experiences of the cash programs and whether gender and protection outcomes were among these. In total, 367 households (across different camps and host communities) of Syrian refugees and displaced Iraqis in Northern Iraq completed the survey and 187 provided interview or focus group information.



World Vision (WV) began operations in Iraq in 2003. Currently it is implementing humanitarian programs in protection, health, food, education, NFI/Cash and water/sanitation/hygiene sectors.

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CASH, WORLD VISION AND WFP IN IRAQ

Agencies responding to the Iraq humanitarian crisis have used cash to provide both short-term relief and long-term social protection. World Vision's cash programming incorporated a large-scale partnership with World Food Program in northern Iraq, gradually replacing direct food distribution since 2014.

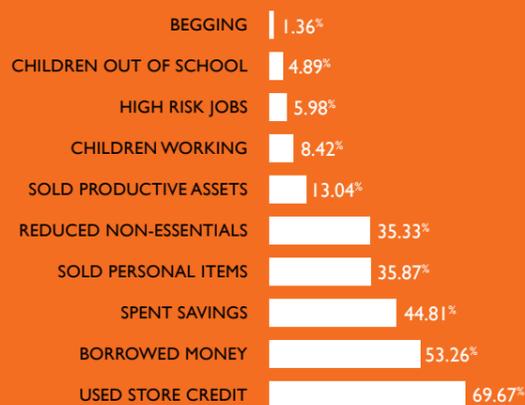
Proportion of respondents who have faced the following problems in the last six months



Proportion of respondents agreeing with the following statements



Respondents were asked to identify which of this pre-set list of issues they had faced in the last six months. Multiple answers were used. The percentage represents the proportion of households that faced the issue.



What are the protection issues and challenges facing displaced Iraqis within their host communities?

- Physical needs remain uppermost in priorities of displaced households.
- Proportionally, female respondents were slightly more likely to identify community safety and harassment of girls and women as a concern, but debt and food shortages remained significantly higher in the list of problems experienced, regardless of gender.
- Men reported facing more challenges of debt and housing, and fewer about food than women.
- Households were aware of, but did not condone, child labour and early marriage in their communities. Universally, households named economic stress as the reason behind such choices.
- Respondents from all backgrounds expressed concern about levels of home violence, and sometimes, but not always, saw it as related to the stressful situations in which people were living.
- The proportion of people who would take action to protect another family from home-based violence was less than two thirds.

How do recipients of cash-based programming work towards mitigating these issues?

The study found:

- Negative financial decisions dropped after cash programming began.
- Going into debt for food did not decrease; however, respondents were paying it back with better regularity.
- Women in semi-structured interviews expressed relief because they had access to cash.
- Very few women spent cash on themselves; the most common usage was to meet healthcare costs and children's needs.
- Women highlighted cash benefits for their children, including social benefits: improved participation, friendships and self-esteem.
- Families ended children's labour as a priority when cash began; however, these gains were fragile and returnee families sometimes reversed their decision when cash ended.
- When financial situations improved in the household, it was not always the case that children went back to school or stopped working. With the routine of learning disturbed, children reported they would rather not start again; as well, boys felt more useful and important if they were working and contributing to reduced economic stress in their homes.
- Incidence of uncontrollable emotion - anger, fear or hopelessness - had improved slightly after cash commenced for men, but had not changed for women. Overall, women rated their happiness lower than men.

How does cash-based programming contribute to general resilience of households to protect themselves from violence, shock, insecurity?

- There was general consensus that households fought less frequently after cash programming commenced.
- Respondents were surprisingly positive about perceptions of neighbourhood safety and trust in authorities. They attributed this to stability of residency and mutual support between needy families, to which cash transfer had contributed.
- At its most fundamental level, cash transfer has been proven in this context to contribute to household food security, and is an effective substitute for more traditional food programming.
- The flexibility of cash transfers to be used to pay for health and rental costs, in addition to food needs came as a great relief to families, with women often mentioning improved health of family members as a key advantage of receiving cash.

What components and functions of cash-based programming are needed to bring about protection outcomes without unintended negative consequences? How should they be included and implemented within a broader program for best results?

The study found:

- Increasing household cash flexibility reduces levels of financial stress and desperation, which in turn contributes to child rights outcomes and to the psychosocial wellbeing and self-esteem of children's caregivers of both sexes.
- There were many positive outcomes of cash-based transfers in this context, but they have not built long-term resilience in recipients.
- Issues of under-employment and under-productivity continue to challenge economic and emotional well-being.
- Effective, coordinated parallel programming was a missing link to create household resilience to protection issues. Thus, though appreciated and appropriately utilised, the cash program in Iraq did not have long-term impact on household or personal vulnerabilities. The ending of support often meant an end to its advantages, not only economically but also for social status and personal self-esteem.
- Experiences of returnees demonstrate rapid changes in this context and limitations of cash without associated livelihoods / protection programming.

"I didn't want my teenage children to work. I could see they were bearing a burden that should be mine. They were working on a potato farm. After cash transfers, they worked less, plus they could keep some of the money they earned to spend on themselves. The household was running as it should. This has relieved my children and I too am much more content..."

Most Significant Change respondent, female, Akre

"The cash is important in our lives because of its effect on our social status and friendships (inside and outside the family). It has brought us more peace and harmony."

Interview respondent, female, Khanke

"I live with my mother and father and four brothers. I think when the cash started we all began getting along much better. There was less stress. I still need to work through - I go painting with my brothers."

Ramsan, aged 13

There is some evidence that cash transfer helped to reduce incidents of violence - a core question at the heart of this study.

However, respondents consistently linked this result to reduced stress, leading to fewer family arguments. There is nothing to indicate that cash transfers have helped men or women take more specific steps to understand and address gender imbalance leading to violence in the home.

Other gender disadvantages were evident under disaggregation of survey data: for instance, while many households shared responsibility for cash transfer collection and decisions, a significant minority reported male-only collection and decision-making. Against psychosocial indicators, women rated themselves less happy than men, reported more challenges in controlling negative emotions and were less likely to report positive personal change since cash transfer began.