

# CLARA: Designing safer livelihoods programs in Iraq

## Executive Summary

During emergencies, crisis-affected communities leverage their assets to survive while navigating a complex landscape of changing power dynamics, unequal access to resources and information, and threats of violence and displacement. Livelihood interventions are a double-edged sword; assets can help people overcome crises and build resilience and self-sufficiency, but can also quickly turn into liabilities, increasing vulnerability to risks, including gender-based violence (GBV).

Humanitarian practitioners can unintentionally contribute to risks associated with livelihoods, including increased GBV, with insufficient planning. When gender and gender risk analysis inform program design, livelihood initiatives can safely contribute to longer-term recovery while saving lives.

In April 2015, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) partnered with Oxfam in Iraq/Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) to pilot the Cohort Livelihoods and Risk Analysis (CLARA) guidance and tool. Developed by the Women's Refugee Commission, CLARA assesses needs, risks and opportunities, and highlights mitigation strategies for safer, more responsive humanitarian assistance.

### Findings from the north Diyala/Garmian region of Iraq

The conflict between the Government of Iraq, Government of Kurdistan and armed opposition groups, including ISIS, has displaced approximately 2.8 million people within Iraq, with over 90 percent living outside of camps. Assets have been destroyed, transportation routes are more dangerous, which affects markets, and



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a deeply ingrained fear of strangers exacerbates social tensions. All of this has disrupted the livelihoods of both internally displaced persons and the host communities and limits what options remain.

Both the IDP and host communities attempt to protect women, and particularly adolescent girls, by restricting their mobility, in some cases even more than they were restricted before the crisis. This has limited women's ability to participate in livelihoods, and they are mainly now confined to their homes.

Farming and shepherding have not fared well, and for most IDP men their best livelihood options require them to travel farther away to find work, although they prefer to stay in the host village to protect their wives and daughters. Likewise, men in the host community reported leaving their villages for work less often in order to protect their wives and daughters.

## Recommendations

While displacement exacerbates vulnerabilities, and can sometimes disproportionately affect women and girls, it can also lead to changes in gender norms and the disruption of social and cultural practices, providing opportunities for the promotion of gender equality.

As men are the primary breadwinners in Iraq/KRI, support for their livelihoods is imperative for the recovery of both IDP and host families, as well as to gain allies for women's livelihoods. Male farmers and shepherds are best supported by cash or in-kind provision of seeds, tools, farm equipment such as pumps and livestock. Support to reestablish supply-chain networks and mobile income-generating activities for IDPs are promising interventions for male traders. Cash-for-work is important for male laborers.

Mainstreaming gender and gender risk analysis across the program's duration enables agencies and practitioners to seize transformative opportunities and to build inclusive, safe, effective and responsive livelihood programs.

Because women tend to be confined to their homes for cultural reasons or due to insecurity, their livelihoods should be activities generally accepted as women's work – for example, backyard farming, cattle and chickens that do not require grazing, dairy production and home-based businesses, particularly those where in-kind provision is possible. Direct participation in cash-for-work outside of the home may increase vulnerability for women. Joining up women into partnerships and cooperatives and assisting in the business plans for female customers – done with the full engagement of men and adolescent boys – may reduce vulnerability to GBV.

WRC's checklist for Integrating Protection/GBV Mitigation in Livelihoods Programs<sup>1</sup> pinpoints minimum requirements for building inclusive, safer, more responsive livelihoods

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programming. Program design should adhere to these minimum standards wherever possible and take a graduated approach. Continuous gender risk analysis throughout the program cycle is needed to ensure that interventions do not unintentionally increase risk to those receiving support.

The full report can be found at <http://wrc.ms/CLARA-Iraq> or <http://oxf.am/ZPNg>

1. [https://womensrefugeecommission.org/joomlatoools-files/docman-files/integrating\\_protection\\_checklist.pdf](https://womensrefugeecommission.org/joomlatoools-files/docman-files/integrating_protection_checklist.pdf)

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The **Women's Refugee Commission** works to improve the lives and protect the rights of women, children and youth displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice.

**Oxfam** is an international confederation of 17 organizations working together with partners and local communities in more than 90 countries. Oxfam works with partner organizations and alongside vulnerable women and men to end the injustices that cause poverty. We save lives and help rebuild livelihoods when crisis strikes. And we campaign so that the voices of the poor influence the local and global decisions that affect them. In humanitarian work, Oxfam specializes in water, sanitation and hygiene, emergency food security, livelihoods and protection.

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