

Programming Brief

Women and Girls Choose: Cash Assistance in GBV Case Management Saves Lives



Giving cash as part of confidential, one-on-one GBV case management is saving lives in Jordan, the Philippines, Lebanon, Colombia, Syria, and other UNFPA country programs. In these settings, women and girls affected by conflict and crises often face increased gender-based violence.

This violence comes from within their own households, but can also come from external persons such as armed actors.

As part of a coordinated response to gender-based violence (GBV), UNFPA and its partners provide a structured GBV case management process to survivors that can include referrals to medical, legal and other specialized services. This process provides a follow-up to challenges that a survivor may be facing, but these services may come with a cost that can be a barrier for survivors, such as transport, legal, or specialized medical costs.

In order to address these barriers, UNFPA colleagues have integrated life-saving cash assistance into survivors' case action plans. Cash is dignifying, discreet, and flexible, helping survivors to escape violence and violent relationships, seek emergency medical care, secure temporary shelter, and buy food and clothing for themselves and their children. Providing cash to survivors over multiple months can help a woman get back

on her feet if she has left a partner who was hurting her, helping her to provide for her children while she finds other sources of income.

GBV survivors have stated that cash has helped them to access life-saving services and that it is appropriate for their needs. Case managers are also relieved to have this option – previously, they might have given money out of their own pockets to GBV survivors in urgent need who lacked resources and other support networks.

With cash, women and girls choose: they are the ones who ultimately decide how to use the cash that they are given. This is truly a survivor-centered approach.

UNFPA is refining its approach based on feedback from cash recipients, their case managers, and implementing partners in the field. Countries and regions are sharing learning and challenges across contexts. In recognition of their success, the five countries initially piloting this approach were jointly awarded the 2021 UNFPA Innovation for Impact Award, recognizing some of the most innovative projects being implemented throughout the organization.

UNFPA is also building an evidence base to support this approach, starting with multi-country research with the Johns Hopkins University Center for Humanitarian Health. The encouraging findings from both in-country monitoring exercises and the John Hopkins University studies suggest that cash could be a relevant option within all case management programs.

The following sections briefly detail the pilots and their impacts in the initial five countries engaging in this programming with UNFPA.



Pilot Countries

Jordan

In Jordan in 2021, UNFPA piloted a program to integrate cash assistance into GBV case management, targeting 345 women survivors, including Syrian refugee women living in the country. Women were eligible for the program if they were already utilizing GBV case management services in UNFPA Women and Girls' Safe Spaces (WGSS) but still faced life-threatening situations and/or had identified fleeing as an option in their action/safety plan. Eligible women received one-off emergency support or recurrent cash assistance for a maximum of 6 months with an amount based on family size and minimum expenditure basket. Results were overwhelmingly positive. Cash in case management recipients stated:

"[With the cash], my thoughts of suicide decreased. I began to face my problems and it decreased the risk I was facing of sexual exploitation."

"I became independent and protected myself and my daughters from my violent husband, and was able to cover the needs of my daughters."

In partnership with Johns Hopkins University, UNFPA is conducting a study to analyze the effectiveness of the pilot's approach. While further results will be available in early 2022, results from initial post-distribution monitoring (PDM) surveys showed that 83% of GBV survivors in the pilot reported an improvement in household relations after receiving cash.

Lebanon

Similar programming has been implemented in Lebanon, where UNFPA has provided cash in addition to GBV case management for both refugees and host communities at WGSS. In these spaces, GBV survivors had a clear need for cash, and even specifically requested it. The risk of GBV increased in Lebanon in 2021 as a result of the country's economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, both of which heightened household tensions and anxieties. As such, many women in Lebanon needed regular monthly cash assistance to get back on their feet after experiencing violence. By the end of November 2021, UNFPA had assisted 585 beneficiaries with cash through this pilot. Working with a number of implementing partners, UNFPA utilized cash-in-hand and over-the-counter delivery mechanisms and is establishing a partnership with the Lebanon One Unified Inter-organizational System for E-cards (LOUISE) in order to channel cash-based assistance through one common card and to streamline the coordination of cash assistance in the country. As a result of the pilot, 84% of beneficiaries reported that cash mitigated immediate risks for them, and 82% reported a significant increase in accessibility to GBV-related services thanks to the cash assistance.

Colombia

In 2021, the Colombia country office team found that cash would be an ideal tool to respond to the immediate needs of GBV survivors in six areas affected by armed conflict or migration from Venezuela. Giving cash was intended to help women make their own decisions about their safety and that of their families, and has most often been used to meet emergency and life saving needs. The country office successfully adapted their processes and worked directly with a local remittance company for the cash delivery. Eligible GBV survivors initially received a one-off transfer of US\$95, but the country office is increasingly able to provide recurring transfers over two or three months. Remarkable on the success of the program, one case manager from Cucuta, Colombia (on the border with Venezuela) said

“We have survivors who have lost their home, they can’t pay rent anymore as the perpetrator (who was their partner) left and they have no resources of their own. They were fully dependent [on their partner] economically, and our cash assistance has proven critical for them to be able to start a new life, together with the psychological support we facilitate.”

Another case worker noted that cash has been key to giving GBV survivors more autonomy in order to break the cycle of violence. To accompany the transfers within the case action plans, at times caseworkers have provided a basic financial orientation (encouraging them to save a portion of the cash for income-generating activities). This has been well received by the beneficiaries. Colombia currently continues to provide cash in its GBV case management program and will do so into 2022.

Philippines

After the series of earthquakes at the end of 2019, UNFPA Philippines country office team provided cash to GBV survivors in the province of North Cotabato to support their healing and cover their basic needs after the disaster. Unconditional, unrestricted cash

assistance was provided through the program, which ran from December 2019 to July 2020, and served as a complement to the support provided by government partners. GBV survivors were able to purchase food, other basic items and pay for transportation to protection services. Post-distribution monitoring for the project found that 90% of respondents reported that the cash modality was appropriate for their needs and that cash assistance improved their access to life-saving services, such as essential health services. The Philippines country office currently continues to use cash assistance within its GBV case management and Cash for Protection programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby 450 GBV survivors and women at risk can receive a one-time multi-purpose cash transfer of US\$100. This will also continue into 2022.

Northwest Syria

In northwest Syria, where access is difficult, UNFPA's partners have incorporated a cash component to help women in case management get to the services they urgently need, as identified in their case action plan. Working with local Syrian NGOs, UNFPA was able to support over 200 GBV survivors with cash assistance in 2021. Cash amounts and frequency of the support were determined based on the survivor's needs. UNFPA, in its capacity as GBV Sub Cluster (GBV SC) lead for northwest Syria, has also worked to ensure that cash assistance is made available for GBV survivors by establishing referrals between UNFPA partners and GBV actors who do not have in-house capacity to provide cash. The GBV SC continues to provide technical assistance to all GBV actors providing cash for GBV survivors, including guidance, training, and procedures for referrals between GBV service providers and cash actors.



December 2021

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