

THE LEARNING BRIEF

Cash Assistance for Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence in Somalia





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1.0

INTRODUCTION

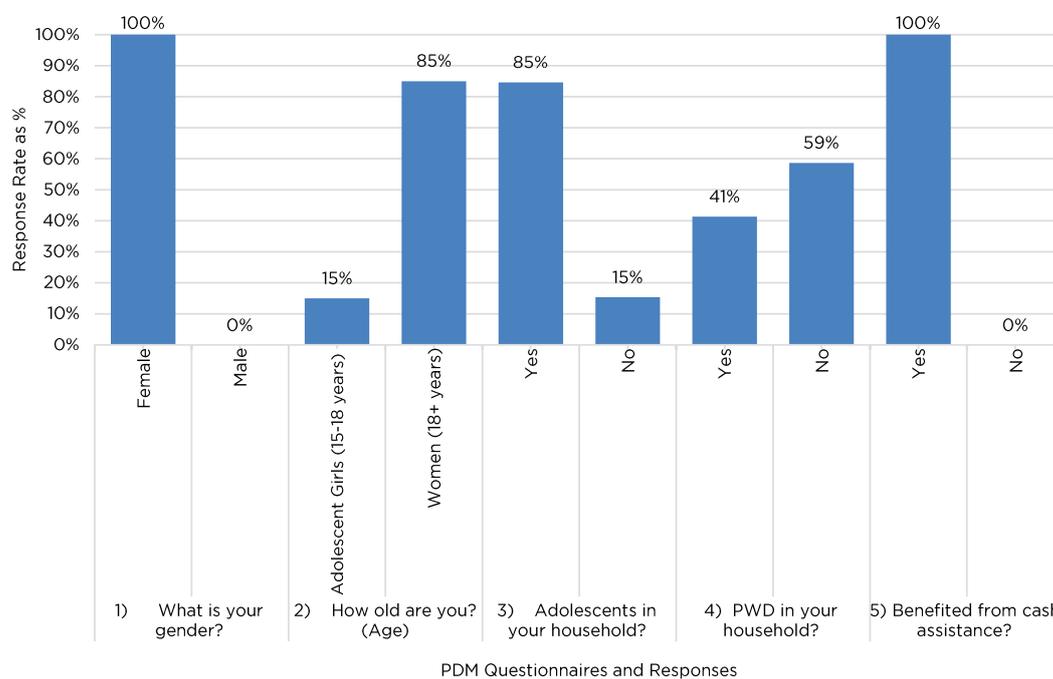
In 2021, Somalia witnessed a catastrophic increase in the number of vulnerable women and girls exposed to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) risks. Natural disasters and armed conflicts resulted in multiple displacements, forced evictions, and the destruction of livelihoods, health facilities, GBV service sites and schools. To mitigate the unprecedented and complicated humanitarian emergency in Somalia, the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) and Cash Working Group joined their effort to understand how to better mitigate GBV risks of vulnerable women and girls. Between November 2020 and January 2021, a series of webinars and practical sessions were carried out for 142 GBV and Cash working group actors in Somalia. As a result of the capacity built in these workshops, UNFPA advocated for and applied to implement a Central Emergency Respond Fund, Anticipatory Action (CERF AA) grant for direct cash assistance to vulnerable women and girls to mitigate GBV risks.

2.0

PROCESSES

The CERF AA grant was implemented in five regions: Ceel Afweyn (Sanaag region of Somaliland); Bandarbayla (Bari region of Puntland) Kismayo and Garbaharay (Lower Jubba and Gedo regions respectively of Jubaland); and Beletweyne (Hiran region of Hirshabelle). A total of 880 women and adolescent girls were selected, specifically female headed households and divorced women. Adolescent girls were targeted with the objective to provide financial empowerment, so that they can meet their most direct and basic needs, particularly those who have lost one or both parents and serve as the primary bread winners of their family. The below graph illustrates the social categorization of persons in the households of the target beneficiaries. All beneficiaries were female.

BENEFICIARY DEMOGRAPHICS



The following actions were undertaken to ensure that (1) GBV risks were recognized and responded to during the implementation, (2) participation and consultations with women were encouraged, (3) and beneficiaries included were those at most risk and reflected the basic selection criterion.

- i. The outcomes of the GBV/Cash Voucher Assistance (CVA) analysis were implemented and tested with women and adolescent girls in various sites, in order to ensure relevance and applicability.
- ii. Vulnerability criteria, agreed upon with partners, was developed and utilized.
- iii. Sessions with target beneficiaries and significant others in their families were conducted, to ensure a common understanding on vulnerability criteria and why women and adolescent girls are the primary target beneficiaries.
- iv. Gender empowerment discussions were conducted with target beneficiaries and their most influential relatives with regards to decisions and actions. The discussions were based on agreed schedules and included topics such as:
 - a. Decision making power over health and resources in the family
 - b. Shared parenting
 - c. FGM
 - d. Early marriage
- v. Survivor centred data protection protocols were developed and implemented during the tenure of the project.
- vi. The mobile phone modality for payment was adopted, since most women and adolescent girls have access to mobile phones and can therefore have access to and control over information concerning deposits and utilization of cash assistance.

3.0

RAPID ASSESSMENT ON THE UTILIZATION OF DIRECT CASH ASSISTANCE

Methodology

UNFPA implemented a CVA project within GBV prevention, protection and response services for women and young girls, the most vulnerable population in Somalia. The scope of the beneficiaries' CVA assessment focused on Accessibility, Safety and Utilization of the target population. To assess these factors within the project, a structured questionnaire was utilized for data collection, analysis and generation of results. The sample consisted of a total of 880 beneficiaries (women and adolescent girls), distributed equally between five locations (176 beneficiaries per location.). To ensure an appropriate sample for the assessment, a random sampling frame was applied by using 15 per cent of the total sampling frame (880), leaving 26 women and adolescent girls representing each location. Among the 26 women and adolescent girls, 85 per cent (22) were women (18+ years old), while the remaining 15 per cent (4) were adolescent girls (15-18 years old).

The assessment covered the following themes:

- Access to the CVA services;
- Utilization of the CVA support;
- Safety related to the CVA support

Given the limited timeframe in which the assessment was conducted, the following methodology was utilized:

Qualitative: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with regular beneficiaries at each location.

- Women aged 18+ years:** FGDs should be conducted with "regular" beneficiaries, who are coming to the CVA location;
- Adolescent girls aged 15-18 years:** FGDs should be conducted with "regular" beneficiaries, who are coming to the CVA location.
- Facilitated by Implementing Partners (IPs) and national female and male, Somali speaking UNFPA staff, using the methodology provided by UNFPA where possible.
- FGD findings captured in Kobo tools and notes were shared with UNFPA GBV Team Lead for processing and Analysis Team



SUMMARY FINDINGS FROM THE RAPID ASSESSMENT

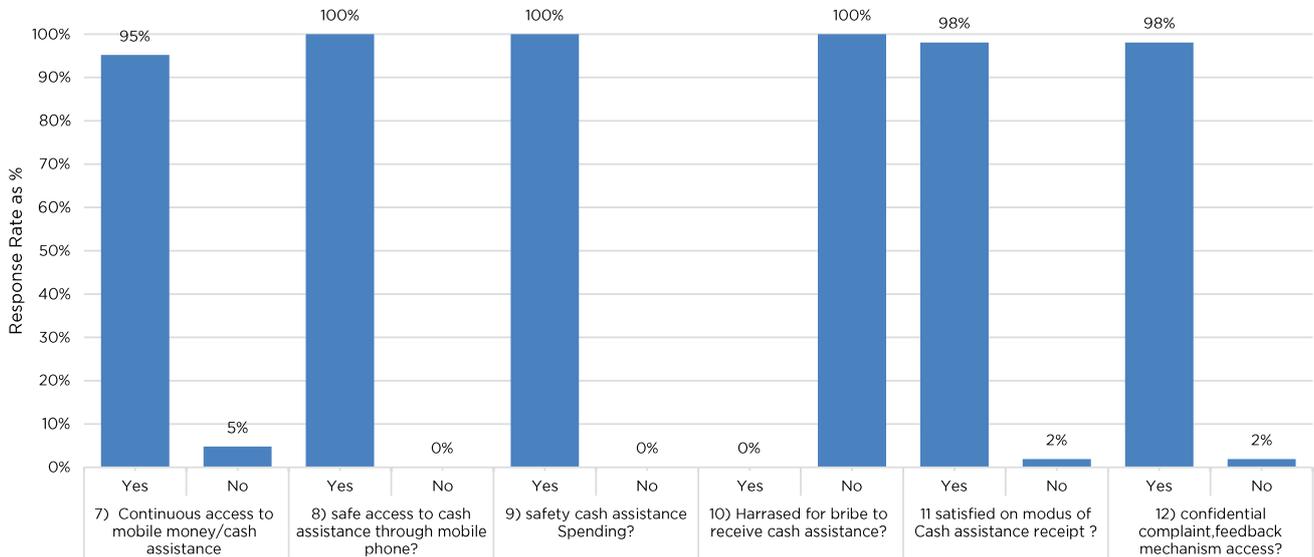
Access

The beneficiaries were requested to indicate whether they had access to the direct cash assistance, in order to determine if there existed barriers to access and if so what these entailed. Most of the respondents indicated that they had access to phones at all times, as the phones were personal allowing them to be notified when the funds were remitted to them. A woman in Bandarbayla (Bari region) confirmed this: *“We receive money while at home; no queues and the money came into our hands”*. Most of the beneficiaries had knowledge of how to use the mobile programs/apps and indicated that they could read text and some numbers, while others indicated that they could not read, but that they were assisted by their children. Participants indicated that they felt safe using the cash – *“Most of the shops are near the camps and are easily available safe and safe too. The shops and the market centers are safe and secure to spend the cash assistance in a shop”* (woman in Garbaharay).

Most of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the mobile money transfer mode and described it as being *“safe, easy, and satisfactory”*. A woman from Hirshabeele, Beletyweyne conveyed her satisfaction with the way cash assistance was delivered: *“I was satisfied with the way I received the cash assistance on my mobile phone. Cash assistance through phone is far better than other methods, because we received it while we were at home with our children”*.

Majority of the beneficiaries indicated that they had knowledge of the feedback mechanisms. A woman from Hirshabeele, Beletyweyne affirmed this in her response: *“Yes, I have access confidentially to give feedback because we were given a contact number”*. Another woman in Bandarbayla agreed with the previous beneficiary: *“We were given phone numbers for focal persons to contact anytime if we need to”*. All beneficiaries agreed that they did not experience any harassment from staff of NGOs that implemented the cash assistance.

BENEFICIARIES ACCESS TO DIRECT CASH ASSISTANCE



PDM Questionnaires and Responses

Utilization

Taking into account the patriarchal culture in socio-economic and political spheres of decision making in Somalia, it was important to determine the level of autonomy among the target beneficiaries. Most of the beneficiaries agreed that the funds were very useful to them: *“The cash assistance decreased my stress, it came at a time when the situation was very difficult”* (a woman in Garbaharay). Beneficiaries noted that they used the cash assistance for medical purposes, school fees, food, clothes, sanitary items and transportation to service and water sites. Most of the beneficiaries confirmed that the cash assistance reduced tension around multiple issues, such as scarce family resources and having the control to dispense of the cash on their immediate and priority needs. A woman from Galgadud said: *“The cash assistance has decreased my level of stress because before I obtained the cash assistance, I was sick and I couldn’t afford to pay a medical treatment. When I received the cash assistance I went to the hospital.”*

“Being an adolescent with two children out of wedlock increased the risk of being shunned, disowned stigmatized and in danger. This reduced drastically our chance of survival. If I had not received this cash assistance, we would have starved while hiding from our community.” – an adolescent girl from Garbaharray

A woman from Ceel Afweyn (Sanaag region) explained: “I have a small tea shop and always used to borrow ingredients, due to my inability to afford it, but now with the cash assistance I am able to run my tea shop without worries or loans.”.

The issue of temporality of cash assistance emerged the FGD: a woman from Bandarbayle attested to the usefulness of the cash assistance, but expressed concerns around it being a short term solution, explained that “our children get food, and our worry of getting food decreased. Even the shops gave us items on credit, since they know that we will have money to pay. But now, when the three months have ended we are back to feeling stressed.”.

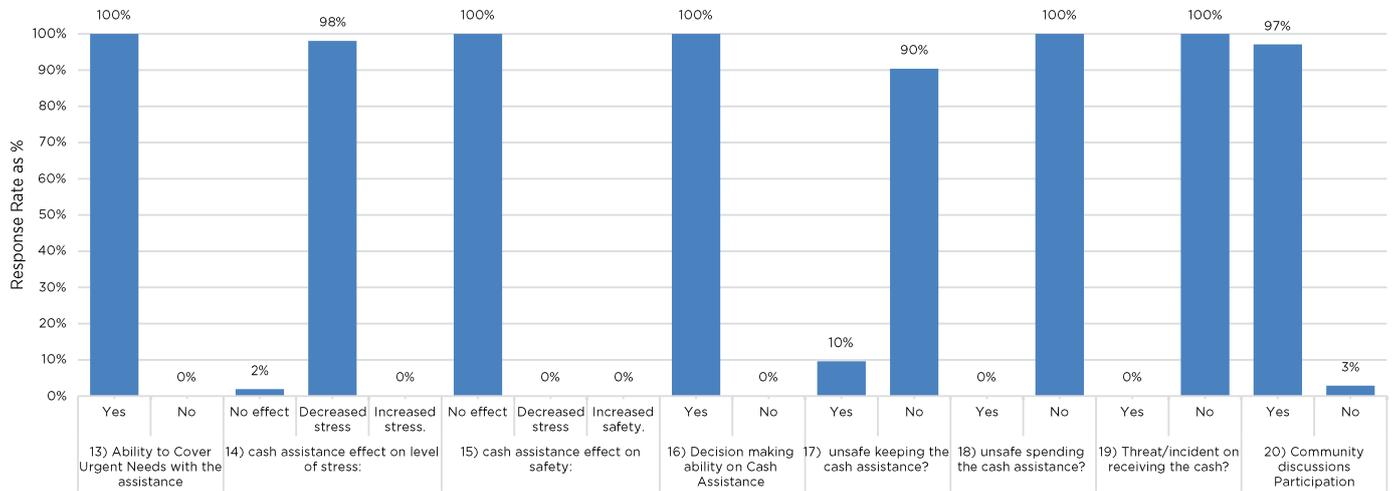
Safety

Findings from the post distribution monitoring indicate that most beneficiaries believed the cash to have increased their safety with regards to relations within the family, as well as minimized the risks of adopting negative coping strategies, such as marrying off their children. They also believed the cash assistance had allowed them to access needed goods and services. A woman from Bandarbayla noted that tension among family members had decreased due to the cash assistance: “fathers are happy when their children have food to eat.”

Beneficiaries also indicated that the gender discussions integrated into the implementation of the cash assistance enabled them and their family members to have a better understanding of the negative impact of harmful traditional practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), as well as the need for ante-natal, post-natal and health facility birth deliveries. A woman Hirshabelle, Beletweyne said: “I participated in the discussions during the project tenure and it was useful and I learned the rights of our girls and issues that pertain to our lives”. Another woman from the same location shared her experience in the discussions: “I also participated the discussions and it was fruitful. We openly talked about our women issues and it was a women to women discussion, so we have not felt shy to take part the discussions. We have noticed that we are all affected by [Gender-Based Violence] GBV”.

“Being an adolescent with two children out of wedlock increased the risk of being shunned, disowned stigmatized and in danger. This reduced drastically our chance of survival. If I had not received this cash assistance, we would have starved while hiding from our community.” – an adolescent girl from Garbaharray

CASH ASSISTANCE UTILIZATION BY BENEFICIARIES AND ITS EFFECT ON SECURITY



PDM Questionnaires and Responses

An adolescent girl in Beletweyne, Hirshabeele summarized her experience: *“The sessions were eye opening for young girls who cannot talk too much on sensitive issue like marital rape, as most of us were forcedly married by our husbands and our parents took some cows. This translated into us not feeling human, like our husbands, that we cannot refuse or accept things like other people. The community gender discussions facilitated by Somali Birth Attendants Cooperative Organization (SBACO) healed our pain and we managed to listen to each other’s problems. We all went through the FGM school followed by domestic violence college and then Marital rape University. So we are all graduates of inhumanity”.*

CONCLUSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

Cash and Voucher Assistance has become a major approach for addressing and meeting a multitude of immediate needs of women and girls. Direct cash assistance provides the flexibility for women and girls to meet needs that may not necessarily be categorized as GBV needs, but that can expose women and girls to GBV risks if not met within a specified period of time. From the foregoing analysis, it would be erroneous to focus only on traditional GBV services for women and girls who are faced with complicated emergencies and risks, such as those resulting from the humanitarian emergency in Somalia. The implementation of the CERF AA direct cash assistance enables the following lessons learned:

- Direct cash assistance for the mitigation of GBV risks provides the flexibility to meet non-traditional GBV needs of women and adolescent girls, that can otherwise predispose them to GBV risks.
- The beneficiaries did not perceive or experience a greater insecurity, but rather garnered autonomy and more value in social relations within the family. This is a major indicator for women and girls' decision making and empowerment in Somalia.
- No incident of increased partner violence was reported, rather, targeted beneficiaries experienced more cordial relations since there was cash for food and other family needs.
- Combining cash delivery with gender discussions, in addition to involving relatives with influence in the family, improved the understanding of women's rights and participation in family economy and decision making.

HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

Age: 55 Years

Name: Nurta

Camp: Shabac Camp, Galbet

Contact: 0617991809



Nurta was facing multiple challenges: droughts hitting hard, being widowed, and with young children under her care. She had a wide range of needs, but was determined to find a lasting solution. She took up manual labour in masonry, a profession reserved for men. As a result, she was ridiculed, sexually harassed, sexual solicited and asked to pay bribes in order to remain in the business.

When she received the cash assistance from Sedhuro it came as a relief. On the same day, she decided to stop working with masonry and start her own small vegetable business in order to make ends meet. This saved her from the abuse and exploitation she was experiencing from men, while also ensuring a continued source of income for her family. She currently sells vegetables in Shabac IDP camp at Galbet.

Age: 80 Years

Name: Mama Amina

Camp: Beder Camp, Farjano

Contact: 0617991809



Mama Amina is an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) at Beder camp. She is elderly, a minority and a poor lady taking care of her grandchildren. With no source of income, she depends on donations, aids and well-wishers as her source of livelihood. From time to time, someone goes to the neighbours and collects food for her and her grandchildren.

In June and July 2021, strong wind currents hit the coast of Kismayo, devastating residents and destroying many businesses, houses and shelters. Mama Amina's shelter was one among many to be hit, and she could not afford to reconstruct her home.

When the cash assistance reached Mama Amina, she immediately started to repair her shelter, which saved her from the approaching rain as well as, and she managed to stock up on food for some time.

Mama Amina standing in front of her newly renovated home. The new shining iron sheet is visible in the background.

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For more information, please contact:



Anders Thomsen
Representative

thomsen@unfpa.org
+252 613 992 565

Nkiru Igbelina-Igbokwe
GBV/Gender Specialist

igbokwe@unfpa.org
+234 816 756 5330

Ridwaan Abdi
Humanitarian Specialist

rabdi@unfpa.org
+252 615 131 030