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MITIGATING THE RISK OF GBV IN CABO DELGADO THROUGH INTEGRATED ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

Lessons learnt and promising practices

Table of contents

<u>Introduction</u>	2
<u>Mitigating the risk of GBV in an emergency context through initiatives integrated economic empowerment: lessons learnt and promising practices</u>	3
<u>Analysing the local market to strengthen women's economic initiatives</u>	9
<u>Helpcode's integrated GBV and economic empowerment programme in 2024 and recommendations for an integrated approach for livelihood actors</u>	14

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
GMPIS	Women's Group for Sharing Ideas of Sofala
PDM	Post distribution monitoring
PSEA	Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
SDPI	District Planning and Infrastructure Service
SDAE	District Services for Economic Activities
SDSMAS	District Services for Health, Women and Social Action
GBV	Gender-Based Violence

Introduction

In the context of the general protection and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, mitigation and response programme that Helpcode is implementing in Cabo Delgado, a sub-component aimed at promoting women's economic empowerment as a GBV risk mitigation strategy has been running since mid-2022.

This sub-component, carried out in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and in collaboration with the NGO Grupo de Mulheres de Partilha de Ideias de Sofala (GMPIS), combines principles and methodologies of economic empowerment, social empowerment and psychosocial support to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment so that women survivors can improve their livelihood strategies and make them more sustainable, while ensuring, in an integrated and multidimensional way, the response to GBV. The initiative's vision is that psychosocial recovery from the trauma of displacement and multidimensional violence through the creation of "safety nets" among women is a fundamental entry point for a broader recovery process that promotes women's inclusion and autonomy on a social and economic level.

Based on the systematisation of the experience of the last two years, the good practices and lessons learned, and the ongoing dialogue with partner organisations such as Ayuda en Accion, this document aims to propose practical guidelines for integrating GBV response with interventions in the livelihood sector, which are a key focus in the current phase of the humanitarian response and which must consider the implications, risks but also opportunities to contribute to mitigating gender-based violence while promoting sustainable forms of income generation and economic recuperation. Thanks to the integration of GBV and livelihoods, it is possible to respond both to the urgent survival needs of the displaced and returnees and to address the root causes of vulnerability at community level.

The document is organised into 3 sections: the first part discusses the results of the post-distribution monitoring carried out throughout 2023 with the women beneficiaries of the economic empowerment and GBV prevention, mitigation and response initiative in Mueda and Palma, to reflect on the lessons learnt and promising practices to be scaled-up; the second part presents the results of a market study carried out in the northern Districts of Cabo Delgado Province and examines its implications in terms of possible changes to the methodology used for the economic empowerment and GBV sub-component to ensure alignment with the characteristics of the local markets and the protection risks identified; the third section, finally, presents the recommendations that guide Helpcode's work in 2024 but which may also be relevant for humanitarian actors active in the livelihood sector.

1 We would like to thank the UNHCR for its financial and technical support for the realization of the economic empowerment sub-component in the context of the integrated fight against GBV.

Mitigating the risk of GBV in an emergency context through integrated economic empowerment initiatives: lessons learnt and promising practices

As part of the general protection and GBV prevention, mitigation and response programme that Helpcode implements in Cabo Delgado in partnership with UNHCR, a sub-component was included for the districts of Mueda and Palma that aims to promote women's economic empowerment as a way - among others - of mitigating the risks of GBV, as described in the previous section. Under this sub-component, from 2023 to date, Helpcode has worked with 360 women, 180 of whom live in the IDPs centres in Mueda District and 180 are returnees in Palma, and who were selected according to the following criteria:

- Level of vulnerability in terms of protection (e.g. number of family members; presence of disabled, elderly or chronically ill people; number of family members with a job or income-generating activity; reported episodes of GBV, among others);
- Previous participation in gender-based violence trauma recovery initiatives promoted by Helpcode and GMPIS as part of the integrated intervention to prevent and respond to GBV (with a particular focus on women involved in the case management services);
- Individual risk analysis: a woman pre-selected according to the above criteria, who presents a high level of risk of GBV linked to her participation in the economic empowerment component, is invited to first participate in the psychosocial support activities offered by Helpcode in order to reduce the risk and then join the next group of women benefiting from the economic empowerment component;
- For the women of Mueda, the intention to continue living in the same place at least during the training period and therefore not to be planning a return in their communities of origin in that period, to ensure the capacity to complete the training.





The integrated economic empowerment / GBV initiative includes three main activities:

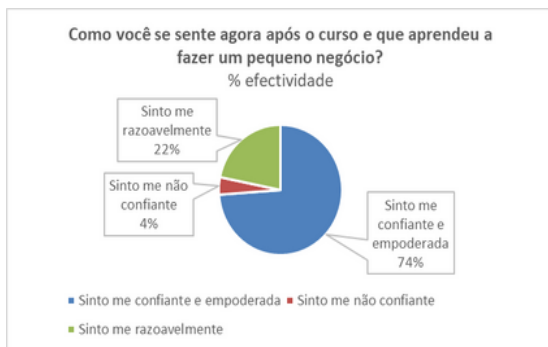
- Market research and analysis of the skills and expectations of the women beneficiaries;
- Training in literacy and basic math, micro-enterprise management, understanding market dynamics and sales processes;
- Technical and practical training for different types of business² (depending on the geographical area and the interest of the women themselves), with the delivery of an individual kit of tools and materials (e.g. grater, bucket, wheelbarrow, capulanas, food products for cooking, etc.) tailored for each woman's type of microenterprise (selling various materials, preparing and selling food, producing and selling mats or carpets, drying and selling fish, producing and selling soap).

Below is a summary of the results of the post-distribution monitoring (PDM, 800 interviews in total with the 360 women beneficiaries of the initiative carried out at different times throughout 2023) in terms of learning, economic income, management of economic resources in the family and the perception of the women and their husbands regarding the initiative.

² It should be noted that most of the women who took part in the pilot initiative opted to set up individual businesses or run them jointly with other family members; on the contrary, group initiatives were considered by the women to be too susceptible to instability and volatility of the context and their perception was that the conditions for building a stable group did not exist, as each woman could in fact need to move elsewhere at any time.

Results in terms of learning and confidence

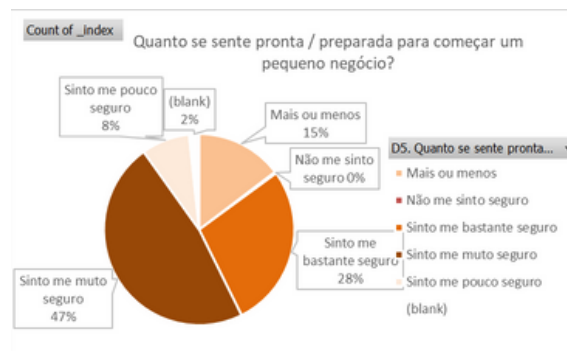
The contents of the theoretical training were designed according to the specific characteristics and needs of the target group, taking into account women's condition of vulnerability and their initial literacy level. According to the first evaluation carried out in June 2023, 65% of the women who took part in the courses said they felt confident and empowered by the topics covered.



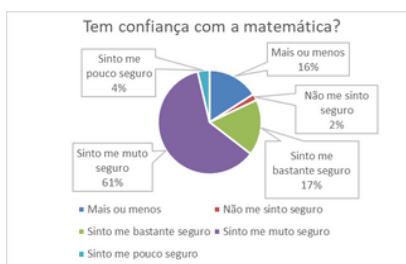
Graph 1

In response, the team responsible for the economic empowerment component carried out refresher courses which resulted in a further increase in the women's level of confidence in their knowledge to 74 % (graph 1).

Among these, 47% felt very confident in their preparation to run a small business (graph 2); 61% felt they had strengthened their math skills (graph 3) and, again, 61% said they were very confident about understanding the concept of "selling" (graph 4); 43% said they were very confident about running a business (graph 5).



Graph 2



Graph 3



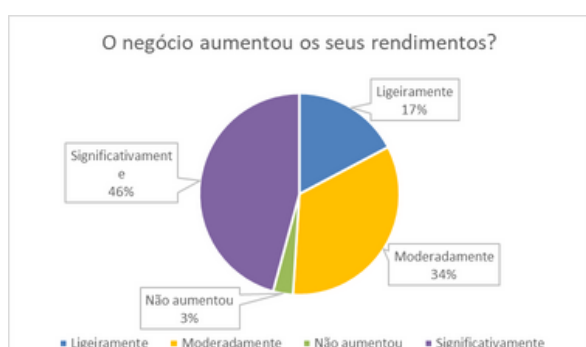
Graph 4



Graph 5

Results in terms of income and response to basic needs

With regard to the income generated by the women's businesses, 46 % of the participants spoke of a 'significant' increase in the family's income since the start of the initiative, 34 % of a moderate increase, 17 % of a 'slight' increase and only 3 % (graph 6) of the women said that their income had not increased - which could be related either to a business idea not meeting the needs of the market or to a level of vulnerability such that the woman was forced to sell the kit to meet basic needs⁴.

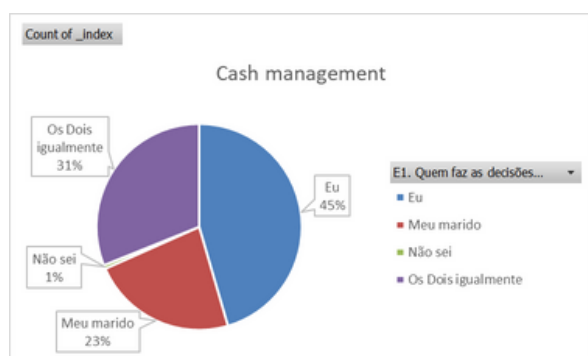
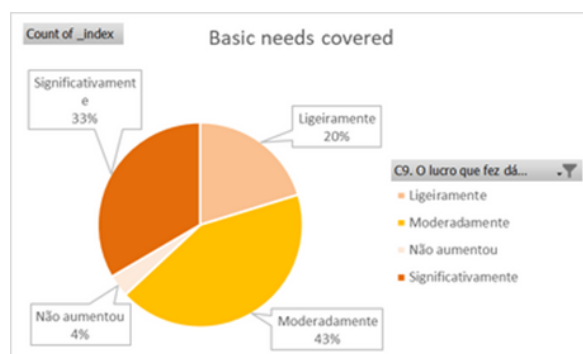


Graph 6

For the project's target group, characterised by a condition of high vulnerability - including not having any form of income generation before being introduced to the programme and, in many cases, having survived GBV - the general perception is that generating a small income produces not only a better ability to respond to the family's basic needs, but also contributes to reducing the risks of GBV which are the consequence of negative coping mechanisms - such as exchanging sex for money, children dropping out of school which, for girls, is related to early marriage, economic violence.

Graph 7

As the following graph shows, 33 % and 43 % (graph 7) of the women registered a "significant" and "moderate" increase respectively in meeting their and their families' basic needs thanks to the economic activities promoted under the pilot initiative.



Graph 8

With regard to money management, 45% of women personally manage what they earn from their business and 31% manage it together with their husband. However, in 23% of cases the income is managed directly by the husband (graph 8).

³ It should be noted that most of the women involved in the pilot initiative did not carry out any regular income-generating activity.

⁴ The women who were part of this 3 % received individual follow-up by the project team.

It is clear that the sub-component is part of family and gender dynamics (including money management) that are already rooted in and subsequently influenced by the experience of displacement and return and the way in which family livelihood strategies have been destabilized: it is therefore not pertinent to attribute a causal link between the results of the survey and the change in family income management.

However, it is important to note that during the theoretical classes, the women learn both the importance of saving and organising the funds needed to continue their business and to meet the family's basic needs throughout the month. When income is managed and decisions made about its use are made jointly, or by the wife alone, it is more likely that the family's money will be used for expenses - for example for hygiene or the children's education - that the husband alone may not consider a priority - according to the information gathered.

However, the way in which the increase in family income resulting from women's economic activities can change the internal dynamics of decision-making about expenditure, and the prioritisation of expenditure itself, should be investigated in more depth as the livelihood interventions underway increasingly focus on rebuilding families' survival strategies. For example, when a woman is asked about her husband's or partner's attitude towards her business, 33 % say that her husband appreciates the way her income contributes to the family's wellbeing, and 40 % "don't have a problem". There is, however, a significant percentage of women (18%, 63 women) who did not want to answer this question (which may, in certain cases, be indicative of a risk situation that needs to be followed up in an individualised and protected manner); even more explicitly, 3 and 6% of women say, respectively, that their husband feels frustrated or that he "doesn't care" - answers that need to be investigated in depth in order to mitigate concrete risks of violence resulting from negative coping mechanisms.

The results of the Post distribution monitoring (PDM) have made it possible, on the one hand, to make practical reflections on how to improve some aspects of the initiative (which continues in 2024) and, on the other, to make recommendations on future interventions in this area (including from a methodological point of view) and on how to strengthen the integration of protection and the fight against GBV in livelihood interventions.





From a practical point of view, the responses to the survey suggest that it is necessary to:

- Regularly update the risk assessment related to different phases of the initiative - participation in the training (considering the place, time, duration), setting up the micro-enterprise, the income management strategy, the composition, delivery and use of the kits;
- Build an intervention model that can accompany women on an ongoing basis, not only in the theoretical-practical part of the business, but also in the psychosocial and individual empowerment component, particularly with regard to decision-making in the family and increasing access to services (such as health, education, protection) for them and their children;
- Monitor and evaluate over time the use and needs regarding the composition of the kits, the market cost of the materials, the possibility of making agreements with traders, the way in which the women's businesses adapt to the supply and demand of goods locally - in order to better accompany each new group of participants based on previous practical experience;

- Include in the selection criteria for women the prior capacity to access basic services and rights (health, food, education), in order to support women in the most appropriate way: the economic empowerment component can be "activated" when there is a minimum capacity to ensure food and access to health and education for herself and her children - otherwise there is a risk that the woman may not have the time and resources to continue with the business;
- Accompany women who identify new or increased protection risks during their economic activities (for example, risks of theft or violence - both at home and in the community);
- Favour the creation of savings groups as one of the possible options for saving money while contributing to the strengthening of community protection mechanisms; however, women can choose the method they find best based on the conditions of the context; Regularly inform women about existing GBV
- projects and services in the area where they live and/or work so that they can approach them in the event of GBV risks related to their economic activity or life;
- Promote economic activities that respond directly to families' basic needs.

Analysing the local market to strengthen women's economic initiatives

To follow up on the results of the post-distribution monitoring and the lessons learnt, and to ensure that the women's economic empowerment component - as well as other livelihood initiatives - can respond coherently to the needs of families and the characteristics of the local market, Helpcode carried out a market study between December 2023 and January 2024, thus deepening knowledge about the local market and its dynamics in Mocimboa da Praia, Mueda, Nangade and Palma.

The study was conducted through: 46 interviews with economic operators in the Districts mentioned, finalised to investigate the dynamics of the functioning of the local market⁵ in terms of supply and demand for products, the different payment methods used by customers (in order to verify the attitude towards payments with systems such as M-Pesa or E-Mola), challenges in logistics, demand and storage of products; 24 focus groups held in Mocimboa da Praia, Mueda and Palma, each with 10 community members (of which 140 women) to reflect on challenges and needs.

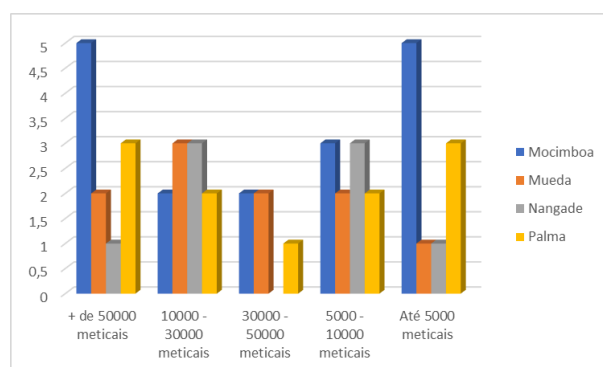
⁵ Including the attitude of economic operators towards (1) collaborating with humanitarian aid initiatives and their beneficiaries, with women often buying the products and materials for their business from these traders and (2) delivering the materials that are part of the kit to the women by presenting a voucher.

access to local markets; 21 interviews with key informants, including officials from the District Services for Economic Activities in the Districts of Mocimboa da Praia, Mueda, Nangade and Palma; triangulation of information gathered through secondary sources. The most relevant elements that emerged from the market study are discussed below, organised according to the different interlocutors involved.

The economic operators' point of view

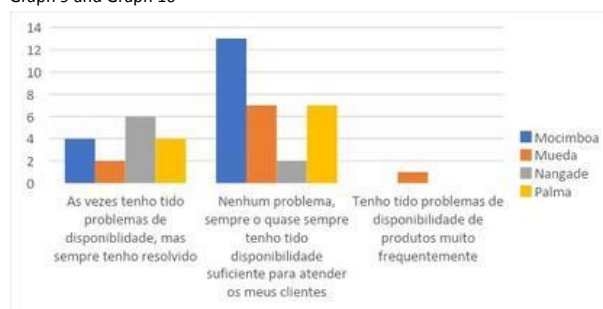
In the four Districts, the best-selling products, according to the information gathered from local economic operators, include: food products (rice, oil and beans), cleaning and hygiene products (soap, buckets, Omo), kitchen tools (glasses, pots, light bulbs), building materials and agricultural inputs (hoes, shovels).

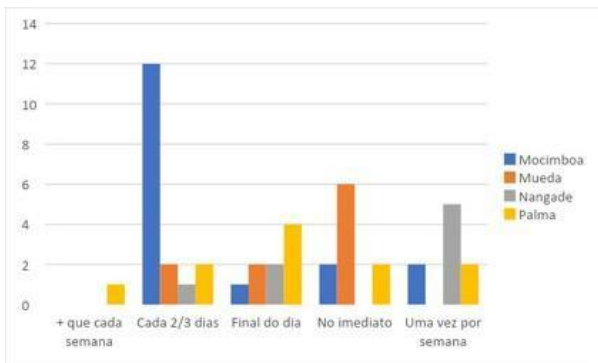
To better understand the size of active businesses, the following graph (Graph 9) illustrates the monthly revenues of each economic operator interviewed. According to the graph, there is a great deal of variability, with Mocimboa da Praia being the District with the largest number of traders in general, and in terms of revenue. Despite the variability in revenues, there are enough traders in all the Districts to ensure that the women who participate in the economic empowerment sub-component can have regular access to the goods and products they need to start their business and keep it going.



In fact, according to the graph on the right (Graph 10), there appear to be no structural problems for traders in terms of access to the goods most sought after by customers. The graph below (Graph 11) shows the frequency with which traders receive the products, which seems to be appropriate to the needs of the women targeted by the economic empowerment initiative. The traders confirmed that, even in the event of an increase in demand for goods, they won't have stock or storage problems, and confirmed that they managed to keep their business going even during the most sensitive periods of the humanitarian crisis.

Graph 9 and Graph 10





Graph 11



A further element of analysis was the issue of competition between economic operators (who sometimes also sell outside their shop, promoting their products via social media) and the women involved in the initiative, and the "saturation" of the market. In order to analyse this issue, we discussed with the traders their sales methods and strategies, and many mentioned that they use social media to advertise themselves and agree on potential customers, costs and logistical arrangements - although the trader is not always able to leave the village with their products to sell in neighbouring communities. In general, all the traders use the telephone (especially Whatsapp) to do business and, especially in Mocimboa da Praia and Nangade, many expressed an interest in building a delivery system for products outside their shop or the village itself - also contemplating the possibility of setting up a community-based logistics system, which would constitute a possible business/informal employment opportunity for women or young people. Regarding the interest of traders in collaborating with humanitarian response actors (in the case of Helpcode, for example, by supplying product kits to women who complete the theoretical training course on business management and receive a voucher to look for the goods in authorised shops), and in committing to respecting PSEA, data protection and confidentiality requirements (including taking part in dedicated training on these issues), all responded positively.

The communities' point of view

The focus groups with the target communities in Mueda, Palma and Mocimboa da Praia centred on four main themes:

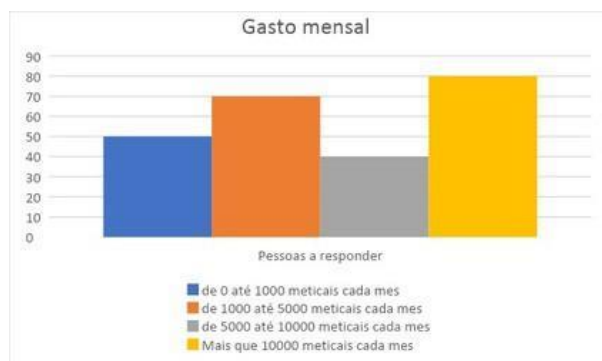
- Dynamics of market access and product availability - distance from the market; protection risks related to market access, among others;
- Needs in terms of products for business and to meet family needs - what kind of products families need most; what kind of products they have access to most due to the types of shops near the community; what materials they need to start their small business; among others ; Main economic activities carried out and perception regarding job opportunities; Protection risks for women starting an income-generating activity



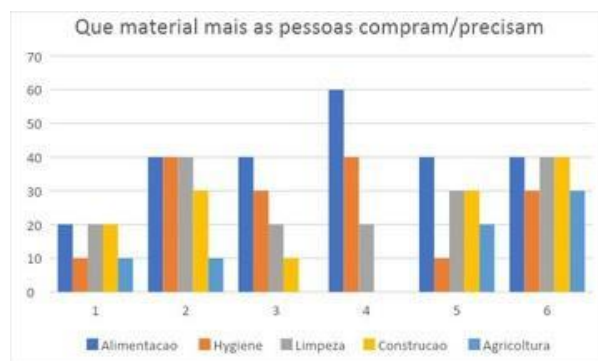
The elements of interest that emerged from the focus groups include:

- There is a certain level of difference in the goods perceived as "basic necessities" by women (food, hygiene and cleaning products) and men (building materials);
- The income-generating activities practised by the women are diverse: most of them practise subsistence farming and, when there is a surplus, they sell their produce locally. In many cases, farming is practised alongside other micro-income generating activities, such as selling food, sewing, producing and selling charcoal and fishing. Around 30 women in total mentioned that they work in the education sector, or that the education sector offers employment opportunities.
- With regard to perceived protection risks (an element to be addressed comprehensively within the framework of the implementation of economic empowerment initiatives), particularly by women who are economically active as micro-entrepreneurs, the majority stated that there is both the risk of being robbed and the risk of tensions or conflicts being created at family or community level. For 60 women (out of a total of 140) there is a specific risk of violence against potential beneficiaries of an economic empowerment project.

According to the following graph (Graph 12), the majority of families need more than 10,000 meticaís a month to meet their basic needs, while 70 families are between 1,000 and 5,000 meticaís - an important piece of information for structuring the business strategy of the women targeted by the economic empowerment initiative. Graph 13 shows the products that the families need most.



Graph 12



Graph 13

The point of view of institutions and humanitarian partners

As part of the market study, government officials (SDPI, SDSMAS and SDAE) were interviewed to reflect on the institutions' perception of economic empowerment programmes for women that follow the logic presented by Helpcode (i.e. integrating income generation with the fight against GBV, and using voucher systems to ensure access to products, also benefiting local traders) and their alignment with the district government's priorities. According to the responses received, the majority (70 %) said they were not aware of voucher-based humanitarian aid access systems; and those who had heard of them (30 %) had never taken part in such projects. However, all expressed their favorable opinion of the intervention methodology proposed by Helpcode once it had been explained. A third of the respondents emphasized the importance of the intervention having clear criteria for selecting beneficiaries and protection in order to avoid conflicts at community level or between displaced people and host communities; it is also necessary to take care of the voucher delivery mechanisms in order to avoid risks of theft and linked to protection.

Another interesting element that emerged in conversations with civil servants is the need for constant monitoring of interactions between women and traders to ensure that quality products are always available and that traders practice fair and equitable prices; they also emphasised the importance of training beneficiaries on how to make the best use of the voucher, analysing the needs of the business in detail.

Information on the most widely used and best accepted cash-based transfer modalities in Cabo Delgado was also collected from key actors in the humanitarian response⁶. Everyone agrees that paper vouchers are the best option to meet the needs and respond to the specific challenges of Cabo Delgado. This is linked to several elements: the preference of institutions; the security and transparency offered by paper vouchers - which promotes trust between beneficiaries and humanitarian actors by ensuring that funds are used for their intended purpose -; ease of access and management (including by women with low literacy), low costs and environmental sustainability; the low dependence on technology, which can be a limit in certain contexts; the stimulus for the local economy, supporting traders in the target districts; the possibility of personalising vouchers according to the needs of the different target groups, avoiding large injections of money that can give rise to inflationary processes in fragile areas; the reduction of the risks of protection, theft and corruption.

Helpcode's 2024 economic empowerment and fight against GBV programme and recommendations for an integrated approach for livelihood actors

Increasing sustainable livelihood opportunities for families in the current crisis context is crucial, especially for the most vulnerable families, whose access to basic needs through humanitarian aid has decreased by 2023, with a negative impact on their food security; for host communities, whose access to resources has been further reduced due to the conflict and the displacement process; and for returnee families.

Based on the evidence gathered through post-distribution monitoring, and on the results of the market study, Helpcode has adapted its intervention methodology to respond effectively to the challenges identified and improve the quality of the intervention in 2024 - through a more comprehensive GBV risk mitigation system and its monitoring, a planning of economic activities that is fully coherent with the implementation context and with the aspirations of each woman, a continuous assessment and response to protection risks.

Based on the lessons learnt in 2023, the intervention methodology for 2024 includes:

- The women targeted by the economic empowerment initiative in the fight against GBV are selected according to the following criteria: being the head of the household; not having other income-generating initiatives; having dependants; being survivors of gender-based violence or other types of violence. The women are accompanied individually throughout the programme, and will always have a parallel connection and access to case management services, psycho-social support activities and other empowerment and awareness-raising activities organised in safe spaces for women and girls.

⁶ Here we would like to thank our colleagues from Ayuda en Accion, the WFP, and the Adaptive Social Protection Working Group who shared their experience in this field.

- The courses will focus primarily on basic literacy and numeracy, and then introduce the main elements of business management. The practical component will be more flexible, in order to respond to the characteristics of the market and the experience and attitude of the women themselves: therefore, the practical classes will be taught by successful small entrepreneurs in various sectors, so that the women can get to know and try out different options;
- Instead of handing out kits of goods and materials, the women - upon completing the theoretical and practical courses - will receive a paper voucher to purchase the materials themselves. Three economic operators will be selected and trained per community who can guarantee the accessibility of their services and the materials the women need to start the business; in the meantime, the women will receive a list of materials that can be purchased with the voucher from the three different providers, as well as detailed information about their use and value. The women will be free to use that amount to start the business of their choice, always receiving individualised monitoring from Helpcode's technical team. Monitoring will be carried out on a regular basis throughout 2024 to guarantee the functioning of the economic activities, resolve problems linked to the business and respond in a timely manner to possible new risks identified during implementation.

Also, in partnership with Ayuda en Acción and as part of a livelihood initiative, Helpcode is promoting a pilot intervention that aims to test integrated and gender-transformative approaches by involving male perpetrators of economic violence in training on positive masculinities to address the root causes of GBV and contribute to reducing economic violence and forced marriage against women and girls. For these men, taking part in the courses on positive masculinities, and carrying out awareness-raising initiatives on the subject, is a precondition for taking part in the livelihood initiatives - which aim to improve the economic conditions of their household. The overall aim of this initiative is to learn lessons and systematise an integrated approach to GBV-livelihood that can be integrated into the humanitarian response and reconstruction efforts in Cabo Delgado. The specific objective is to prevent and mitigate the risks of GBV (with a focus on economic violence / denial of resources) by promoting the participation of male perpetrators of economic violence in livelihood initiatives, on the condition that they actively sensitise their communities in the fight against violence against women, after having participated in training on positive masculinities.

The analysis proposed in this document also makes it possible to share broader reflections that can serve as a reference for humanitarian actors who want to integrate a GBV approach into livelihood interventions, or promote women's economic empowerment initiatives as part of the integrated fight against GBV in emergency contexts:

- Any initiative that aims to integrate the promotion of sustainable livelihoods with the fight against GBV must guarantee - either directly or through collaboration with (including institutional) GBV actors - a component of case management and GBV prevention and sensitisation at community level. At the same time, regular risk assessments during implementation are key to identifying changes in family or community dynamics due to women's and men's participation in this type of initiative and mitigating/responding to any risk that may arise;
- Despite the most transparent, comprehensive, inclusive and participatory beneficiary selection process possible, women's living conditions and needs can change suddenly, affecting their ability to continue their business and sometimes forcing them to sell the materials they have acquired. In these cases, humanitarian partners promoting economic empowerment initiatives need to provide individualised support to help overcome the crisis phase through integrated support mechanisms and help build a fairer, more dignified life.

- Access to income-generating opportunities is considered crucial by women - especially for victims of violence, which in many cases is economic violence. However, it is essential in livelihood programmes to avoid "building" a direct causal relationship between economic empowerment and a reduction in the risk of GBV: this is because - according to the experience of Helpcode and GMPIS - economic empowerment initiatives are successful and sustainable when women (and the communities in which they live) are sensitised and have access to structured mechanisms and dynamics for integrated struggle against GBV and gender-based discrimination. For this reason, it is essential to implement monitoring systems where women's voices and perceptions of the relationship between economic empowerment and the risk of GBV can be heard and responded to on an ongoing basis;
- Initiatives that contribute to women's economic empowerment within the framework of the integrated fight against GBV can have a far-reaching impact and help change discriminatory dynamics that often exist within families - for example, in relation to decision-making processes regarding the purchase of goods and access to services for the family, which can become more inclusive and gender-balanced by increasing the family's income thanks to women's economic activities. However, it is crucial to continue reflecting and promoting an open dialogue between women, families and communities to promote women's active participation in decision-making processes in a way that is not linked to their ability to contribute economically to the family, and to mitigate any risks (including in terms of GBV) that may arise once women are seen as active economic actors.
- It is important to recognise that, although there is a very prevalent narrative promoting group savings and business mechanisms, many women - in the context of the Cabo Delgado crisis - end up opting for individual businesses (and savings systems) because they are aware of the risks linked to the volatility of the context and how these are reflected in people's decisions to stay in one place or move to another place perceived as safer or more promising in terms of living conditions. It is therefore necessary to support women in their different choices, creating safe spaces where they can express their point of view and expectations regarding collaboration with others, avoiding promoting stereotyped solutions.

Contact

Giulia Moro
GBV and protection specialist
giulia.moro@helpcode.org

Roberta Pellizzoli
Programme manager
roberta.pellizzoli@helpcode.org

Miriam Mazzoni
Monitoring officer
miriam.mazzoni@helpcode.org www.helpcode.org

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