

Inclusive Cash for Work Programs: Building A Stronger, Safer Recovery for All

In the aftermath of a disaster, cash-for-work programs are an essential component of relief and early recovery efforts. These programs must be designed and implemented in ways that take gender and protection considerations into account. They must be accessible to women, men and older girls and boys. When women and girls have safe and equal access to cash-for-work, they are much better positioned to meet their basic needs and much less vulnerable to the sexual exploitation and abuse that are often pervasive in crises.

Typhoon Yolanda (known also as Typhoon Haiyan) impacted an estimated 5.6 million workers. One million of these workers are women who were considered “vulnerably employed” before the disaster, meaning they had unreliable income and no social security. For many of these women and other vulnerable workers, cash-for-work programs are a critical first step in their protection and in their economic recovery.

Through extensive consultations and field work with economic and protection program experts, the Women’s Refugee Commission has developed the following recommendations for designing effective and inclusive cash-for-work programs in the initial phase of humanitarian response operations.

Cash-for-work programs should:

- Select community work projects that benefit all members of the community and ensure women, female and male youth and other marginalized groups have a voice in project selection. Work projects that reduce women’s exposure to violence, such as clearing water collection points and rehabilitating rural roads, should be prioritized.
- Diversify cash-for-work activities and work sites to provide suitable, safe opportunities for women’s participation. This may include activities that require less strenuous physical labor and are closer to transport and childcare facilities.
- Ensure cash-for-work projects selected are those crucial to communities in times of disaster and that design and implementation include the incorporation of disaster risk reduction measures such as using appropriate materials and choosing safe locations.
- Ensure that all temporary employment schemes provide equal pay to female and male participants and that they do not undermine participants’ current livelihood activities or disrupt existing markets.
- Ensure safety at work sites, especially for female participants and their children. Conduct a safety assessment of work site locations. Include security personnel, if necessary, and provide safe transportation to and from work sites, when appropriate.
- Provide childcare arrangements so that women can participate and benefit on an equal basis with men in cash-for-work activities.
- Set age limits and forms of work in line with national legislation. 15 years is the recommended minimum age for participation in cash-for-work programs.
- Hire and train female work site supervisors and program staff monitors to enhance the protection and safety of female participants.
- Ensure cash-for-work opportunities are appropriate for women while also providing opportunities for women that are not traditionally female-identified.
- Monitor work conditions and security regularly to ensure that participants are safe from exploitation, sexual abuse and harassment.
- Develop safe payment mechanisms, including mobile phone transfers, when appropriate. When distributing cash, consult women and girl participants to identify safe routes, distribution locations and mechanisms, and times for distributions. Ensure, however, that women have access to and control over household mobile phones, if used for cash transfers, as well as safe places to save money.
- Adapt work hours and locations, as appropriate, to reduce exposure to sexual violence. This may require shortening workdays to only daylight hours, including times for travel to and from work sites.
- Ensure that complaints mechanisms are in place for beneficiaries to report concerns about sexual violence, exploitation, corruption or other abuses. Provide clear guidance to beneficiaries on how to

lodge complaints. The complaints mechanism should be part of a general communications strategy that supports open dialogue between beneficiaries and the implementing agencies. This will help reduce misinformation, rumors and risks to participants.

- Develop clear program exit strategies that link participants to follow-on economic opportunities or micro-finance services so that participants and their families are not put at economic or survival risks when the program ends.

Click [here](#) for additional information on integrating gender, protection and risks mitigation into livelihoods programs.

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