

EMPOWERED AID IN ACTION: Integrating EA findings and recommendations into strategy and SOPs.



OCTOBER 2022

Since the launch of **Empowered Aid (EA)**, our resources have been used in several humanitarian responses to mitigate risks of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) through engaging and sharing power with crisis-affected communities, in particular women and girls. One such response is **Lebanon**, where **World Vision Lebanon (WVL)** utilized Empowered Aid resources to meaningfully scale up prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in its programs and to center the voices of women and girls in humanitarian response.

Empowered Aid has supported **World Vision Lebanon** in mainstreaming PSEA by providing funds, findings, and technical support on how to reduce sexual exploitation and abuse in programming, as well as materials to train staff in collecting and evaluating data on gender-based violence (GBV).

USING EMPOWERED AID IN WASH PROGRAM

In 2022, **World Vision Lebanon** implemented the **Empowered Aid 2.0** project in its WASH program in the Beqaa Valley. The project stems from the COVID-19 pandemic response. Project activities included: distributing disinfection kits for Syrian households living in informal camps and settlements in Beqaa, and distributing LAHA kits (menstrual hygiene kits) for Syrian and Lebanese women.

The project was organized in three main phases:

The Empowered Aid Participatory Action Research (PAR) toolkit contains key research tools & associated training guides used by Empowered Aid in Lebanon and Uganda, such as the Participatory Group Discussion (PGD) and Qualitative *Interview* guides.

- ❖ **Phase 1: Capacity building for staff and casual workers.** In this phase, staff and enumerators were trained on GBV/SEA Materials and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEAL) Toolkit including safety audit, point of distribution questionnaire and on how to implement the EA recommendation during the distributions. In addition, the WVL program lead worked with the Global Women's Institute (GWI) on preparing GBV/SEA sensitization session materials based on the findings of EA and trained 60 staff members (30 women and 30 men) from livelihood, child protection, education, and sponsorship sectors on GBV and SEA core concepts to improve sensitization and risk mitigation across the organization. World Vision staff enrolled in and completed the EA course if they were unable to attend the in-person training, and the HR department at WVL is in the process of incorporating the online course into onboarding materials for new staff.
- ❖ **Phase 2: implementation of EA recommendation and data collection.** In this phase, WVL distributed 2,762 disinfection kits door-to-door throughout Barelías informal-tented settlement (ITS) and 300 female hygiene kits to a targeted group of Syrian refugees and Lebanese in Barelías and Kfarzabad villages. During the distribution, hygiene promotion staff carried out 56 safety audits and trained casual workers who completed 294 point of distribution questionnaires. Safety audits, the point of distribution questionnaire (PODQ), and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to monitor the distribution. The recommendations applied during the distributions included: assigned times for groups of families to collect distributions, aid delivery at the household level with at least two aid workers in mixed-sex or

all-women teams, more women aid workers or women's committees involved in aid distributions, and community sensitization on GBV and SEA, including SEA complaint mechanisms. In addition, after the distribution, eight FGDs were conducted with distribution participants. A total number of 66 participants (26 Syrian females, 8 Syrian males, 17 Lebanese females and 15 Lebanese males) were targeted in the FGDs in Beqaa Governate. By applying the recommendation of community sensitization on GBV and SEA, the team reached out 313 adolescent girls and 3494 women through 962 sessions.

- ❖ **Phase 3: Data Analysis and Action plan.** In this phase, WVL with the support of the GWI team analyzed the data from the three tools (safety audits, PODQs, and FGDs). Insights from the analysis were shared with the team implementing EA in a three-day workshop through which they validated the findings and created an action plan. Furthermore, as a first step to ensure the sustainability of EA after the closing of the project in Lebanon, a meeting with the senior management team including the country director, communications, finance, programs, procurement and technical specialists from different sectors took place at the end of September to share the findings and recommendations from the WASH distribution. On September 27th, the Project Manager organized on a donor roundtable with representatives from WFP, German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), UN Women and the National protection coordinator-Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) from Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA). Recommendations from this meeting focused on how World Vision could use their in-house capacity to work on child friendly SEA materials and reporting mechanisms in addition to triangulating with UNICEF on their recent PSEA study in Lebanon.

LEARNINGS FROM EMPOWERED AID AND ACTION PLAN

Findings from the EA data collection and analysis highlight the importance of scaling up the prevention of SEA. After discussing the findings of EA implementation in WVL programs and the impact on women and girls, WVL developed an action plan to contextualize EA in its context and programs through different steps highlighting the main learnings:

- ⇒ **Ensure consistent awareness-raising sessions on PSEA in all activities.** The findings show that the Syrian refugee community is not aware of SEA concerns. For example, some men participating in the FGD said that they don't believe that SEA occurs in their communities. The strategy WVL will follow moving forward is to include visible messaging about PSEA in all awareness sessions of projects.
- ⇒ **Ensure information on PSEA reporting mechanisms is included in the project and trusted by the community.**
Some community members who participated in interviews and focus group discussions indicated a lack of trust in NGO reporting mechanisms because of the power the staff have, and explained that they don't report SEA risk because of the family and community backlash. The recommendation in response to these concerns is to review WVL Standards Operational Procedures (SOPs) to include information about PSEA and how we respond to SEA risks as an organization, and to establish a help desk in every distribution with the presence of female staff, as participants indicated that they preferred to report in-person rather than through hotlines.
- ⇒ **Appoint PSEA Champions** from the community and build their capacities on GBV/PSEA and reporting mechanisms awareness sessions about PSEA and the reporting mechanism and encourage the community to report SEA incidents. Moreover, they will also work on sharing information with the community about distribution time, location and selection criteria to ensure that the community is engaged and informed.
- ⇒ **Include an EA online course** as part of the onboarding package for new staff in WVL.
- ⇒ **Expand EA integration and contextualize the recommendations**

- ⇒ into other sectors in WVL. The team shares the findings and recommendations of EA with the sectors leads and works with them to initiate the action plan to integrate these recommendations into their projects.
- ⇒ **Advocate for PSEA budgeting** with donors. WVL will organize a roundtable with different donors from different sectors to present EA findings and recommendations and discuss with them the importance to integrate PSEA in their proposal and budgets.
- ⇒ **Share EA findings and recommendations** with different sectors, working groups, PSEA network and donors.
- ⇒ **Revise the distribution SOPs and include EA recommendations.** WASH SOPs will be revised by the technical team based on EA recommendations to include contextually-appropriate adaptations, such as sex-segregated lines and a greater proportion of female to male staff during distributions.
- ⇒ **Integrate EA recommendations in cholera response.** As Lebanon is currently experiencing a cholera crisis, and WVL is responding to this crisis through its WASH program, PSEA will be integrated into the response based on EA recommendations. For example, the awareness session will include messages on SEA, mandatory female presence, and communication materials about SEA reporting.

ABOUT EMPOWERED AID

Empowered Aid is a multi-country, participatory action research project led by the Global Women's Institute (GWI) at the George Washington University. The initial study was conducted in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and World Vision in Uganda, and with CARE International and Union of Relief and Development Associations (URDA) in Lebanon; with scale-up activities currently underway in partnership with World Vision in the Middle East, East Africa and South Asia. Its goal is to support the creation or adaptation of aid delivery models that actively work to reduce power disparities and give women and girls a sustained voice in how aid is delivered. Empowered Aid is funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.

Learn more at <https://empoweredaid.gwu.edu>