

MICROLINKS WEBINAR: SUPPORTING RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS IN CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENTS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

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PRESENTERS

Henri-Noel Tatangang, plan international

Valentina Dal Lago, Oxfam Intermon

Benjamin Kaufman, Mercy Corps

MODERATOR

Kali Glenn-Haley, USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

April Thompson, USAID Knowledge-Driven Agricultural Development Program

Kali:

Great, thank you so much, Henri, that was a great presentation. We're now opening up to a Q&A discussion. I can see that many of you have been asking questions throughout the presentation, which is great. What we'll do, I've been collecting and grouping together some questions that are similar and I'll ask our presenters those questions first up and then give them time to answer questions that maybe I missed or that they thought were particularly interesting. So please continue to type questions and we'll see if we can get to some of them.

We will – we have about 25 minutes or so still left. It also looks like Benny dropped off and we are working to try and get him back on line. So for the first question that I'll ask Henri-Noel, and Valentina, so and I wish that Benny was still on for this. But I think I'll first start off with a question around protection. So what protection and conflict-sensitive design considerations would you recommend are really crucial for program design? You both touched upon the importance of protection in your program design of the impact of conflict on livelihood activities.

So can you discuss maybe some key considerations or requirements that you would really recommend anyone operating in this environment to ask themselves or to integrate into their program? And as part of that, how do you balance livelihood versus protection considerations in your program? We heard from Henri that Plan International really focused very heavily on protection consideration and how is that balanced with the livelihood consideration? So Henri-Noel and Valentina, over to you to answer that question and hopefully we'll get Benny on soon.

Henri-Noel:

Okay, maybe I can talk. It's true. What we do is we do a lot of community involvement, because we know that those that are very involved in the _____ in security _____ within the community. So one key thing that you have to do is to discuss with the community on the program you want to carry out, discuss with the community on what about this would be relevant to them and how it will have an impact on the progress or the [inaudible]. So once this discussion is done, it's already [inaudible] reduce your risk of insecurity. I need to keep them to push the community to protect what they want to build together.

So this is one important aspect. The second thing I would say is that the children that we – our kids that we involve in the _____ groups or _____ groups, we needed to simply

discuss with the _____ that have in specialization in the mobilizing _____, removing them from the _____ groups. _____ go and interact with the [inaudible] with them to relieve those that are children, because they are exposed to different functions, [inaudible] those children. And so the group leaders will [inaudible] and now we come in [inaudible]. That's how we come in now and save these children and help them.

So it's a complimentary [inaudible]. And that also contributes to [inaudible] contributes in different ways. Then the last point maybe I will make about this is that when the children stop doing the training and then we start discussing with the families and they're happy to take back the children, it influences so much in the community and they see the positive reality and they see these children becoming more useful. I think it _____ so much on the reaction of the community and the environment [inaudible].

Kali: *Back on.*

Benjamin: *We, I'm back on.*

Kali: *Oh, great. Henri – we're now at Q&A and Henri was just answering the question what protection and conflict sensitivity design considerations would you recommend people who are attending this webinar include in their program design and kind of a discussion of how you balance livelihood consideration to protection one. So Valentina and Benny, do you have any [crosstalk].*

Benjamin: *Yes, I would say – Benny talking. I would say that one of the – so protection should be a primary concern throughout all of livelihood activities, a primary concern of Do No Harm for beneficiaries and that a good conflict analysis should be at the basis of that. And I can give you an example. We had previously run in our social cohesion project a lot of the work through a Muslim Christian lens, because that's the way a lot – you know, two years ago when the project had been designed, it's the way it was understood.*

And we recently just did another evaluation in the west that shows the conflict and we realized, you know, once you really dig in deep in terms of conflict out here, it's not Muslim Christian, it's inner communital, it has questions to do of economic interests. So

you need to do – when designing a program to really go in deep in terms of conflict assessment, it's conflict sensitive design. I would also say in terms of GBV, you're looking at different needs in terms of different communities.

So looking at a different kind of evaluation, it's protection to the very large domain. So it's a question of domestic violence and what kind of concerns can decrease the amount of financial control women have in households. Will that improve their protection incidents? So we need to make sure that sort of those mechanisms within the program don't label and stigmatize and that their economic need is – does not outweigh the visibility and protection in terms within the program design.

Kali:

Great, thank you, Valentina, do you have anything to add to that? Okay, I think the next question has to do with how you all determined market viability in your programs for the income-generating activities that you focused on. I'm assuming that you each did a market assessment, but how did that kind of take form? Did you look at a cost benefit analysis of the inputs that could be expected to be made versus the profits that beneficiaries could expect to earn?

Did you look at some other type of market saturation or other types of market demands in determining which type of livelihood you would be pursuing and so part of that, Benny, I know that you talked about many of the beneficiaries had previous livelihoods that they were returning to. Did you do any work to make sure that those would still be profitable in this new context? And so for all of you, are there any changes that you would make to the way that you approached assessing market demands for the [crosstalk].

Benjamin:

So Benny here. I can say – and I think it was Dorothy who brought up this question earlier about the amount of demands for carpentry, especially for someone who's been trained for a short period of time. We're also looking at a context here, because of the context in which Mercy Corps works where household and shelter have been completely destroyed by conflict. So you do have a large need for carpenters and for locally made risk.

So, of course, we always do a market evaluation assessment. In a town called Bakala, it's about 60 kilometers to the north of _____ and we're speaking with beneficiaries and they said one of the largest needs they have, it's in terms of housing. So

there's ways that you can actually work your _____ activity programming to be able to also dovetail to the needs of the beneficiary from other sectors, be that carpeting, be that brick-making, or, you know, mechanic for transporters within the area.

Kali: Valentina, can you hear us?

Valentina: Yes, sorry.

Kali: Great, okay, if you wanted to answer the question about protection, because we lost you on that one and then also the market demand question. I'll extend that to you.

Valentina: Okay, I just wanted to focus on some approach, because we are used to do professional analysis. Sorry about the – we listen to music and I cannot think. Yep, thank you.

Kali: I think someone needs to mute themselves. If the person is listening, [crosstalk] muted.

Valentina: Okay, I just wanted to think about from a community protection approach. Normally, we do many different risk protection analysis and to [inaudible] and to identify [inaudible] and to identify specific groups of, as Benny said, about _____ victim and the – to identify their needs and to have them to develop their – local their own activities and their own [inaudible].

Kali: Thank you, Valentina. Henri, do you have any response to the question about market demands and how you determined which vocations would be profitable?

Henri-Noel: Well, [inaudible] is the service called [inaudible]. It is specialized _____ - created by the government to gather all information on _____ employment opportunities and different _____ for market. So we use the same technical expertise and we send them to the field where we do the assessment and recommend to all fields, which are profitable for the children or for the youth that are without jobs. And these are the opportunities we now

exploit and support in conducting the trainings for them to go on with. So there are many opportunities that come up with a study, sometimes need to be done in this specific area, because it varies from one part of the country to the other, depending on what [inaudible]. It is built on data, we did the trainings with this _____ project. Thank you.

Kali: Great, thank you. We had a couple of questions about training. In all of your programs, training really ranges quite substantially, so I believe in Mercy Corps, it's a three-day intensive training where plan had six months vocational training and Valentina has several different training situations. So my question to you three are how did you decide what content would be necessary for the training? How did you evaluate the training effectiveness and what changes would you make to your training curriculum or the duration or the methodology used to impart the information? What changes would you make [crosstalk]?

Henri-Noel: Well, for the kids of Plan International – okay, go ahead, Benny.

Benjamin: Oh, Henri, go ahead, please.

Henri-Noel: Okay, I was saying that for the kids of Plan International, we – the training center, which we are working with, had to work closely with the ministry of education. There is a department for vocational training, so to work closely together and validated the module and that's why the training certificate [inaudible] by the government services and the training center. They are not _____ by Plan International. We are simply providing support for this training to be conducted. So the training center is eligible by the government and the training package is validated by the government as well. So that's what we are going with.

But what we are insuring anyway is that there are components of child protection integrated into the package, which are now more specific to our mission, our agenda, and there are also aspects of _____ support, which are added to the package, accompany the children, because [inaudible]. These are the extra packages or aspect that we add to the program. And, of course, we do a lot of monitoring to make sure the children don't go [inaudible]. That's [inaudible]. Thank you.

Benjamin: So on Mercy Corps case, it's not just training for three days. We'll actually run training—sometimes it'll be one day, sometimes it'll go up to six months as well. It depends on the program, the donor, the beneficiary needs, subject chosen on multiple factors. So currently, this week actually starting today, we started it as a retraining of the _____, which with we previously worked in _____, so that would be a two-day intensive training on group governance, on accounting tactics and so on and so forth. And at the end of that training, they'll be given _____ kits with notebooks, black and red pens, lock boxes, calculators.

Another — for longer term aspects, if you're looking at something like [inaudible] small — something like welding, like carpentry, those'll be longer, more intensive trainings, so we'll go from three to six months. Ideally, if you're looking in a perfect world, you're going to be able to do longer term trainings and also have time at the end of your training to be full on support and followup with those beneficiaries. We plan that into our programming given the funding cycles and in emergency, the environment where you're often looking at one year. Sometimes, that's not always possible to have a longer term job training program that will last longer than six months. Six months is really the limit that we're able to do it in the _____ environment.

Kali: Thanks so much. Valentina, do you have anything to add?

Valentina: _____, according to the training, we would like to focus that for example with the agriculture groups. We are doing technical support. It's _____ building, because we found, of course, people with _____ already know how to do and _____ having them to develop the capacity and to improve their knowledge. And also because we [inaudible] culture groups in financial _____ and management and technique and marketing.

Kali: Great. All right, so I think we have about eight minutes left and I'll use the next five minutes or so for Valentina, Henri, and Benny to answer any questions if they have seen that weren't — that didn't ultimately make it to this space. We obviously got a ton of questions in the chat box or to touch upon any closing thoughts or areas of interest or issues that this presentation brought up for them. So take it away, Benny, Henri, and Valentina.

Benjamin:

Hi, Benny here. I guess I'll go ahead and start. One of the questions I see here are the content of IGA _____ and the grant size. So in our – again, that will depend from program to program. We tend not to do IGA _____ because we don't find them to be as effective for beneficiaries, so we normally do cash grants and then follow up through our MNE department to check on their purchases. In our recover two program, which was from September 2015 to December – to October 2016, it was about \$85.00. In our current OFDA project, it's up to about 120.

We recently ran an evaluation in the same zone for an upcoming OFDA project that would start this fall and that has gone up to about \$160.00 in terms of being able to have a profitable and sustainable IGA. But with regard to the makeup for the IGA kits, it's not really standard set amounts. And there were a lot of questions about cell phone and cell phone penetration. The – we aren't able to do a lot of mobile tech for several reasons. One is the amount of cell phone coverage in the country, which can be fairly variable. You'll get 3G networks in the capital in _____ and in some places outside that really once you drop outside of there, it's not much.

You're also looking at questions in terms of literacy both on the phone, which aren't _____, but still present challenges, as well as the cost of mobile phones for beneficiaries. So – and even if you look at things like mobile cash transfers, it's not the same number of agents that you have, even in places with the _____ where Mercy Corp has a fairly large cash transfer program. So it's something that we're certainly looking at and would like to work on more. But the current cell phone penetration, usage rates, literacy rates, and cash transfer ability of the telecom providers in the country right now really don't allow us to rely much on mobile tech in the country. I'll pass off onto the next presenters and thank you again, USAID, and Henri and Valentina for all of your support and help.

Henri-Noel:

[Inaudible].

Kali:

Thanks, Benny. Henri, do you want to go next?

Henri-Noel:

...with other donors from this kind of project and just to clarify that we are doing a lot of programs that target children associated with _____ or who are on a [inaudible].

So these children we are funding from several donors, but the one I was presenting you was particularly the one from OFDA in the [inaudible] in other parts of the country. It's one of our key activities. There was also another question about the involvement of families.

As I said during the presentation, we identify some families and they're selected generic by the community leaders and the children, that [inaudible] they are comfortable with this particular family or this particular one, because they consider they have no history of child abuse. So we train these families on how to work and [inaudible] and are confident with _____ training. And another question was around the sustainability, _____ earlier during the presentation. Once the training is over, we are _____ for a few months to insure that [inaudible] and if they need any guidance or any support again, we try to provide that support. I think that's what I can say and [inaudible] thank you.

Valentina:

Thank you, Henri. I just wanted to come back to the market analogy, because we need an answer and it's our approach with the protection risk analogy to identify the most effective way of intervention of the _____ and it's also related to the evaluation of _____ actually because our monitoring on the field is on _____ that is done in collaboration with local farmer and local _____.

And another question is _____ approach is always doing that an external evaluation for each of _____ projects and it's for our project and in _____ is 14 at the end of the month of June. I wanted to really to focus your attention on the participation of local communities in the _____ of different activities and on the orientation eventually for problems for difficulties that we can find on the field. And also the most important thing is the participation of, as I said, local authorities and local partnerships to create an ownership of the project and of _____.

Kali:

Great, thanks so much, Valentina, I'm going to pass it over to April to conclude the presentation, but I want to thank each of our presenters so much for the work that they do in CAR. It is crucial work and also for the participants of this webinar for dialing in. April, over to you.

April:

Great, thank you so much to our presenters. Again, this is really a rich conversation and just impressive to hear what you all have been able to accomplish in such a challenging environment. Thanks to all of you for sticking with us. We had our own challenging environment here this morning in DC. We've got some polls here, if you could take a moment to answer before you leave the webinar here and stay tuned, we will have some resources available to you.

There's actually a couple here in the separate left-hand corner that you can download that provide a little bit more context. But we will provide a recording, a transcript, and hopefully a post event resource that will answer some of these questions we didn't have time to address today. Thanks again and look forward to seeing you next time.

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