



MULTI-YEAR FUNDING AND RESULTS-BASED PROTECTION

This case study looks at the benefits of multi-year funding for outcome-oriented protection approaches. It highlights experiences of Oxfam in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in community-based protection programming, and of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in implementing a multi-country project to generate evidence on integrated gender-based violence (GBV) and economic recovery approaches. It draws on reflections from both organizations to outline facilitating factors for the planning and implementing of multi-year programs.

Multi-Year Funding and Outcome-Oriented Methods

Results-based protection (RBP) approaches encourage us to work to improve protection outcomes, but effecting change can be a long process even when there are short-term actions that could take place to prevent or stop protection risks. Short funding timeframes can be incompatible with the steps and time needed to build relationships, understand protection risks, and work to properly address them.

Multi-year funding can be more efficient and cost-effective, reducing costs associated with repeat short-term funding such as administrative costs of grant management and frequent fundraising efforts. It can also help foster long-term partnerships, improving staff retention and therefore capacities. In turn, this allows greater trust-building with communities, stronger analysis, and space for adaptation based on learnings and changes in context—key tenets of outcome-oriented approaches.

What is multi-year funding?

A commitment to increasing multi-year funding was made as part of the [Grand Bargain](#)—an agreement between donors and humanitarian organizations to improve effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action launched in 2016 at the World Humanitarian Summit.

Since then, multi-year funding (grants of at least 24 months) provided to humanitarian actors has increased, although there is significant variance between donors on the proportion of funding that is multi-year.

(For a breakdown by funder, see ODI’s [“The Grand Bargain in 2022 – an independent review.”](#))

Benefits of Multi-Year Funding

- **Consistency and stability** allow the focus to be on program implementation and learning rather than constantly chasing funding, plus greater trust-building with communities. Passing multi-year grants onward to local partners means they gain similar benefits.
- **Adaptations** of program approaches respond to evolving community needs, changing contexts, and program learning. Feedback loops throughout program implementation are most effective when coupled with flexible and longer-term funding that allows adaptation of approaches.



- **Enhanced partnerships** allow local partners to be better involved in design, learning, research, and adjustment, shifting relationships from implementation arrangements to strategic partnerships.
- **Investments in learning and innovation** provide space for explicit learning objectives to be set, with sufficient time available to generate evidence, improve implementation quality and outcomes, and develop innovative approaches. Inputs from global technical teams, program teams, monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) teams, and local partners can be repeatedly brought together.
- **Integrated protection approaches** with other sectoral outcomes can, through a more holistic approach, address root causes of protection risks for communities facing multiple challenges. Aiming to achieve multiple outcomes in complex environments can require iterative programmatic design and adaptations, not possible to fully realize with shorter funding cycles.
- **Comprehensively addressing protection risks** is made possible, allowing protection actors to work with communities to establish long-term plans to address more complex threats. Some protection threats are acute (e.g., roadblocks by armed groups). Others can be systemic and, when exacerbated by crisis, escalate risks for individuals or a community (e.g., gender-based violence or land disputes).

In Practice

Fostering thinking and innovation: DRC's evidence generation for integrated programming

Multi-year funding can also facilitate research and piloting of new program approaches. DRC is currently implementing a three-year project to generate evidence and develop program models that integrate GBV and economic recovery. The aim is to find ways to address gender inequality as a root cause of GBV and women's economic marginalization. The project, implemented in partnership with the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) and funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), spans four countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Uganda, and Niger.

The three-year timeframe is enabling a sequence of research, then tool development and contextualization, followed by piloting, bringing together global and local actors. As well as aiming to produce tested tools and approaches that can then be applied elsewhere, capacities of local organizations working on GBV or economic recovery are being strengthened in the hope they can continue implementing successful approaches.

During the first year, DRC and WRC conducted research and developed tools at the global level, and established "Local Anchor Groups" (LAGs) at the country level.



To root the work in evidence, DRC conducted research on existing integrated GBV and economic recovery program models and MEAL systems, published in a [Global Landscaping Report](#), and conducted a gender and market analysis in each country of implementation.

Drawing on this initial research and existing guidance¹, DRC and WRC then developed a global *Theory of Change Playbook*—a guidance on how to develop theories of change for integrated GBV and economic recovery programming. In addition to being used for this project, the Playbook is designed for other (especially local) organizations. It contains exercises and tools to guide local actors through assessment and analysis, design, and monitoring and evaluation to develop a contextualized Theory of Change for protection and economic recovery outcomes.

RPB point

A theory of change sets out a causal logic starting with a defined goal (outcome) and setting out activities and actions that will be taken to achieve it, describing why they are expected to lead to the desired change. It should identify goals and specific actions designed for the context.

To center the work in local perspectives, LAGs were formed in each country. These comprised mostly local actors with experience in GBV prevention and response or economic empowerment of women. The LAGs aimed to bring together

RPB point

Achieving protection outcomes will usually require *multi-disciplinary strategies*: collaboration and complementary action across sectors and disciplines. Inclusion of, or leadership by, local actors will help ensure full contextualization of efforts.

different actors, skills, and experiences to explore actions that could be taken toward integrated outcomes

Each LAG had between five to 20 organizations most of whom were civil society organizations as attempts to encourage duty-bearers to participate were less successful. Long-term funding allowed for building trust and generating buy-in and commitment, before starting to design capacity-development action plans.

International organizations often use theoretical and jargon heavy language, and one challenge DRC encountered was that more time than anticipated was needed to explore concepts such as “theory of change” and “outcome-oriented protection” with local actors, and to translate the theories being developed into practice. A straightforward learning is to ensure supporting documents are using accessible terminology and are readily available in appropriate local languages—a simple requirement, but one that needs enough time to produce an accurate translation. A more thought-provoking learning is on

¹ Including [InterAction’s Gender-based Violence Prevention Evaluation Framework \(2021\)](#) and the [Community Builder’s Approach to Theory of Change](#) by Andrea A. Anderson and The Aspen Institute (2009).



how to communicate and explore these theories in a manner that allows local actors to adopt the concepts into their own ways of working rather than just being conduits for international organization implementation. Both demonstrate the benefits of longer-term funding providing time flexibility and activity adaptability, staying true to the intention of empowering local actors.

The third year focused on pilots and further learnings.

Based on the contextualized Theory of Change, local members of the LAGs developed and piloted program models, with a small budget provided by DRC. DRC also supported local partners to develop MEAL plans to monitor progress toward the outcomes. Activities built on organizations' existing experience and expertise to tie together GBV and economic recovery work and outcomes. The initial vision was that the pilots would have at least three iterations: activities run for a few months, a learning exercise conducted, activities adapted, and then run again.

RPB point

Iterative design and feedback loops - where activities are adjusted according to learnings, then run again - are at the core of an RBP approach.

GBV Innovation Project: Key of Life in Lebanon

Key of Life is an NGO focusing on rights and wellbeing. As a LAG member, they were supported by a small grant to pilot the localized Theory of Change. This identified the problem of GBV against women resulting in rights violations and negatively impacting their ability to economically participate and benefit, defining a range of intervention types and associated outputs and outcomes to address this.

Key of Life collaborated with a women's agriculture cooperative, targeting cooperative members. The project had three aims: (1) protecting GBV survivors and at risk of GBV from further threats and supporting recovery by connecting them with support services; (2) working toward a shift in social norms through awareness campaigns, community dialogues, and educational programs; and (3) supporting economic empowerment of GBV survivors and at risk of GBV through access to vocational training, entrepreneurship development programs, and financial resources.

Activities were jointly planned with the cooperative and a women's group, and implemented over a ten-month period. The grant and framework provided by the Theory of Change enabled the organizations to build on and bring together their existing work. Activities included extension of an internship program, targeted coaching and training sessions, including on business development and financial management, and case management services for GBV survivors and women and female youth at risk of GBV. In addition, they established a community-based protection committee to ensure sustainability.

Working with existing community groups enabled Key of Life to assess and tailor the activities to specific needs, with the structures that the groups provided hopefully enhancing sustainability of impact. Lessons-learned were documented and project outcomes shared back with partners.



They were initially planned to take place over a year, although delays, including due to external contextual factors (government perception of sensitivity around GBV issues leading to delayed project approvals in one country, and deterioration in the political and security context in another), have shortened some timeframes. Although these issues have required some adjustment, they were more easily absorbed within the multi-year timeframe given the flexibility compared to shorter-term funding.

At the global level, learnings from each country will be documented and shared through a global donor roundtable with the participation of key donors, humanitarian practitioners, and policymakers to promote and fundraise for the methodologies developed. The project aims to demonstrate why and how integrated GBV and economic recovery models are more effective in achieving sustainable outcomes.

RPB point

Multi-disciplinary approaches are critical for achieving protection outcomes: comprehensive reduction of protection risk can rarely be achieved by protection actors alone.

At the local level, the intention is for LAG members supported and capacitated on skills that can be used beyond this specific project to continue implementing integrated GBV and economic recovery programming in ongoing or new program approaches. In turn, multi-year funding would benefit this, allowing international and national NGO actors to use the Theory of Change and tools to develop and rollout approaches aiming to change protection outcomes.

Sustainable community-based protection strategies: Oxfam in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Oxfam has built a multi-year community-based protection program strategy with local partners Solidarité pour la Promotion Sociale (SOPROP), Groupe d'Associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Paix (GADHOP), CEPROSSAN (CEPROSSAN), Centre de Développement Intégral de l'Enfant Rural (CEDIER), and Syndicat d'Initiative de Kasha (SIKASH) funded through multi-year and annual donor grants. Overlaying of grants has allowed Oxfam to fund its strategy over multiple years, learn and adapt activities, and expand geographic reach. It also allowed Oxfam to retain experienced national protection staff and explore integration of protection outcomes with other goals including governance and food security outcomes and strengthening of local humanitarian leadership.



Working with local partners, Oxfam’s programming is centered on Community Protection Committees (CPCs). Once democratically elected by community members, CPCs are supported to develop community protection plans and identify protection threats—examples of which include illegal road barriers, arbitrary arrests, and GBV perpetrated by armed groups, other community members, and state authorities. The CPCs are then supported to negotiate and engage with local authorities and other stakeholders on actions that can be taken to mitigate the identified risks. The CPCs then pass on knowledge of rights and laws to the communities so that they can use this knowledge to protect themselves or others from protection risks. Oxfam’s work with CPCs is detailed in a case example: [example: A Community-Based and Adaptive Program to Reduce Protection Risks: Oxfam’s Experience in the DRC.](#)

In recent years, Oxfam’s community-based protection work has hinged on IrishAid and UK Department of International Development (DFID) funding covering multiple years, complemented by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperati

on (SDC) SDC and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) grants that were either multi-year from the outset or required annual proposals to extend funding. Additional funding including shorter-term grants from donors such as USAID-Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), European Commission of Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), Global Affairs of Canada (GAC), German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO), Country-Based Pooled Fund, World Bank, UNICEF, and the private sector have been used by the Oxfam team to support their multi-year program approach.

Iterative design and feedback loops - where activities are adjusted according to learnings, then run again - are at the core of an RBP approach.

Currently, the work is partly supported by multi-year funding from the Belgian Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) for six countries, including the DRC, for integrated protection and food security response.

[Organizational strategic prioritization and commitment](#) from Oxfam to its multi-year community-based protection approach was key to both securing these rounds of multi-year funding and maintaining a strategic longer-term vision for the work that was then rolled out with the support of multiple donors. A key benefit of receiving multi-year funding has been the **sustainability** of Oxfam’s interventions. A critical aspect for CPC success has been Oxfam’s ability to shift from one-year



to two- or three-year workplans with CPCs—a recommendation strongly made by an internal sustainability evaluation conducted in 2016.

Activities that Oxfam and its partners conduct with CPCs include establishment and community election of members; familiarization with protection; conducting protection, stakeholder, and power analyses; capacity building and coaching; putting in place action plans; resource identification; and relationship building with local stakeholders. Building trust and relationships between and within Oxfam, CPC members, and other stakeholders, and understanding local power dynamics, takes time. This all adds up to be a heavy schedule over only a few months before the CPC members are confident and able to start addressing protection risks they identify.

Setting a two- or three-year workplan with the CPCs which has a clear exit strategy from the beginning now allows Oxfam and its local partners to focus the second year on improving the CPCs' autonomy, when activities and capacity-building are done by committee members and partner staff observe and support. This has not only reinforced CPCs' capacities, but also improved the chances of CPCs being sustained by members after Oxfam and its partners exit.

A 2016 evaluation demonstrated the success of the CPC approach and its usual implementation over multiple years. It found that most community protection structures had continued with activities in some form after Oxfam had exited, with 51 structures in 23 communities (out of 67 structures in 30 communities) continuing regular weekly or monthly planning meetings¹. For community-based protection, longer timeframes are preferable: the more Oxfam and its partners can engage, the more likely that participants develop skills that they continue to use after the project ends.

The multi-year funding also supports a **continued follow-up** with CPCs. Oxfam passes down multi-year grants to its partners, which in turn enable them to continue to check in with CPCs in areas where they have exited the main activities. Follow-up visits with CPCs two or three times a year can be planned to support them to adapt to any changes in the local context.

This follow-up enables Oxfam to identify successes, changes, and good practices developed by the CPCs. The aim is to find ways of maintaining successful approaches in the communities for as long as possible, and to discuss any challenges faced by the CPCs. Issues are discussed with the partner teams to inform future capacity-building sessions for CPCs, local authorities, and leaders. Experience-sharing sessions are organized between CPCs from different communities at least once a year to capitalize on, maintain, and replicate good practices that have led to changes in communities.



The multi-year strategy gives time to build **stronger relationships** not only between Oxfam, local partners, and CPCs, but also between partners and local duty bearers.

RBP Enabler:

Building strong relationships requires trust, regular engagement, collaboration, and support - in turn requiring longer-term investment with multiple actors and strategies that look ahead beyond a few months or a year. Multi-year funding can support organizations to develop and rollout- longer-term strategies.

Oxfam and its partners are then able to raise protection issues in a more constructive way, more likely resulting in change. It also has enabled Oxfam to build **strategic partnerships** with its local partners, building mutual trust and implementing localization approaches. This has supported the organizations' continued work together including in hard-to-reach areas.

The longer program timelines also enable **less rigidity and better adaption of activities** to local contexts.

RBP point:

Adaptability is critical to outcome-oriented approaches success, allowing programme approaches to be adjusted based on changes in context or risks, identified through ongoing analysis

For example, Oxfam can design shorter workplans when communities already have protection knowledge and capacities, or plan longer implementation periods in locations with fragile or complex security.

Facilitating Factors

The following facilitating factors, based on reflections from Oxfam and DRC program staff, can also be challenges to the smooth planning and implementation of multi-year outcome-oriented protection.

- **Staff continuity or turnover:** Multi-year funding can support staff continuity, especially in smaller or local organizations where gaps in funding often mean staff contracts aren't renewed, resulting in loss of capacities and inefficiencies if having to re-hire for new projects. Conversely, if staff turnover is high during implementation of multi-year programming, this can adversely affect implementation through loss of capacities, institutional memory, and momentum toward project goals.
- **Longer-term approaches can require a shift of mindset:** Designing multi-year programming to be more "outcome-oriented" requires a different way of thinking than just extending shorter-term approaches. Equipping staff to be able to envision and plan longer-term approaches can take time and encouragement.



- **Time to sit together and think is essential:** Developing a multi-year strategy or longer-term vision takes time and should ideally involve multiple actors. Strategic planning involving program staff, local partners, communities themselves, and perhaps regional and global support teams takes time.
- **Technical support within the organization and commitment to investment in learning:** Encouragement from regional and global technical teams can help shift program visions toward the longer-term, using local expertise from different contexts to inspire others and sharing effective models and learnings between countries. Support and commitment by management teams in investing in learning and innovation is essential for its integration within program approaches.
- **Changing contexts and crisis response:** Changes in context, such as resurgence of conflict or new crises, can be disruptive to longer-term programming. Adaptation strategies can be built into design from the start, such as planning rapid protection response activities for any new crisis to sit alongside longer-term activities.

RBP Questions to Consider

- Which contexts or types of activities could benefit from longer-term (multi-year) program approaches?
- What would different teams within an organization need to do to collaborate on design and planning for multi-year protection responses?
- What organizational challenges might there be in implementation of multi-year programs? What mitigation measures might be needed?
- If working with local partners, are internal procedures equipped to sign and support multi-year sub-grant partnerships?

RBP Questions to Consider for Donors

- To what extent do the current project proposal and implementation requirements allow protection actors to implement flexible multi-year programming?
- What operational or administrative efficiencies could be gained from multi-year compared with single-year grants for outcome-oriented protection programming?
- Could multi-year funding be used more extensively to support outcome-oriented protection programming? What would be required to increase this?