

# **3** Supporting self-reliance requires a blended set of aid instruments

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If humanitarian assistance is not sufficient to meet people's most important needs, it is even less effective in achieving economic self-sufficiency, for which the lack of economic and livelihood opportunities is the primary grievance for the vast majority of survey respondents. In protracted situations, people want economic autonomy, not prolonged assistance. Because it is not designed to end need, and because it is unpredictable in nature, humanitarian assistance is not the right tool to build sustainable economic opportunities, especially in refugee contexts where strict restrictions can be in place to prevent refugees from participating in the economic life of their host countries. Creating an enabling environment for livelihood opportunities for people affected by crisis should rapidly become a priority for DAC members in their political dialogue with partner countries.

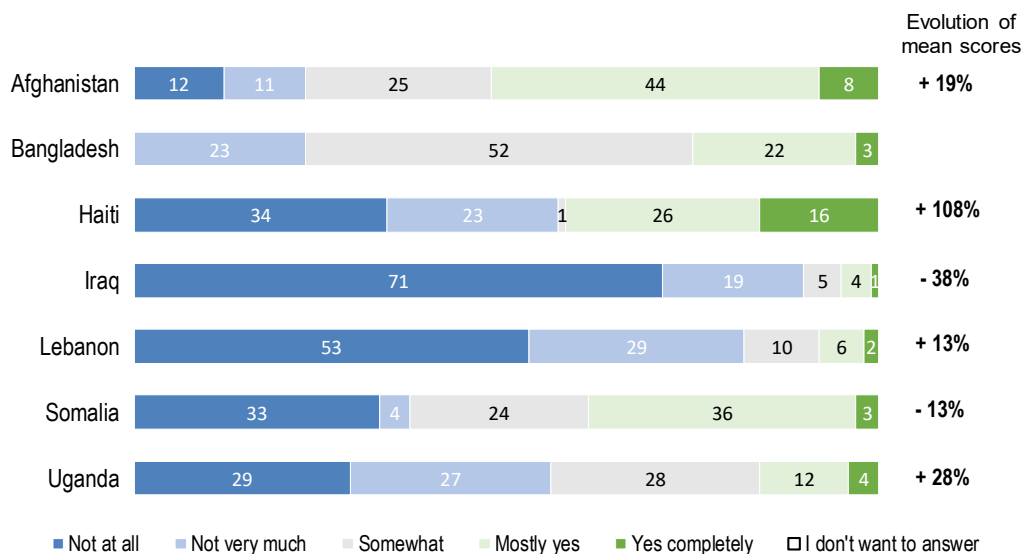
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## Key messages

- Humanitarian assistance is not the right tool to support self-sufficiency. Livelihood opportunities are amongst the most commonly unmet need according to people who are affected by crises and who are striving for financial autonomy, not for prolonged assistance.
- Helping create the right conditions for affected people to access livelihoods beyond aid should be a priority for donors engaged in crises contexts.

The surveys asked people if the humanitarian aid they get will help them become self-reliant in the future. In this context, self-reliance is the ability to live independently from humanitarian assistance (Easton-Calabria et al., 2017<sup>[1]</sup>). Not surprisingly, as humanitarian assistance is not sufficient to meet people's most important needs, as suggested in the previous chapters, it is even less effective in helping them achieve economic self-sufficiency. The vast majority of respondents do not feel that humanitarian assistance is helping them to live without aid in the future (Figure 3.1). Across countries, a minimum of 48% and up to 94% respondents are negative or neutral about the role of humanitarian assistance in helping them to become self-reliant.

**Figure 3.1 Do you feel the support you receive helps you to become self-reliant?**



Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018). The bar charts show the percentage of respondents who selected each answer option. The mean scores are calculated based on reported responses using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The evolution of mean scores reflects a negative or positive evolution since round 1 (2016-2017). Some numbers cannot be added up to exactly 100%, as graphs show rounded percentages without decimals, therefore distorting the relative frequencies between answer options.

Source: (OECD, 2019<sup>[2]</sup>), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 1 (2016-2017) and round 2 (2017-2018).

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In refugee contexts, recent policy instruments such as the New York Declaration (UNGA, 2016<sup>[3]</sup>) and its corollaries the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (UNHCR, 2018<sup>[4]</sup>) and the Global Compact for Refugees (UNGA, 2018<sup>[5]</sup>), as well as the Grand Bargain (Agenda for Humanity, 2016<sup>[6]</sup>), all call for seeking durable solutions for refugees and more broadly for people affected by crises. Because it is limited in scope and unpredictable in time, humanitarian assistance is not the best instrument to achieve this objective. Humanitarian actors are increasingly engaging in building resilience, addressing underlying causes of vulnerability (ALNAP, 2018<sup>[7]</sup>), but the humanitarian model is based on short-term programming

and funding that cannot deal with long-term issues whose resolution goes beyond humanitarian programming cycles. Even when replicated over decades, the humanitarian response instrument does not have the predictability necessary to bring the systemic changes required for people affected by crises to reach self-sustainability.

Furthermore, the unpredictability of such assistance can also exacerbate uncertainties for people receiving it in relation to return, eviction, labour law, access to jobs, etc. For example, some people receiving humanitarian assistance are cautious about taking up short-term employment opportunities as they fear this would exclude them from receiving the support they need as part of their overall household income strategy (RDPP et al., 2017<sup>[8]</sup>).

Humanitarian assistance is delivered in a socio-economic context that needs to be understood, and the risks of increasing vulnerabilities at the country level should also be analysed. In Lebanon for example, employers use humanitarian assistance as an excuse to pay Syrian refugees below the minimum wage – a monthly average of USD 277 a month compared to the USD 448 Lebanon minimum wage (ILO, 2014<sup>[9]</sup>). This in turn brings down the informal minimum wage for the Lebanese, as the availability of Syrian refugees does not encourage salary upgrades.

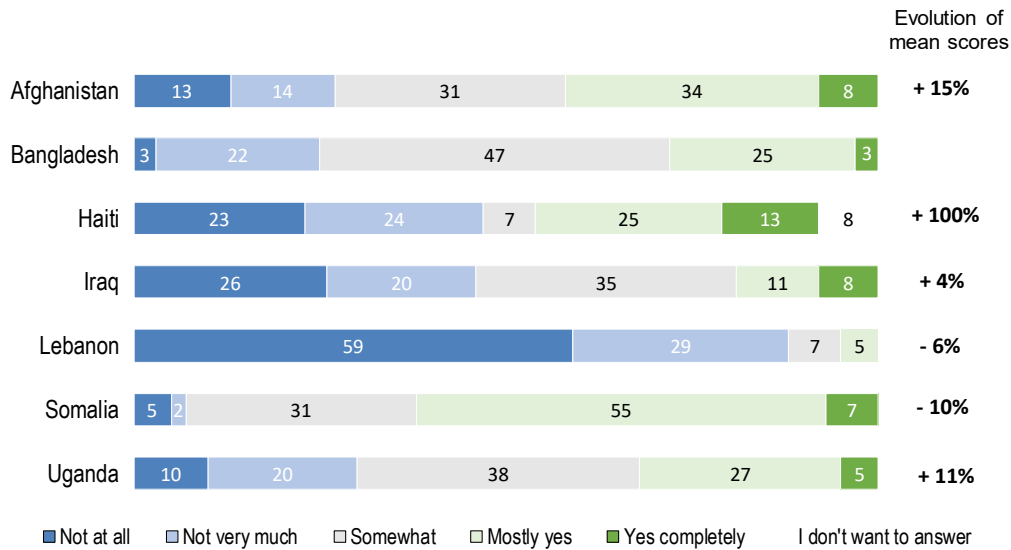
### People affected by crisis want autonomy, not prolonged assistance

Findings from across the surveys, and confirmed by much research in crisis areas, show that people affected by crises and receiving assistance are primarily looking to regain financial autonomy and sustainable livelihoods and to become less dependent on assistance. Particularly in long-term crises, refugees have a sense of protracted temporariness when they are stranded in reluctant host countries like Bangladesh or Lebanon. The inability to achieve self-reliance is one of the main factors driving secondary migration (Van Hear, 2011<sup>[10]</sup>).

When asking people receiving humanitarian assistance whether their life has improved, responses differ from one context to another, depending on the situation in their countries of origin and the quality of the humanitarian response (Figure 3.2). However, respondents who replied negatively put employment or income opportunities as one of their top concerns for achieving self-reliance (OECD, 2019<sup>[21]</sup>).

In countries where governments impose strict control on what the humanitarian sector can deliver even as a basic service, the issue of economic sustainability for people affected by crises requires the mobilisation of other instruments in order to help create an environment that is more conducive to self-sustainability. Especially for refugees, self-sustainability touches upon a country's political and economic choices. For donors, helping create a conducive environment for affected people to reach self-sustainability requires a political dialogue that humanitarian actors can feed into but not initiate, in order to protect the humanitarian principles driving their action.

Figure 3.2 Overall, is your life improving?



Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018). The bar charts show the percentage of respondents who selected each answer option. The mean scores are calculated based on reported responses using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The evolution of mean scores reflects a negative or positive evolution since round 1 (2016-2017). Some numbers cannot be added up to exactly 100%, as graphs show rounded percentages without decimals, therefore distorting the relative frequencies between answer options.

Source: (OECD, 2019<sup>[2]</sup>), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 1 (2016-2017) and round 2 (2017-2018).

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Some programmes lie at the juncture between humanitarian assistance and social development and represent interesting opportunities to support long-term self-reliance for refugees while reassuring host governments that supporting refugees does not contradict their own policies. In Lebanon, for example, the Subsidised Temporary Employment Programme (STEP) includes a pillar for providing eligible refugees with savings accounts that are only accessible when they leave Lebanon (Box 3.1).

### Box 3.1. The DFID-supported Subsidised Temporary Employment Programme in Lebanon

The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) funds humanitarian and development assistance in Lebanon, aiming to help highly vulnerable refugee and host community families to meet their basic survival needs and maintain dignity. Given the specific Lebanese context, this assistance focuses on education, jobs and services, and is based on the logic that humanitarian assistance is required only until development assistance begins to offer a meaningful alternative. Through the Subsidised Temporary Employment Programme (STEP), DFID also provides financial and employment incentives that will encourage small and medium-sized businesses to expand production and create new permanent jobs for Lebanese workers, as well as temporary jobs for Syrians. One aspect of this programme is to create savings accounts that are only accessible to refugees on leaving Lebanon. The accounts – or wallets – are managed by an NGO and the Banque Libano-française, a private Lebanese bank that also manages the cash transfer within the Lebanon Multi-purpose cash transfer in partnership with the World Food Programme and MasterCard.

Source: (DFID, 2018<sup>[11]</sup>), *DevTracker Project GB-GOV-1-300060*, <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-300060> (accessed on 16 April 2019).

## Restrictions on the right to work increase the burden for hosting countries

Wage earning and self-employment provisions in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 1951<sup>[12]</sup>) are seldom fully implemented (Zetter and Ruadel, 2016<sup>[13]</sup>). In refugee contexts, some of the main obstacles mentioned by survey respondents include a problematic legal status that results in the lack of rights and opportunities. Fearing permanent settlement of refugees, some hosting governments put stringent restrictions on many aspects of refugees' lives, most notably on movement and access to work. Restrictions on the right to work also prevent their access to other rights, such as social security benefits and general labour rights protection. In many host countries, limitations also apply to opening a business; and owning property, land or capital – undermining refugees' access to sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Where access to jobs is restricted, and as humanitarian assistance is not enough to sustain affected people's livelihoods, refugees are often confined to seeking work in the informal sector, or in low-wage jobs such as in agriculture, construction or services (these are the three sectors in which refugees are allowed to work in Lebanon, for example). Working informally often means greater vulnerability to exploitation, poor working conditions and harassment. When affected people are forced to live on the margin of societies, it not only exacerbates existing social problems, but also deprives the host country government of some domestic revenues (RDPP et al., 2017<sup>[8]</sup>). As refugees are not included in the formal economy, the cost of accommodating them in terms of basic services provision, water, electricity, garbage collection, etc. falls onto the host country without any financial contributions, other than humanitarian assistance, to relieve some of the financial burden.

Additionally, confining refugees to some low-wage sectors increases competition with the local unskilled workforce, notably when refugees take asylum in areas that are already suffering from a lack of investment from the central government, as is the case in all surveyed countries. This also fuels negative perceptions of refugees and exhausts countries' capacities to host, for example in Lebanon where 56% of respondents feel unwelcomed.

As most people are looking for economic opportunities to complement humanitarian assistance and meet their livelihood needs, their access to economic opportunities is therefore a critical connecting point between humanitarian assistance and development co-operation. There are increasing examples of non-humanitarian programmes that benefit both refugees and the host country. The Jordan Compact (EC, 2017<sup>[14]</sup>), for example, seeks to provide Syrian refugees with access to the formal labour market in exchange for improved access for Jordan to European markets and support from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Box 3.2).

### Box 3.2. The European Union's Jordan Compact

Signed in February 2016, the Jordan Compact aims to improve access to education and the formal labour market for Syrian refugees in a protracted displacement situation. Instead of requiring refugees to pay high prices for a work permit, the Jordanian Government has waived these fees, reduced bureaucratic barriers, and issued 200 000 work permits in specified sectors in Special Economic Zones. Furthermore, Jordan has committed to improve the business environment, provide school places for all Syrian children, as well as support refugees with training opportunities. In return for employment quota in existing Special Economic Zones, the EU has loosened trade regulations and offered tariff-free access to European markets. The donor community has also agreed to better support the Jordan Response Plan, which was only 30%-funded by 2016 (Grawert, 2019<sup>[15]</sup>). By integrating Syrian refugees into the existing Special Economic Zones strategies, Jordan has attracted additional financial support from international donors. Three years on, the Jordan Compact has led to improvements in education and employment for Syrian refugees, and has also notably improved its manufacturing sector, showing that a conducive policy environment can also open up the potential to benefit both the host community and refugees.

Source: (Barbelet, Hagen-Zanker and Mansour-Ille, 2018<sup>[16]</sup>), *The Jordan Compact: Lessons learnt and implications for future refugee compacts*, <https://data2.unhcr.org/fr/documents/download/61932> (accessed on 16 April 2019).

Because meeting people's needs requires the mobilisation of many actors who are all seeking funds, people affected by crises are perceived as a cost for assistance agencies and donors, as well as a financial burden for host countries. Humanitarian planning and programming are based on the assessment of the gaps that need to be filled and their costs. However, in protracted crises, there are also opportunities which can be capitalised on to complement needs and gap assessments. Allowing refugees to improve their livelihoods by starting to invest in, produce, and contribute to the host economy can yield development benefits.

For donors, supporting the creation of conducive environments for developing economic opportunities and a legal environment in which refugees are protected from exploitation and discrimination is an important way to enable partner countries to align their development, humanitarian and diplomatic instruments with development objectives.

### Aspirations and dignity are elements of building self-reliance

Prospects for economic autonomy mean that people affected by crisis do not only seek work to complement humanitarian assistance, but also, and sometimes above all, to live in dignity. Economic autonomy is one of the main elements in dignity. The ability to live from one's work has a dramatic effect on people's sense of dignity. Many refugees describe dignity in terms of being able to provide for one's family and having financial stability. As seen in Bangladesh, the economic aspect of dignity is also important to women, particularly those women who are heads of household and would rather work than receive assistance (Holloway and Fan, 2018<sup>[17]</sup>). Inability to work also directly links refugee status with dependence on society; the related negative social impact also acts as a strong push factor for secondary migration (Kvittingen et al., 2019<sup>[18]</sup>).

People affected by crises are often seen as vulnerable victims who depend on assistance, a stereotype sometimes conveyed by assistance agencies' fundraising campaigns focusing on their lifesaving role in humanitarian contexts. While this role is indeed vital in acute emergency phases, the stereotype is often misleading (Horst, 2006<sup>[19]</sup>). People affected by crisis quickly turn their attention to finding livelihood

opportunities, either because their initial savings are exhausted rapidly, or because the humanitarian assistance they receive is too little or not targeted enough to rely on exclusively, as seen above.

The lack of economic opportunities is also mentioned in the surveys as an obstacle outside refugee contexts. The position of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is particularly problematic as they do not benefit from the same level of international protection or have a specific institution designed to support them. Instead, they largely depend on their government for protection and assistance, such as social safety net mechanisms. In Iraq for example, while people see an overall improvement because of the end of the conflict (Figure 3.2), perceptions of empowerment are lower in areas in which refugees and IDPs now find themselves in a state of protracted displacement. People who returned to their place of origin are more positive, especially where government policies encourage return and the assistance response has shifted focus from supporting IDPs to supporting returnees.

A cash-based response is often presented as a more dignified way to deliver humanitarian assistance and an easier way to link it with a broader social safety net programme, such as the Emergency Social Safety Net in Turkey. This is true, and most people receiving assistance in the form of cash see it as a valuable aid. However, cash assistance remains humanitarian assistance. It is insufficient to meet all needs, is not more predictable than in-kind aid and qualifying criteria are poorly communicated to its beneficiaries (Chapter 4).

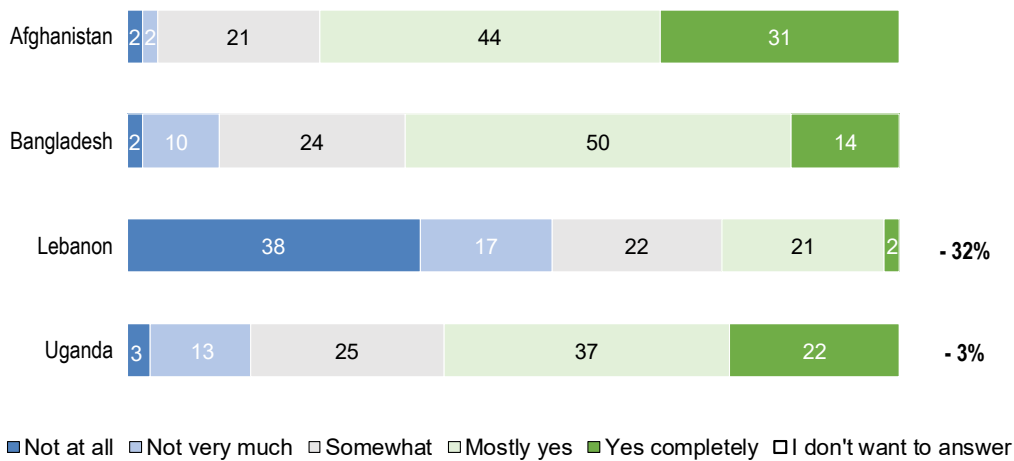
The way people affected by crises access economic opportunities is one of the main elements allowing refugees to make a dignified contribution to the country's development, rather than being a social and economic burden on the host country requiring intervention by the international community through humanitarian assistance. Access to work and livelihoods for all people affected by crisis should therefore become a priority issue for Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members in their political dialogue with partner countries and development co-operation actors.

## Host communities are also directly affected by crises

An influx of people fleeing a crisis from another area of a country or across a border is an understandable demographic shock for any population, especially at the local level. The arrival of a new population affects public service delivery, land use, housing availability, food availability and prices. When humanitarian actors employ local staff and use local services such as housing, this favours the most educated and the most socially connected within the host communities, which can exacerbate the social impact of the crisis, (Grunewald, 2014<sup>[20]</sup>). The crisis can also negatively affect infrastructure, road traffic and market prices, as noted by the host community in Bangladesh (GTS, 2019<sup>[21]</sup>).

Because of possible competition between refugees and the local population over jobs, social services or resources, refugees' perceptions of feeling welcomed by the host community are decreasing in some countries (Figure 3.1). The initial support and hospitality can rapidly wane as local social tolerance becomes tested, especially when the exogenous population is from a neighbouring country with a different culture, language or religion. Many factors play a role in these perceptions, which do not only seem correlated with the length of the crisis, but also with government policy towards refugees.

**Figure 3.3 Do you feel welcome in your host community?**



Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018). The bar charts show the percentage of respondents who selected each answer option. The mean scores are calculated based on reported responses using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The evolution of mean scores reflects a negative or positive evolution since round 1 (2016-2017). Bangladesh was only surveyed during round 2. Some numbers cannot be added up to exactly 100%, as graphs show rounded percentages without decimals, therefore distorting the relative frequencies between answer options.

Source: (OECD, 2019<sup>[21]</sup>), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 1 (2016-2017) and round 2 (2017-2018).

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National and local authorities retain the main responsibility for engineering the relationships between the population and affected people through their own policies and practices. When popular support starts to wane and when affected population are perceived to represent a risk to host communities, the government may start to implement restrictive policies, as was the case in Lebanon after 2013. Decisions over whether or not to grant the right to work, provide access to education and public services, and registration policy are all examples of critical issues which a host government has to navigate carefully when displacement is set to become long term. For example, in Bangladesh, most of the Rohingyas who notice tensions with the host community attribute them to restrictions on their right to work in the local economy and their resultant high rate of informal work. The main reasons given by locals for these same tensions are cultural differences and the Rohingya working unofficially in the area (GTS, 2019<sup>[22]</sup>).

### International engagement can help create opportunities

The way humanitarian assistance is planned and delivered within political contexts and administrative constraints can also make a stark difference. Besides protection and assistance, delivering assistance only to the people affected by crisis based on their refugee or IDP status can rapidly create dissension between hosting communities and the people affected. These negative perceptions can be reduced by enabling refugees or IDPs to participate in projects that serve the entire community (Horst, 2006<sup>[19]</sup>). While the legal and security constraints imposed by the national authorities can be strict, humanitarian assistance should be programmed in a way that alleviates the burden on the local services and population as much as possible. This is especially the case for employment and wages for young and informal workers in middle-income countries, who are most at risk of competition with affected people (Verme and Schuettler, 2019<sup>[23]</sup>).



When the regions or neighbourhoods receiving refugees are underdeveloped, such as in Lebanon, Uganda or Bangladesh, the protracted increase in population and economic exchanges can justify development investment and be turned into social and economic opportunities. This is the rationale of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), in which crisis response finance can also create opportunities for the host country to enhance development. It requires building a narrative explaining that refugees, or people affected by crises more broadly, can make positive contributions to the local economy (Verme et al., 2016<sup>[24]</sup>). Programmes that create awareness of the potential embodied in forced migrants can help to tackle negative views.

In Uganda, where perceptions of being welcome are high amongst refugees (Figure 3.3), the government policy to implement the CRRF provides more livelihood opportunities, notably in the agricultural sector, even for refugees who were not allocated land. While the Ugandan model of refugee management is not immune from controversy (Hovil, 2018<sup>[25]</sup>), it has opened up opportunities for development in a particularly underserved region of the country (Box 3.3).

### Box 3.3. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in Northern Uganda

Uganda adopted the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in 2017. One of Uganda's key components under the CRRF mechanism is the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment project (Government of Uganda and World Bank, 2017<sup>[26]</sup>), a government-led multi-year strategy for self-reliance and resilience that seeks opportunities for both refugees and the host communities. Its trademark "30-70 Principle" ensures that 30% of the assistance targets the host community. The initiative has increased investment from international actors. Despite its generally underfunded situation, Uganda's engagement in the CRRF attracts financial support from international actors (Coggio, 2018<sup>[27]</sup>). Since 2017, the World Bank has provided a USD 50 million loan for the government to implement the CRRF and mobilised the IDA18 refugee sub-window to support refugees and host communities: through this window, Uganda received a USD 29 million grant for a water management project and a USD 335 million grant for municipal infrastructure. The CRRF has improved health and education development indicators in Northern Uganda, because of an integrated response that has increased the accessibility of health and education services. Infrastructure projects have also provided market access and livelihood opportunities (IRC, 2018<sup>[28]</sup>).

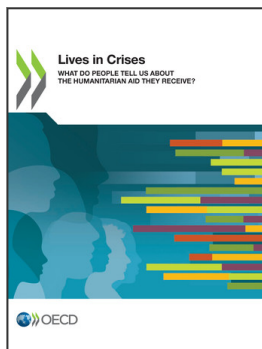
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**From:**

## **Lives in Crises**

### What Do People Tell Us About the Humanitarian Aid They Receive?

**Access the complete publication at:**

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9d39623d-en>

#### **Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2019), "Supporting self-reliance requires a blended set of aid instruments", in *Lives in Crises: What Do People Tell Us About the Humanitarian Aid They Receive?*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/3a2e52d2-en>

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