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**Scottish Government
Humanitarian Emergency Fund**

**South Asia Floods: August 2017
Response reports:**

- **Oxfam in Bangladesh**
- **Save the Children in India**
- **Tearfund in Nepal**



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South Asia Floods August 2017

Emergency Context

In August 2017, heavy monsoon rains caused intense flooding across India, Bangladesh and Nepal, the worst floods in the last four decades, leaving multitudes of people in need of life-saving support. Massive floods had affected around 42 million people in the states of Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal in India; more than one-third of Bangladesh had been flooded, affecting more than eight million people; and flooding and landslides affected thirty-seven districts across Nepal.

Hundreds of people lost their lives while homes were destroyed, assets washed away, hundreds of thousands of hectares of agricultural land flooded, crops lost, livestock and fishing infrastructures badly affected. In the immediate aftermath of the floods, there were significant public health concerns: local water supply sources (tube wells, ponds and canals) had been contaminated and household sanitation systems destroyed, presenting a major risk of water-borne disease. Many people found themselves stranded on roads as there was no place left to take shelter.

Rail and road systems were severely hit causing delays in transportation of aid relief, and delaying repairs to damaged health facilities, pharmacies and local clinics. Thousands of schools had closed, while those that were accessible were functioning as relief camps. With so many children unable to go to school, incidents of abuse, child labour, migration, and child marriage were reported.

Though the water receded and people returned to their homes and villages, many houses were still seriously damaged and the poorest families, particularly those with children, pregnant and lactating mothers, people with disabilities or elderly relatives, continued to face increased risks of food insecurity, malnutrition, scarcity of water and sanitation facilities and lack of water treatment facilities. The floods deposited significant quantities of silt on land which needed to be cleared before people could begin to replant.

With little or no money, flood-affected communities were unable to meet their immediate food and other basic household needs. Agricultural day labours faced significantly reduced employment opportunities in the post-harvest period, and communities were left with little choice than to borrow loans at excessively high interest rates. Women and girls were disproportionately affected: having little or no access to adequate sanitation; facing severe challenges in menstrual hygiene management; and the longer travel distances to collect potable water raised the risks to their safety and protection.

The Scottish Government's Humanitarian Emergency Fund supported three emergency responses: Save the Children in India, Oxfam in Bangladesh, and Tearfund in Nepal.

Achievements with HEF support

India: More than 1,300 families, across twelve villages, received emergency hygiene kits and temporary shelter kits. Across fifty villages, water, sanitation and health sessions were conducted promoting personal hygiene, household and community hygiene, and reinforcing the importance of maintaining clean water sources. In addition, two child-friendly spaces helped to rebuild children's confidence and to develop coping mechanisms, as well as giving parents and care-givers the ability to leave their children in safe supervised areas while they attended to other personal and household responsibilities.

Bangladesh: More than two thousand five hundred families received cash grants, enabling them to meet their immediate needs and priorities. Many used the money to buy food, medicines, seeds, tools and livestock as well as materials to rebuild their homes. Hygiene kits were also distributed, critical in reducing and preventing incidences of water-borne diseases.

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Nepal: More than two hundred families now have a better sense of security and wellbeing, living in newly rebuilt houses, constructed with flood and earthquake-resistant techniques. They have cleared their lands and are growing seasonal crops after receiving new farming tools, seeds and training.

India – Save the Children

Project Plan

Save the Children's response aimed to support 1,325 households in the Kishanganj district in Bihar with shelter and hygiene kits. Two Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) would provide children with a safe environment for play and psychosocial support.

Project Impact

In the fifteen-week period of the response, Save the Children provided 1,325 families across twelve villages with hygiene kits and temporary shelter kits. Water, sanitation and health (WASH) campaigns were conducted across fifty villages, promoting personal hygiene, household and community hygiene, and reinforcing the importance of maintaining clean water sources to a population of more than 25,000 people. In addition, the establishment of two child-friendly spaces helped almost 500 children to rebuild their confidence and to develop coping mechanisms, as well as giving parents and care-givers the ability to leave their children in safe supervised areas while they attended to other personal and household responsibilities.

Temporary shelter kits

In times of crisis, shelter is critical both in terms of private, family space but also for security and safety. Temporary shelter kits helped the families build or repair their huts, thus protecting their possessions and livestock. The materials distributed to the families included tarpaulin sheets, blankets, floor mats and solar lamps, a practical addition for light and security.

WASH: household and community health

Flood waters contaminated most of the water sources and it was important for communities to understand how this happens and how to make the water safe. This was particularly crucial in the villages of Kaliyaganj, Jarbari, Kamarmoni as these were the worst affected by the flood. Basic hygiene kits of water purification tablets and bleaching powder were provided to the targeted families and demonstrations on their correct use were conducted.

More widely, WASH campaigns were conducted across fifty villages promoting the importance of personal, household and community health and hygiene. Performances of '*nukkad natak*' (folk street play) focused on personal hygiene, hand washing, food and household hygiene and the storing of potable water. Cleanliness of the community environment was also covered with demonstrations on the safe disposal of liquid and solid waste, and of human excreta. Complementing household toilet kits provided by the government, these demonstrations helped to restore the dignity of people who had previously had to defecate in the open.

Child-Friendly Spaces

Two Child-Friendly Spaces were established, providing almost five hundred children with safe spaces to play, learn and develop, and receive psychosocial support. Activities were designed to build on the natural environment and develop suitable coping mechanisms as well as reaffirm and build the confidence of children. These spaces were also used to identify threats to children; abuse, neglect and trafficking are major concerns in this area. In addition, the provision of these supervised spaces allowed parents and caregivers to leave their children while they collect food and water, rebuild homes or seek new income generating activities.

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Bangladesh - Oxfam

Project Plan

The Oxfam response, funded by the HEF, aimed to support 2,000 of the most vulnerable households (approximately 10,000 people) in the northern districts of Dinajpur and Kurigram with cash grants and hygiene kits.

Project Impact

In the six-week response period, Oxfam, with partner organisations Pollisree in Dinajpur Sadar Upazila, Dinajpur District, and MJSKS in Ulipur Upazila, Kurigram District, slightly exceeded targets, supporting 10,201 people with both cash grants and hygiene kits and providing a further 560 hygiene kits to 2,548 more people. The timely support of cash grants enabled households to determine for themselves their own priorities and to make their own choices, without having to resort to negative coping mechanisms such as borrowing high interest loans or selling household assets. Cash grants also go some way in restoring people's dignity in the aftermath of a crisis.

Multi-Purpose Cash Grants

The response provided one-off cash grants of BDT 4,000 to meet immediate food and other basic household needs. Twenty families with members who had additional disabilities received a further BDT 1,000 to buy assistive devices and extra medicines. Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM), conducted by Oxfam's partners and in conjunction with project beneficiaries, found that grant recipients used the cash for a range of purposes including: purchasing food, repairing shelters, agricultural inputs, medicines, clothes and educational materials, and loan repayments. In addition, some recipients used the cash to purchase livestock such as goats, sheep or poultry.

The market-based approach adopted in this response also stimulated the wider local economy, as the deployment of cash grants helped to protect and revive the local market as the purchasing power of beneficiary communities increased.

Health and Hygiene

Oxfam and partners provided 2,560 households with hygiene kits. Each hygiene kit contained bathing soaps, washing powders, sanitary pads, undergarments and Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS).

These kits, with associated health and hygiene sessions and wider messaging disseminated in the communities, made people more aware of personal hygiene issues and health risks, critical in preventing incidences of water-borne diseases. With the provision of sanitary pads, women and girls were also better equipped to manage menstrual hygiene, while also having their privacy and dignity protected.

Tearfund in Nepal

Project Plan

Tearfund's response, funded by the HEF, aimed to support 240 households in the Rural Municipality (RM) of Raptisonary, Banke District, in the Southern Terai region. Classified as a Priority One area by the World Food Programme due to the large-scale loss of food stocks and agricultural production, the project provided cash grants, shelter materials, agricultural inputs and technical training.

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Originally, the project had planned to target households in Narainapur RM in addition to Raptisonary RM. In consultation with Banke District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC), it was agreed that the response should concentrate on the Raptisonary RM where the number of affected households was greater. Early in the project implementation, Tearfund and partner International Nepal Fellowship (INF) had agreed that a mix of cash distributions and in-kind material distributions would allow a more cost-effective and timely intervention. Cost-effective purchasing of livelihood tools meant more budget was available to purchase additional and better quality shelter materials.

Project Impact

In the six-month response period, households now have increased protection and safety, having been able to re-build their homes, constructed with flood and earthquake-resistant techniques, using cash grants and materials provided by the project. They have also cleared silted land and started growing seasonal crops again after receiving farming tools, locally appropriate seeds, and training on preparing land and vegetable farming.

Shelter

Of the 240 targeted households, 236 are now living in newly reconstructed homes. Rather than constructing transitional shelters, most of the households decided they wanted to build permanent homes.

Construction on the houses was initially delayed as some male household members had left the district to seek work as migrant labourers, and cultural norms forbid women to engage in such work. With a lack of skilled labourers, Tearfund invested additional funding to enable INF to provide training in masonry skills to 60 local men. In the course of the training, the men built two demonstration houses, the traditional two-storey *Jhigati* house. In an extension to the project, Tearfund also funded the construction of three model brick houses. Both house models were constructed in the location of the RM office, demonstrating the different earthquake and flood-resistant techniques to the wider community.

Some households delayed reconstruction as they believe that construction should not be carried out during the dark moon period (mid-December to mid-January). To mitigate this, INF's engineer and CMs carried out additional household visits, encouraging households to speed up construction.

For many households, the provision of materials and cash grants were sufficient to build the traditional *Jhigati* houses. Others maximised the support by being able to add salvaged materials from their damaged homes to build brick houses, or borrowed money from family to hire local masons. The new homes included 134 *Jhigati* houses, 74 block houses, 28 brick houses and one concrete house.

Three households, however, have not commenced building to date as they do not have their own land. INF is currently negotiating with the local RM office, the Ward chairperson, and the community forest-user group to secure land for these households. If access to land is not forthcoming, it is anticipated that they will use their cash grants to support livelihood options instead.

The fourth household lost three children in the floods and have delayed rebuilding. They hold the belief that construction work should not be started after the death of a family member. To do so is *Jutho*; ritually unclean. This family have told INF that they do plan to construct a permanent home but are looking for land in a different location. They have spent some of the distributed cash on daily subsistence but still have the materials and enough cash to construct a house.

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Livelihoods

Having undertaken a one-day agricultural training session on the use of fertilisers, seasonal crops and crops for planting in silted areas, 237 households are now growing and harvesting vegetables, wheat, masoor daal and tori (mustard).

While INF had procured materials in Nepalgunj that were not readily available locally, cash was distributed for people to buy items available in Raptisonary, such as seeds and fertiliser agricultural inputs. Cash also meant that households were able to buy the most suitable construction material for their needs. For example, many households could buy bamboo at lower costs from local farmers than INF could at central market prices.

The project provided each household with decent quality tools for construction and for farming, including two spades, a long-handled shovel, a watering-can, an axe, a trowel, two sickles, a mattock, a hammer, a crowbar, a handsaw, sixteen galvanised iron sheets (each nine feet in length), 18 feet of plain sheet, 1.5kg of binding wires; 1.5kg of nylon rope, a claw hammer, a pick handle, 1.5kg of roofing nails, 3kg of wooden nails and a shovel.

Training sessions included the use of the materials, flood and earthquake-resistant techniques, clearing silted land and the planting of flood-resistant crops.

Project Methodologies of the three responses

Initial consultations helped the Save the Children team to understand the cultural norms and practices which fed into the design of the WASH campaigns. Members of the communities were involved in identifying the most vulnerable families, the appropriate forms of relief required, and the safe and neutral sites for distribution of relief support. Community volunteers helped to conduct meetings within communities and encouraged community involvement in the various stages of distribution. Volunteers, especially young people, helped in the secure storage of relief materials and in crowd-management during of relief materials.

Oxfam employed the 'Community Self-Targeting Method' to identify the most vulnerable households: women-headed households, elderly people, people with disabilities, and pregnant and lactating mothers. In addition, twenty families were identified with members who required additional assistance. At the local level, the people directly affected by the emergency were integral to the design, delivery and evaluation of the response, as were partners, local administration and locally elected bodies:

- Selection of relief distribution points and locations;
- Establishment of feedback and complaint mechanisms;
- Provision of mobile numbers for general information.

In Nepal, Tearfund and partner INF had established criteria for identifying the most vulnerable and marginalised individuals and households and these were checked and agreed by the Banke Disaster Management Committee and the Rural Municipality office. Due to the project time-frame, INF were unable to select the households and were instead provided with a list of 240 households by the RM, in line with the Ministry of Home Affairs One Door Policy. Subsequent monitoring visits by INF staff concluded that, while all recipients match the criteria (including low-income status, limited income sources and damaged housing), they were not necessarily the most vulnerable households and some of the allocations may have been politically motivated.

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Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning

In India, Save's monitoring to ensure the correct beneficiaries received the appropriate support was undertaken continuously throughout the project through master rolls, coupons, and identification cards. Many families, however, either did not have, or had lost their, government-issue identification cards and had to be identified by the community. Complaints and feedback boxes were supplied at distribution sites with support on offer to those with limited literacy levels. Post-Distribution Monitoring surveys were conducted on a sample basis of ten per cent of beneficiaries who expressed satisfaction with the project and the items they had received.

In Bangladesh, three tiers of the monitoring system were established at the community, partner organisation and Oxfam. Monitoring of beneficiary selection processes tracked use of set criteria, quantity and quality of delivery, visibility of materials, cash amounts, utilisation of cash and establishment of an effective Complaint Response Mechanism system. In addition, implementing staff shared weekly progress updates, monitored market commodity prices before and after the cash distributions, and conducted Post Distribution Monitoring on a sample basis, and beneficiaries participated throughout the monitoring process.

In Nepal, the project's progress was monitored by Tearfund through regular reports submitted by INF, and through the documented visits to households by the CMs recruited for the project. Tearfund staff also carried out regular monitoring visits. For example, in one visit, Tearfund conducted six focus group discussions and one community meeting. Feedback from more than one hundred participants included:

- The combination of cash and inputs allowed households to meet their specific needs;
- The provision of stronger galvanised iron sheets instead of tarpaulin was appreciated;
- The new homes made people feel safer and more protected;
- The new tools were decent quality and easy to use.

Feedback mechanisms also included a display banner providing information on the project dates, working areas, number of households, the budget and toll-free hotline numbers. The RM office was the location for the distribution of cash, shelter and livelihood materials. Acting on feedback was instrumental in averting potential community tension particularly in the case of the four households who had not started house construction. INF had previously communicated that the second instalment would be disbursed to households once their houses had been built and technically approved. As these four households had been delayed by circumstances outwith their control, INF provided them with the second instalment.

Key Challenges

The main challenges derived from the scale of the floods, the vast numbers of people affected, and limited resources.

For the Save the Children team, the targeted villages were almost inaccessible. Being so remote, field teams had to either walk, up to ten kilometres daily, to reach the communities, or stay overnight in the villages. It was also very difficult to transport relief materials to such remote locations and, on occasions, local protests delayed deliveries of aid. For the Oxfam team, the continual heavy rainfall also made travel extremely difficult during the beneficiary selection process. In some cases, partners had to deploy other staff to cover gaps, or make additional journeys, thereby adding to the transport costs.

Local politics in all three countries also gave rise to tensions that the teams had to negotiate in order to deliver their responses. In India, where so many people needed support, and with so few aid organisations present in the area, it had been extremely difficult for Save the Children to make people understand that they could not support entire communities. In Bangladesh, tensions within communities and pressures brought by local community leaders

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caused initial delays. In both cases, meetings had to be conducted to explain to the communities the strict criteria by which support would be provided to a limited number of the most vulnerable families. Ultimately, the support of local government, community elders and leaders proved crucial in helping the teams gain acceptance within the communities and begin implementation of the projects.

A further challenge for Oxfam was in managing the bureaucratic processes to avoid duplication with other agencies working in the same areas. Oxfam, Pollisree and MJSKS shared relief distribution plans with the government, especially the Sub-District Administrators (Upazila Nirbahi Officers¹) and Union Parishad Chairmen², to ensure effective coordination as well as the engagement and cooperation of local leaders and institutions. The final beneficiary lists were cross-checked and endorsed by the relevant UP Chairmen and Upazila Nirbahi Officers who were also present during the relief distributions. Coordination at the national level was maintained with the Department of Disaster Management (DDM), UN Clusters, National Cash Working Group and the responding INGOs/NGOs.

In Nepal, the Ministry of Home Affairs had initially implemented a One Door Policy (ODP), prohibiting organisations from distributing relief directly to flood-affected communities. All relief materials were to be distributed through the District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC) which slowed down relief efforts. Eventually, the Banke Chief District Officer decided to allow NGOs to provide relief directly to communities as long as they coordinated with the DDRC. INF established effective coordination with the DDRC, attending the first public meeting held within twenty-four hours of the floods, as well as inputting into the regular cluster meetings.

Key Lessons

The involvement of the affected families was crucial to the successful implementation of all three responses. In India, engagement with local duty-bearers, *panchayat* representatives³ and members of the communities themselves helped in the timely distribution of relief materials. In addition, organising young people into volunteer groups during the distributions ensured smooth and conflict-free operations in the field. Investing in the capacity of project partner staff, and in partner staff during the last flood response, helped in meeting project deliverables in a timely manner and improved project efficacy and effectiveness this year.

The capacities of Oxfam's implementing partners increased through their involvement in the project. Partners gained more knowledge and experience of engaging and involving communities directly in humanitarian response and in beneficiary selection. Partners also increased their capacity to deliver best practice in cash transfer emergency programming, this was particularly beneficial to one partner who had more limited previous experience of this type of response.

Similarly, in Nepal, Tearfund's partner, INF, had no previous experience of cash-grant distributions. Tearfund guided and supported INF to put in procedures to minimise the potential security risks of distributing the cash. INF are now aware of the need to update their finance policy to ensure that they will be able to implement future relief and early recovery projects in a timely manner. Furthermore, to speed up the procurement process in this project, INF's finance department gave special permission for quotation and tender advertisements to be placed in local newspapers for one week's duration, rather than the obligatory fifteen days.

¹ Upazila Nirbahi Officer is the chief executive of an upazila (sub-district) administration.

² Union Parishad is the smallest, rural administrative unit in Bangladesh.

³ Panchayat is the grassroots-level of formalised local self-governance system in India at the village level

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Other lessons to note:

- Involvement of communities in all aspects of emergency response is essential to avoid any problems, misunderstandings or community tensions.
- Effective and timely planning is essential to minimise impacts on affected populations and engagement of community leaders is essential to progress beneficiary selection processes quickly.
- Effective coordination is a must to avoid duplication of areas, beneficiaries and resources and to maximise impact.
- Motivation of staff working on any kind of emergency response is essential since staff often work additional hours under pressure in extremely challenging conditions.
- Established policies and procedures on complaints management mechanisms are vital for handling complaints effectively and ensuring accountability to affected populations.
- Participation of affected communities was essential for appropriate identification of beneficiaries and resolution of any complaints or other queries.

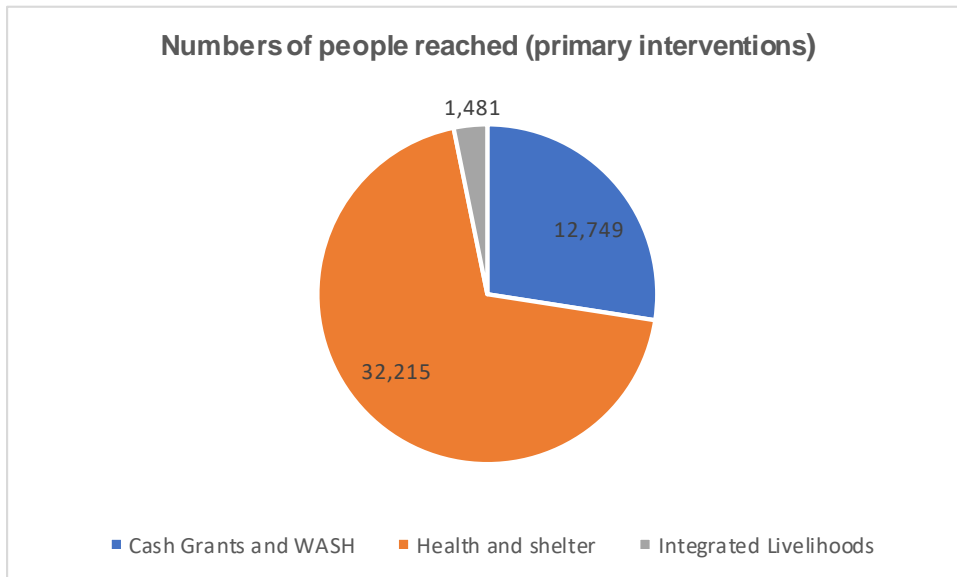
Oxfam, Bangladesh

Finance

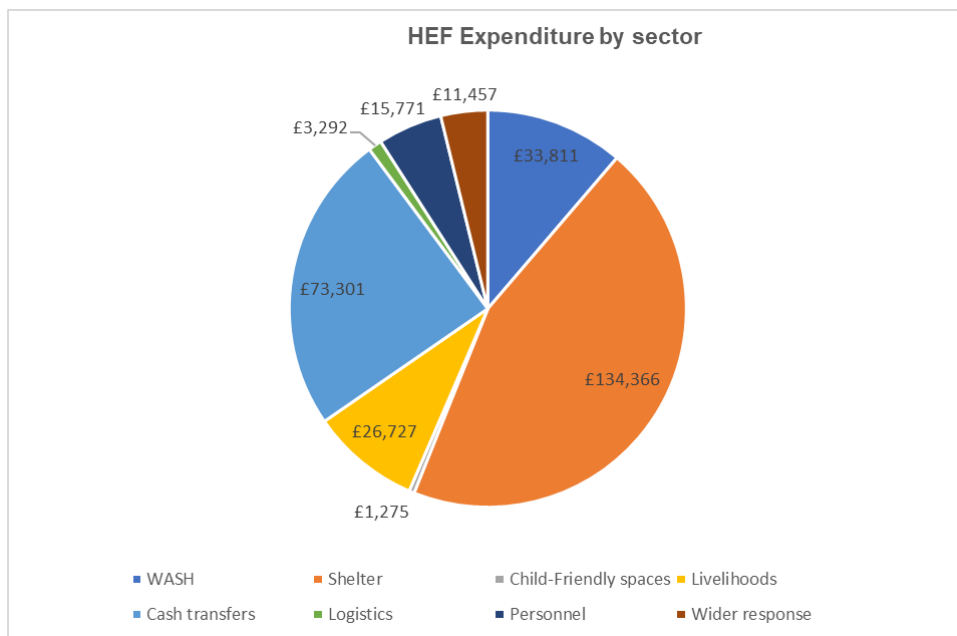
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	Save the Children	Oxfam	Tearfund
SUPPLIES/MATERIALS	94,580	80,611	94,289
WASH	26,501	7,068	
Shelter	66,804	-	65,814
Protection	1,275	-	
Livelihoods		-	26,727
Unconditional Cash-transfer & Vouchers		73,301	
Accountability to Affected Populations		242	1,748
LOGISTICS	708	1,430	1,154
Transport	708	568	648
Storage/security		-	109
Office		862	397
PERSONNEL	2,191	4,872	5,500
In-country locally engaged staff	2,191	4,872	5,067
In-country expatriate staff		-	433.00
Personal Support		1,204	2,004
In-country locally engaged staff: subsistence / travel		638	1,979
Communications		566	25
Contribution to wider response	2,521	11,883	
Contribution from organisation			- 2,947
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	100,000	100,000	100,000

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⁴ These figures are approximate and include people who have been supported through multiple interventions.