

# tool 54 Emergency Fund for Referrals in Eastern DRC

## Case study

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict has partnerships with several national NGOs in eastern DRC that monitor and report on grave violations in the framework of the MRM through a network of trained community volunteers. As part of these partnership projects, NGOs map service providers in their area of operation, establish relevant contacts and set up referral pathways for medical, psychosocial and legal assistance to victims. Two main challenges were identified at the very onset of these projects:


- 1) **Referrals:** while organizations knew who to refer victims to, it was sometimes difficult for victims to physically reach service providers when they lived in remote areas. Conversely, many service providers were not able to reach these areas.
- 2) **Protection:** over time, community volunteers trained to alert the organizations to cases of grave violations acquired a certain level of visibility within the community. While this visibility enables victims and families to easily reach out to volunteers and report incidents, it also puts volunteers at risk of threats or retaliation by armed actors. In extreme cases, relocation was necessary, which represented additional costs for the organization.

To address this challenge, an 'emergency fund' was built into all project budgets to cover costs directly associated with referrals and physical protection of individuals. Instructions and procedures for the use of the 'emergency fund' were composed and integrated into project funding agreements. They outline the general aims of the fund, as well as approval processes to be followed for certain costs. In order to allow organizations enough flexibility to decide on the use of the fund on a case-by-case basis, there is no list of eligible or ineligible costs, but rather general principles to guide decision-making:

- **Equity and non-discrimination:** the 'emergency fund' is limited. Organizations should manage it taking into account the timeframe and geographical range of the project and ensure that its allocation is equitable and non-discriminatory.
- **Expectation management:** the organization must avoid creating expectations that cannot be met among victims and their families. The child, the family and the community must understand that assistance is limited and exceptional.
- **Punctual use:** due to its limited capacity, the 'emergency fund' should not cover recurrent or continuous costs.
- **Exceptional use:** the 'emergency fund' should only be used if costs are unavoidable and if no other organization or person is able to cover them (in part or in their totality).

Some examples of costs covered by the 'emergency fund': transportation of a child to a provincial hospital for medical treatment, transportation of legal practitioners to a remote area to collect testimonies from communities affected by conflict violence, payment of living costs of a community monitor relocated to a provincial capital with the logistical assistance of peacekeeping forces due to imminent risk of personal retaliation by elements of a local armed group.

## related tools

-  **tool 53** – Guiding questions 'Mapping service providers and identifying referral pathways'