



A PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT

Making water, sanitation and hygiene safer through improved programming and services

Toolset 3-B
Linking WASH and protection

TS3-B-3 – Ensuring safe and equitable access to marginalised Malian social groups in refugee camps: Mauritania and Burkina Faso

<p>Context</p>	<p>Nearly 375,000 Malians fled the conflict in the north of their country in 2012. More than 145,000, the majority of them women and children, sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The refugee camps in Burkina Faso and Mauritania are located in remote areas with severe food and water shortages. The humanitarian response has met some, but far from all, of the refugees' vital needs.</p> <p>The refugee population is composed by a variety of ethnic groups such as the Touaregs, Arabs, Peuhls, Bambara and Sonrhais. Their particular social structures include the existence of marginalised groups that work as domestic servants for other refugees living in conditions of slavery or semi-slavery. This is the case of the 'Bellas' among the Touareg and the 'Haratin' among the Arabs, the two majority groups in the camps.</p> <p>As registration has been carried out by classifying individuals according to their ethnic group, there are no figures about the total number of these marginalised groups. The question of 'slavery' is considered to be a highly 'sensitive' issue, and has not been addressed openly by the different humanitarian actors in the camps. These vulnerable groups are not therefore included in the group of persons recognised as having special needs by UNHCR.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the response, Oxfam identified that the existence of these marginalised group presented a particular challenge and has been advocating for quality assistance and adequate protection for them.</p>
<p>Implementing organisations</p>	<p>Oxfam.</p>
<p>Description of good practices</p>	<p>Since April 2012, Oxfam has been providing a WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene promotion) response in the camps of Bassikonou in Mauritania and in Mentao and Goudebou in Burkina Faso. All WASH programmes aim to ensure that their actions are safe and conflict sensitive.</p> <p>This approach has permitted the teams, working in close contact with the communities, to identify the risks presented by the specific social structure in the camps in which a vulnerable group, the so-called domestic slaves, face threats of deprivation, violence and coercion.</p> <p>Examples of Oxfam strategies to ensure safe and equitable access are summarised below.</p>

Adapting the programme

Problem: Sanitation – the slaves/domestic servants were not allowed to use the latrines by their ‘masters’, creating a risk of violence for women in particular.

Solution:

- Carried out a sensitisation campaign about the public health risk of open defecation and the risk of contamination/illness to ALL people in the camp if only one person does not use the latrine; and
- Construction of special latrines for vulnerable groups.

Problem: Distribution of non-food items was not carried out equitably; it was hard to reach domestic workers with such items.

Solution: Carried out a sensitisation campaign asking if households had domestic workers or not. Provided sensitisation on the importance of the domestic worker having access to hygiene products, as they were responsible for the cleanliness of the house. Post-distribution monitoring was carried house by house to check on access (NB: it remained challenging to reach domestic workers during post-distribution monitoring).

Problem: Members of vulnerable/marginalised groups were not present in hygiene promotion activities.

Solution:

- Ensured participation of domestic working women in hygiene promotion sensitisation groups by pointing out possible risks of their not taking part for the health of the whole family.
- Recruited female community mobilisers. However, this met with mixed success:
 - In Mentao (Burkina) a woman belonging to the Bella community was recruited, but she was not able to cope with the pressure and resigned;
 - In Bassi (Mauritania) the team was able to recruit seven persons (five women and two men).

Problem: Lack of information received from domestic workers.

Solution: A complaint mechanism system was set up that included specific meeting points and focus group discussions for domestic workers to participate and speak freely.

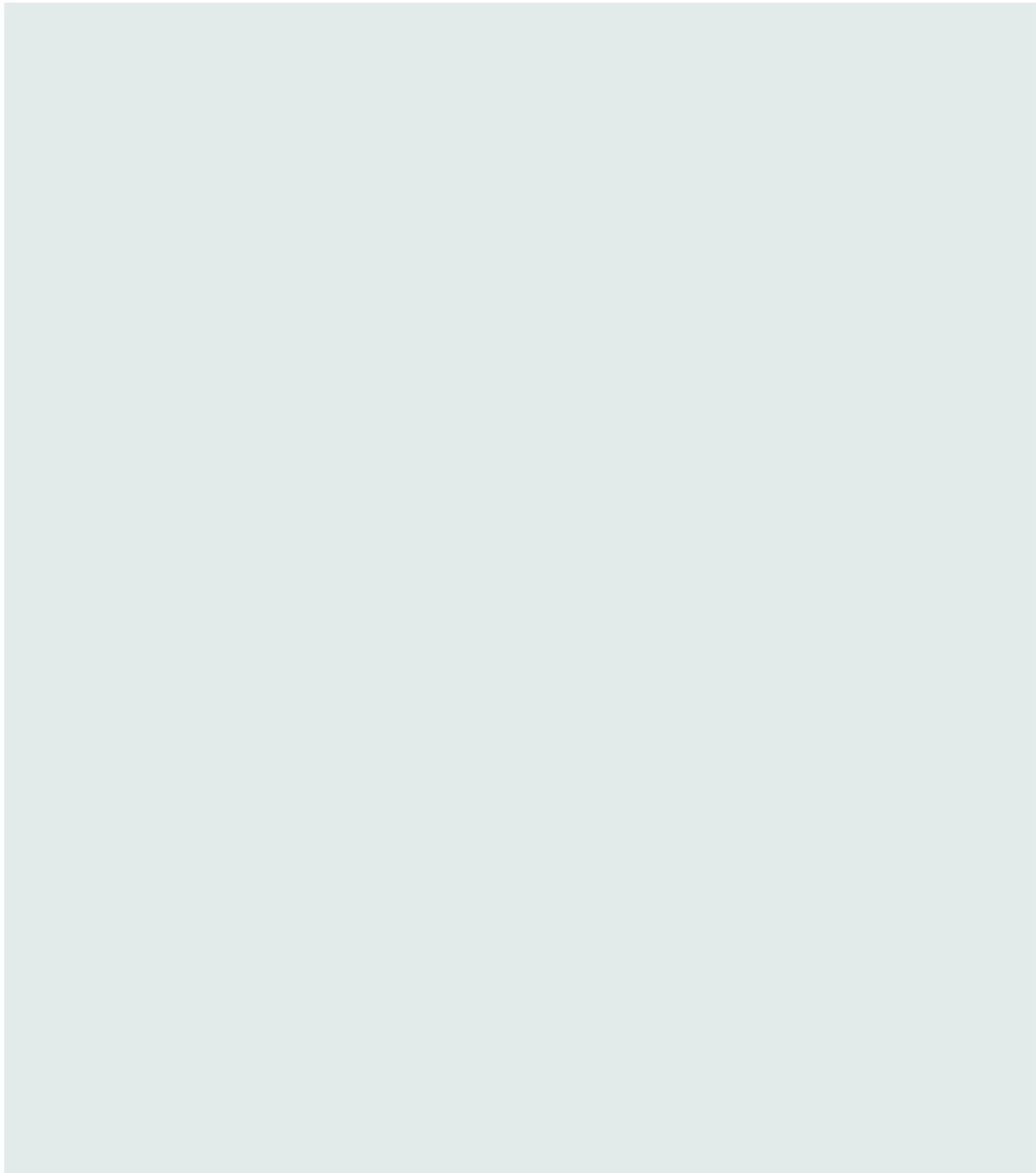
In addition, Oxfam also undertook the following activities:

Co-ordination and self-referral

Set up a referral system to ensure access for the refugees, including the domestic workers, to other programmes:

- a. Access to education: identifying minors (boys and girls) working as domestic servants; and
- b. Identifying cases of forced marriage, sexual violence.

	<p>Advocacy</p> <p>a. Lobbied with UNHCR and other humanitarian actors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — To ensure equitable assistance to marginalised communities deprived of access (such as the Bella and Haratin communities); — To prioritise addressing protection threats to refugee populations; — To provide disaggregated data by sex, age and ethnicity; — For regular co-ordination meetings on child protection and gender-based violence. <p>b. Prepared an Oxfam paper on <i>Mali's conflict refugees, Responding to a growing crisis</i>. Dissemination was undertaken at national and international levels.</p> <p>Trainings</p> <p>Protection training workshops were held for Oxfam staff in Mauritania and Burkina.</p> <p>Human resources</p> <p>Recruitment of a protection officer in the camp of Bassikonou in Mauritania (employed for 8 months) and in Burkina (employed for 4 months).</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance by humanitarian actors to address the question of 'slavery', as it is considered too sensitive; • Refugees consider the traditional structure to be part of their culture; • After distribution, the 'slaves' have to give their rations to their masters; • The services available to provide assistance to victims of GBV are insufficient or fragmented; • Lack of disaggregated data; and • Lack of participation of Bella and Haratin in community structures.
Recomendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to carry out protection and gender analysis during needs assessment, followed by continuous monitoring; • In such challenging contexts it is important to recruit a protection officer (in this case, they were recruited six months after initiating the programme); • There is a need to adopt creative strategies in safe programming and to document good practices, sharing with other actors so that they might learn and build capacity on good practices; and • It is important to train the WASH team on protection and gender mainstreaming.
References/links	<p>Duch, P. and S. Carter (2013) OXFAM-Intermon. Personal communication.</p>



**VIOLENCE
GENDER
& WASH**

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