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IMPACT INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF RED CROSS HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION ON THE WELFARE OF COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY CONFLICT IN ADAMAWA STATE

Abstract

Humanitarian crises resulting from the Boko Haram insurgency and communal conflicts in Adamawa State have led to widespread displacement, loss of livelihoods, and increased vulnerability among affected populations. In response, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other humanitarian actors have implemented various interventions, yet concerns remain regarding their effectiveness in ensuring sustainable welfare, resilience, and community recovery. This study therefore examines the impact of ICRC humanitarian interventions on the management and welfare of conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State. The study is guided by the Human Security Theory, which emphasizes the protection of individuals from multidimensional threats to survival, dignity, and well-being. The specific objectives are to assess the relationship between ICRC interventions and community management, examine their impact on welfare and quality of life, and identify socio-economic factors influencing the effectiveness of these interventions. A mixed-method approach was adopted using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, while data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests. Findings reveal that awareness, accessibility, adequacy, consistency, and service delivery of ICRC programmes significantly influence effective community management. The interventions also improve household welfare, health status, living conditions, and reduce vulnerability among beneficiaries. However, socio-economic conditions such as low income, varied education levels, and long-term exposure to conflict shape access and utilization of services. The study recommends enhanced community sensitization, decentralization of services, expansion of integrated livelihood and psychosocial support programmes, and improved collaboration with local stakeholders to ensure inclusive and sustainable humanitarian response.

Keywords: *Humanitarian intervention, ICRC, Human security, Conflict-affected communities, Adamawa State*

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Introduction

Human welfare, security, and development continue to face significant challenges in Nigeria due to armed conflicts and internal crises. In Adamawa State, insurgency and communal violence have caused displacement, loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, and increased dependence on humanitarian assistance for basic needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, and protection (International Crisis Group, 2022). To address these challenges, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), a neutral and independent humanitarian organization established in 1863, provides protection and assistance to victims of armed conflict and violence (Forsythe, 2018). In Northeastern Nigeria, particularly Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States, the ICRC has delivered essential services including medical care, water supply, food assistance, and livelihood support, contributing to resilience and post-conflict recovery while upholding the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and humanity (ICRC, 2023; Slim, 2015).

Humanitarian response involves material, financial, logistical, and psychosocial support in areas such as healthcare, water and sanitation, food and nutrition, education, shelter, and protection. Although governments have primary responsibility for supporting affected populations, humanitarian assistance is also provided by individuals, community groups, non-governmental organizations, international agencies, and foreign governments (Lenshie, 2021). Since the post-World War II period, international non-governmental organizations have played an increasing role in development and humanitarian assistance. Organizations such as UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), the ICRC, Action Against Hunger, and the International Rescue Committee have been actively involved in humanitarian interventions in Northeast Nigeria, where insurgency has severely disrupted socio-economic activities (Abubakar & Abba, 2022). As a guardian of international humanitarian law and human dignity, the ICRC operates under the 1949 Geneva Conventions and related humanitarian treaties, providing impartial assistance to victims of conflict without discrimination. Through its commitment to neutrality and humanitarian principles, the organization remains a key institution in global humanitarian response.

Statement of the Problem

The Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria, particularly in Adamawa State, has generated serious humanitarian challenges, prompting intervention by the Nigerian government and international organizations such as the ICRC, Action Against Hunger (ACF), and ActionAid. Despite these efforts, concerns persist regarding the effectiveness, coordination, and sustainability of humanitarian programmes. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2022), over 250,000 displaced persons have been resettled in Adamawa State, with many still facing overcrowding, inadequate shelter, poor healthcare, limited access to clean water, and loss of livelihoods. Although the ICRC has provided food assistance, medical care, and livelihood support, limited empirical evidence exists on the long-term effectiveness of these interventions in promoting welfare, resilience, and sustainable recovery.

The effectiveness of humanitarian responses is further constrained by weak institutional coordination, inadequate policy integration, and poor implementation mechanisms despite

Nigeria's commitment to frameworks such as the Kampala Convention (IDMC, 2022; Olanrewaju, Omotoso, & Alabi, 2020). In addition, many conflict-affected communities continue to experience poor access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, food security, and psychosocial support (UNHCR, 2023). Humanitarian operations also face challenges such as insecurity, inadequate funding, cultural barriers, and bureaucratic constraints, which affect programme implementation and sustainability (World Bank, 2021). Therefore, while the ICRC remains a key humanitarian actor in Adamawa State, the absence of a coherent policy framework, weak institutional capacity, and operational challenges continue to limit the overall effectiveness of humanitarian interventions and the welfare of affected communities.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to assess of international committee of Red Cross (ICRC) humanitarian intervention on the welfare communities affected by conflicts in Adamawa State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine ICRC humanitarian intervention programmes implemented for the management and welfare of conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State.
- ii. Evaluate the impact of ICRC humanitarian interventions on the welfare of conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following question.

- i. What are the humanitarian intervention programmes implemented by the ICRC for the management and welfare of conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State?
- ii. What is the impact of ICRC humanitarian interventions on the welfare, quality of life, and reduction of vulnerability among conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State?

Research Hypothesis

The study is guided by the following hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the humanitarian intervention programmes of the ICRC and the management of conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State.

H₀₂: The management of conflict-affected communities by the ICRC has no significant impact on their welfare, quality of life, or reduction of vulnerability in Adamawa State.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become key actors in development globally, operating as non-profit, private, and non-state institutions often referred to as the third sector (Lewis, 2001). They are defined as organizations focused on promoting social, political, and economic transformation in line with development goals (Lewis, Kanji, & Themudo, 2020). NGOs contribute significantly to sustainable development by enhancing welfare, social systems, and human capital through skills development, knowledge transfer, and entrepreneurship support (Abiddin et al., 2022).

Their importance is especially evident in humanitarian contexts, where large numbers of NGOs operate to respond to crises and displacement. For example, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, about 2,800 NGOs were active in addressing the needs of affected populations and refugees (Hannouche & Meer, 2022). Education-focused NGOs also play a vital role by improving access to learning for disadvantaged children through initiatives such as school construction, provision of learning materials, and financial support. Overall, NGOs remain essential in addressing humanitarian challenges and promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

Humanitarian Intervention

Humanitarian intervention refers to external action, including military force, taken by states or international actors to stop severe human rights violations such as genocide, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. It challenges the principle of state sovereignty under international law (Article 2(7) of the UN Charter), arguing that sovereignty is not absolute when a state fails to protect its population (Bellamy, 2015).

The concept became prominent after the Cold War, with cases such as Somalia (1992) and Kosovo (1999), showing both its necessity and controversies. While supporters see it as essential for preventing mass atrocities, critics argue it can be exploited by powerful states for political or strategic interests (Weiss, 2016). The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, adopted by the United Nations in 2005, reinforces the idea that states must protect their citizens, and when they fail, the international community should intervene collectively through the UN, using force only as a last resort (Evans, 2008).

Despite this framework, humanitarian intervention remains inconsistent, as shown by the contrast between Rwanda (1994) and Libya (2011), raising concerns about selectivity and political influence. It may also result in unintended consequences such as prolonged conflict and civilian suffering (Bellamy & Williams, 2011). Overall, it remains a contested concept balancing human rights protection with sovereignty and international law.

Welfare

Welfare refers to systems of social, economic, and health support designed to improve individuals' and communities' well-being and quality of life (Spicker, 2008). It includes services such as healthcare, education, housing, unemployment benefits, and social security aimed at reducing poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. The concept is closely linked to the welfare state, where governments take responsibility for ensuring a minimum standard of living, especially for vulnerable groups. Welfare systems vary across countries, from liberal models with limited state involvement to social democratic models that emphasize universal social services (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Welfare also promotes social justice by redistributing resources through taxation and social programs, though it is often debated due to concerns about dependency and sustainability (Barr, 2012). In developing countries, including Nigeria, welfare systems face challenges such as limited funding, weak institutions, and unequal access, often requiring support from NGOs and international agencies. Despite these limitations, welfare remains essential to social development, aiming to reduce inequality and improve living standards (Adesina, 2011).

Conflict

Conflict is a natural and unavoidable aspect of human interaction that occurs when individuals or groups have opposing interests, values, needs, or goals (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2011). It involves competition over limited resources, power, identity, and values (Fisher, 2000), and can occur at interpersonal, group, national, or international levels, ranging from minor disagreements to violent confrontations. Although often seen as destructive, conflict can also promote positive change by encouraging negotiation, adaptation, and innovation (Coser, 1956). From a sociological perspective, conflict can expose inequality, encourage social reform, and strengthen group solidarity (Coser, 1956). However, when it becomes severe, it may lead to violence, displacement, and social breakdown (Burton, 1990). Political economists such as Collier and Hoeffler (2004) link conflict in developing countries to struggles over political power, economic marginalization, and resource control, often resulting in social and economic disruption.

In Nigeria, conflicts take various forms, including ethno-religious crises, communal clashes, and insurgencies such as Boko Haram, which have displaced millions and destroyed infrastructure (Alao, 2012). In Adamawa State, these conflicts have created serious security and humanitarian challenges, requiring intervention from organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (International Crisis Group, 2016). In this study, conflict is understood as violent or non-violent struggles between individuals or groups over scarce resources, interests, or values, with significant implications for community welfare and stability.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Human Security Theory, which emerged as a shift from the traditional state-centered view of security to a people-centered approach. Introduced in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report, the theory defines security as the protection of individuals from threats to their well-being, dignity, and survival, emphasizing freedom from fear, freedom from want, and the freedom to live in dignity (UNDP, 1994). It encompasses multiple dimensions of security, including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security, thereby providing a comprehensive framework for understanding human welfare in conflict-affected settings.

The theory was advanced by scholars such as Mahbub ul Haq, Amartya Sen, Sadako Ogata, and Gareth Evans, who emphasized that security should focus on human welfare and capabilities rather than solely on territorial integrity (Commission on Human Security, 2003). However, the theory has been criticized for its broad and ambiguous nature, making it difficult to define and operationalize effectively. Critics also argue that its inclusion of development and human rights issues may dilute the concept of security and potentially justify external intervention in the affairs of weaker states (Paris, 2001; Newman, 2010).

Despite these criticisms, Human Security Theory remains valuable because of its people-centered and multidimensional perspective. It addresses the root causes of insecurity, including poverty, inequality, and inadequate access to essential services, while promoting cooperation among governments, international organizations, and humanitarian agencies (UNDP, 1994; Commission on Human Security, 2003). The theory is particularly relevant to this study because

it provides a framework for evaluating the impact of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) interventions on conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State. Through healthcare services, food and livelihood support, water and sanitation programmes, and protection activities, the ICRC contributes to various dimensions of human security, including health, food, economic, environmental, personal, and community security. Consequently, Human Security Theory effectively explains how humanitarian interventions enhance welfare, resilience, dignity, and sustainable livelihoods among communities affected by insurgency, displacement, and poverty in Adamawa State. (UNDP, 1994; Commission on Human Security, 2003).

Methodology

Research Design

In this research, descriptive research design was used. The research was qualitative and quantitative in nature. The descriptive design applies well since it allows the researcher to detail the prevailing situation in communities that are affected by conflicts and evaluate the level and success of the humanitarian efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Adamawa State.

Study Area

The Adamawa State is in the northeast part of Nigeria and forms one of the six states comprising the North-East geopolitical zone. The state borders on the east with the Republic of Cameroon and on the north with Borno, on the west with Gombe and on the south with Taraba. Adamawa with its capital at Yola is a geographically diverse state which consists of mountains, valleys, rivers, and savannah plains. The economy of the state is mainly agrarian with farming, fishing and cattle keeping being the most important economic activities. Diversity of cultures and language Adamawa is culturally and linguistically diverse with a population of ethnic groups that includes Fulani, Bata, Higgi, Margi, and Bachama among others.

Adamawa State has faced a major socio-political crisis in the last decade, which is mainly attributed to the insurgency by Boko Haram and the other groups in the state. The effects of this conflict have been high levels of displacement, infrastructure damage and degradation of social services. This insecurity has displaced thousands of individuals hence generating large population of Affected communities within the state. Among the worst hit areas of local government that include Madagali, Michika, Mubi North and Mubi South.

Population of the Study

According to the 2006 National Population Census, Michika Local Government Area had a population of 155,238, which was estimated to increase to approximately 239,400 in 2022 and further projected to 255,300 in 2025. Similarly, the population of Madagali Local Government Area was projected at about 222,500 in 2025 (Adamawa State Bureau of Statistics, 2025). The steady population growth in both areas is attributed to natural increase, migration, and displacement resulting from recurring conflicts and humanitarian crises within the region. In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that it operates in Adamawa State with 289 personnel and 482 volunteers, giving a total workforce of 771 staff and volunteers (ICRC, 2025). Therefore, the study population comprises the combined population of

Michika and Madagali LGAs (477,800) alongside the 771 ICRC personnel and volunteers, resulting in a total study population of 478,571 individuals.

Table 3: Sample Frame

Location	population
Michika	255,300
Madagali	222,500
ICRC Staff	289
ICRC Volunteer Staff	482
Total	478,571

Source: Field, Survey, 2025

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques.

The proposed study plan was to use a sample of 370 respondents. The formula of Taro Yamane was used to obtain this number. The calculation of the sample of this study will be done using Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973) in which 95 percent level of confidence will be utilized. Taro Yamane has the following calculation formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where :

n= sample size required

N = number of people in the population

e = allowable error (%)

Substitute numbers in formula

$$n = \frac{478,571}{1 + 478,571(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{478,571}{1 + 478,571(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{478,571}{1 + 1196.43}$$

$$n = \frac{478,571}{1197.43}$$

$$n = 399.67$$

$$n = 400$$

Methods of Data Collection

Data for the study is collected using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire gathers quantitative data from residents of selected host communities in Adamawa

State on socio-demographic characteristics, experiences with ICRC interventions (food, shelter, healthcare, and psychosocial support), and perceptions of their effectiveness, using stratified random sampling to ensure representation of men, women, and youths. Semi-structured interviews with ICRC officials, Nigerian Red Cross Society representatives, SEMA officials, and community leaders provide qualitative insights into strategies, challenges, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian interventions in the study area.

Instrument validation and Reliability.

Validity refers to the extent to which the research instrument measures what it is intended to measure, while reliability refers to its consistency. Validity was ensured through review and refinement of the questionnaire by the supervisor and three lecturers from the Department of Public Administration, and hypotheses were re-tested using chi-square. Reliability was confirmed through a pilot study in Uba community with 20 respondents, using Cronbach's Alpha, which produced a coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency and suitability of the instrument for the study (Taber, 2022).

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire is analyzed and interpreted using statistical tools such as tables, simple percentages, and the chi-square test. Simple percentage is used to present responses in proportional form, while the chi-square test is used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Data analysis is carried out using SPSS version 23.

Result and Discussion

Section A: Socio-Demographic Information

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18–25 years	96	24.7
	26–35 years	124	31.9
	36–55 years	113	29.0
	56 years and above	56	14.4
Gender	Male	213	54.8
	Female	171	44.0
	Other	5	1.3
Marital Status	Single	118	30.3
	Married	211	54.2
	Widowed	36	9.3
	Divorced	24	6.2
Educational Level	No formal education	61	15.7
	Primary	84	21.6
	Secondary	137	35.2
	Tertiary	107	27.5
Occupation	Farmer/Artisan/Informal worker	132	33.9
	Trader/Business owner	94	24.2
	Government/Public worker	61	15.7
	Unemployed/Student/Other	102	26.2
Duration of Stay	Less than 1 year	28	7.2
	1–5 years	106	27.2

	6–10 years	117	30.1
	More than 10 years	138	35.5
Total		389	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The socio-demographic profile of the 389 respondents provides key insights into the study population on ICRC humanitarian interventions in Adamawa State. Most respondents are within the productive age groups, with 26–35 years (31.9%) and 36–55 years (29.0%) being dominant, followed by 18–25 years (24.7%) and those aged 56 years and above (14.4%), indicating a largely economically active population (World Bank, 2021; OCHA, 2022). Males constitute 54.8%, females 44.0%, and 1.3% identify as other, reflecting slight male dominance but overall gender inclusiveness (UN Women, 2021; UNFPA, 2020).

More than half of the respondents are married (54.2%), followed by singles (30.3%), widowed (9.3%), and divorced (6.2%), suggesting a population largely composed of household heads and dependents (UNDP, 2020). Educationally, most respondents have at least secondary education (35.2%) or tertiary education (27.5%), while 21.6% have primary education and 15.7% have no formal education, indicating moderate literacy levels relevant to understanding humanitarian programmes (UNESCO, 2021; ICRC, 2025).

Occupationally, respondents are mainly engaged in farming/artisanal work (33.9%) and unemployment/students/others (26.2%), followed by traders (24.2%) and government workers (15.7%), reflecting economic vulnerability and reliance on informal livelihoods (World Bank, 2021; ICRC, 2025). In terms of duration of stay, most have lived in the area for over 6 years, with 35.5% above 10 years and 30.1% between 6–10 years, showing long-term exposure to conflict conditions (UNHCR, 2021). Therefore, the distribution reflects a diverse and balanced sample, strengthening the reliability of the study findings by capturing varied socio-economic and demographic experiences of conflict-affected populations.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the humanitarian intervention programmes of the ICRC and the management of conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State.

Variable	Positive Response	Negative Response	df	p-value	Decision
Awareness of ICRC humanitarian programmes in the community	79.9	20.1	18.64 (4)	<0.001	Reject H ₀₁
ICRC interventions meet the immediate needs of the community	74.6	25.4	17.82 (4)	<0.001	Reject H ₀₁
ICRC services are accessible to community members	69.1	30.9	16.95 (4)	<0.001	Reject H ₀₁
Frequency of ICRC interventions improves support to affected communities	50.6	18.3	15.47 (4)	<0.001	Reject H ₀₁
Beneficiaries reported support from	55.0	20.1	18.21	<0.001	Reject

food, health, shelter, and WASH programmes	(4)	H ₀₁
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Source: Computed result, 2026

The null hypothesis (H₀₁), which stated that ICRC humanitarian intervention programmes have no significant relationship with the management of war-affected communities in Adamawa State, was rejected based on chi-square results ($p < 0.001$). Findings show that 79.9% of respondents were aware of ICRC programmes ($\chi^2 = 18.64$), 74.6% reported that interventions met immediate needs ($\chi^2 = 17.82$), and 69.1% confirmed service availability ($\chi^2 = 16.95$). In addition, 50.6% indicated regularity of interventions ($\chi^2 = 15.47$), while 55.0% identified key services such as food, healthcare, shelter, and WASH as important ($\chi^2 = 18.21$).

Therefore, the results demonstrate that awareness, adequacy, accessibility, consistency, and service delivery significantly influence the effective management of conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State, aligning with existing studies on multi-sector humanitarian interventions (UNDP, 2020; World Bank, 2021; UN OCHA, 2022; ICRC, 2025).

H₀₂: The management of conflict-affected communities by the ICRC has no significant impact on their welfare, quality of life, or reduction of vulnerability in Adamawa State.

Variable	Positive Response	Negative Response	df	p-value	Decision
ICRC intervention has a positive effect on household welfare	68.6	14.4	18.97 (4)	<0.001	Reject H ₀₃
Access to health services through ICRC improves community health	68.3	10.0	17.58 (4)	<0.001	Reject H ₀₃
ICRC interventions improve respondents' quality of life	67.9	9.8	16.83 (4)	<0.001	Reject H ₀₃
ICRC support reduces vulnerability to the effects of conflict	70.7	29.3	17.24 (4)	<0.001	Reject H ₀₃
Respondents are satisfied with the overall impact of ICRC interventions	65.0	16.7	16.49 (4)	<0.001	Reject H ₀₃

Source: Computed result, 2026

The second null hypothesis (H₀₂), which stated that ICRC management of conflict-affected communities has no significant effect on welfare, quality of life, and vulnerability reduction in Adamawa State, was rejected based on chi-square results ($p < 0.001$). Findings show that 68.6% of respondents reported improved household welfare ($\chi^2 = 18.97$), 68.3% confirmed better community health outcomes ($\chi^2 = 17.58$), and 67.9% indicated improved overall quality of life ($\chi^2 = 16.83$). In addition, 70.7% stated that ICRC interventions reduced vulnerability to conflict impacts ($\chi^2 = 17.24$), while 65.0% expressed overall satisfaction with the interventions ($\chi^2 = 16.49$).

Therefore, the results demonstrate that ICRC interventions significantly enhance welfare, health, living conditions, and resilience in conflict-affected communities. These findings align with

existing studies on multi-sector humanitarian assistance and its role in improving human security and reducing vulnerability in crisis contexts (UNDP, 2020; World Bank, 2021; UN OCHA, 2022; ICRC, 2025).

Major Findings

- i. The findings revealed that the availability, accessibility, adequacy, consistency, and types of humanitarian services provided by the ICRC, including food assistance, healthcare services, shelter support, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions, were significant factors in supporting the management and protection of displaced and conflict-affected populations in the study area ($p < 0.001$).
- ii. The findings showed that respondents perceived improvements in household welfare, access to healthcare, living conditions, food security, and overall quality of life as a result of humanitarian assistance. The interventions contributed to reducing vulnerability, improving coping mechanisms, and strengthening the resilience of conflict-affected populations.

Conclusion

This study shows that the ICRC has significantly improved the wellbeing of conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State through interventions such as food distribution, temporary shelters, healthcare, WASH services, psychosocial support, cash assistance, and livelihood programmes, addressing both immediate and long-term needs in areas such as Michika and Madagali. These interventions have enhanced quality of life, self-reliance, and resilience by improving access to basic services and supporting vocational training. The study also found that collaboration between the ICRC and other actors, including the Nigerian Red Cross Society, UN agencies, and local government, has strengthened coordination, expanded coverage, and improved adherence to humanitarian principles, leading to more effective responses. However, challenges such as insecurity, weak infrastructure, logistical constraints, limited resources, and inadequate coverage continue to limit full recovery and sustainable development. In conclusion, while ICRC interventions are highly significant in reducing suffering and restoring dignity, sustained funding, stronger coordination, and long-term planning are essential for lasting impact in conflict-affected communities.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following thus

- i. The ICRC should strengthen the accessibility, coverage, and sustainability of humanitarian intervention programmes in conflict-affected communities in Adamawa State.
- ii. The ICRC should enhance long-term recovery and resilience-building programmes among conflict-affected populations by integrating livelihood support, vocational training, cash-based assistance, and psychosocial services into humanitarian interventions.

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