



## PROTECTION & PRIORITISING THE MOST VULNERABLE PERSONS IN THE UKRAINIAN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

**WHO IS THIS DOCUMENT FOR?** This document provides guidance for humanitarian actors on how to address protection and vulnerability in their work, and highlights aspects to consider in operations to ensure a protection focused humanitarian response in Ukraine (both Government (GCA) and Non-Government (NGCA) controlled areas.

### ALL CONFLICT AFFECTED PEOPLE ARE IN NEED – WHY A PROTECTION AND VULNERABILITY FOCUS?

**THOSE MOST IN NEED.** Millions of people in Ukraine, both in government and non-government controlled areas have been affected by the recent conflict. Within populations, certain individuals and groups may be more vulnerable than others. It is necessary, and a priority, to identify such individuals or groups, and to take measures which address their specific vulnerability. When providing humanitarian assistance, there is a global agreement that all humanitarian actors should focus on those most in need.

**NEED FOR PRIORITISATION.** It will take time and resources to reach everyone and prioritization is necessary to decide who to support; where (geographically) to support; when to support (start with whom) and what type of assistance. Prioritization should be done bearing in mind protection and vulnerability concerns i.e. although the plan is to reach all some have more urgent need for support.

**AVOID UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES AND FUTURE PROTECTION ISSUES.** Ex: how assistance is provided and to whom can create tension among IDPs and host communities. It is essential that the community understands how prioritization was done, and it is very important to discuss and communicate with the people we work with.

**ENSURING THAT YOU HAVE THE FULL PICTURE.** If you include disaggregated data [details of gender, age, marital status, disability, economic situation etc.] in assessments and when deciding on who-where-what- to support, the project will be based on a fuller picture related to needs.

### WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF VULNERABILITY?

A person is not vulnerable from birth but life circumstances (e.g. poverty, education) and/or discrimination based on other characteristics (gender, disability, age etc.) and therefore is not able to enjoy equal access to human rights and may be more vulnerable and/or marginalised.

- People are, or become more vulnerable due to a combination of physical, social, environmental and political factors, and vulnerability is not a fixed category. Not everyone with same characteristics will experience the same level of vulnerability, i.e. being a woman does not make the person vulnerable per se but a pregnant woman whose husband was killed and whose house has been damaged will have protection concerns.
- Responding to 'specific needs' of the elderly, chronically ill, persons with disabilities, lactating or pregnant women means meeting their human rights to shelter, food, health and education and this sometimes require the humanitarian actor to have a stronger focus on certain groups or individuals.

### CAN YOU PROVIDE A LIST OF THOSE MOST VULNERABLE THAT SHOULD BE PRIORITISED?

There is no generic prioritisation list. Each organization has to assess vulnerability for each project at the planning stage before humanitarian response is initiated.

### ASPECTS TO CONSIDER WHEN LOOKING TO ASSIST PEOPLE MOST IN NEED?

**Assessments and surveys** – ensure that data and details related to vulnerable groups (according to gender and age) are included so you can identify them and address their needs

**Community participation** – ensure it is broad based (men/women/disabled/elderly/children) in all phases of the program: (i) assessment phase of who to support; (ii) in deciding what type of assistance; (iii) when and how information is shared with beneficiaries; and (iv) during implementation.

## THE BELOW HIGHLIGHTS SOME KEY PROTECTION FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING (TO HELP YOU TO PRIORITISE)

- People from the most conflict affected areas [also consider who is most vulnerable within this area] including areas where access is difficult.
- IDPs and conflict affected population in NGCA [Equality of responses; avoid creating a divide between groups for instance by considering host communities]
- A main aspect is ensuring accountability mechanisms [ensure that you have set up a way for those receiving support to give feedback and identify gaps]
- Our actions can have positive or negative effects. Anticipate these effects [Do no harm]

### DISPLACED PERSONS

#### Why?

While not all IDPs are necessarily vulnerable, displacement can increase vulnerability, especially for persons at risk based on their profile, life circumstances and lack of support networks.

Please consider the following factors if prioritizing the displaced:

- Duration of displacement: have their resources (savings) been depleted? How to cover cost for long-time displacement?
- Does the person or the family have income?
- Are they receiving any kind of assistance (Government, NGOs, etc.)?
- Access to documentation and registration? Are there groups of people who may not have their documents (Roma, destroyed in the conflict) and therefore cannot register?
- Unregistered displaced persons: some might be more at risk and in need of support (e.g. unaccompanied minors unable to register)
- Displaced persons in need of institutional care
- Displaced persons who have gone through traumatic events and have faced human rights violations.
- Displaced persons at risk of eviction.
- Ensure IDPs are disaggregated by sex and age for better analysis of issues, risks and experience.

### PERSONS LIVING ALONG CONTACT LINE

#### Why?

They have different needs living in areas under continuous shelling and presenting threat to life (including Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)). They are likely to have less access to assistance and services (disruption of services) and more difficulty to ensure their rights (ex: how to ensure compensation if the house is destroyed?) Persons living along the contact line are going through traumatic events and may have faced human rights violations.

Please consider the following factors if prioritising persons living along the contact line:

- Are they receiving humanitarian assistance?
- Is there an access issue? i.e. can humanitarian workers access their village or can they leave their village to access assistance? If not, how to address this in order to reach people in need?
- Will **our actions** expose the people targeted to harm? i.e. are we putting them at risk vis-à-vis their environment?
- Gender and age factors must be considered due to the different risks that specific groups may be exposed to.
- What is the situation of people (children, older persons, disabled etc.) living in institutions?

### PEOPLE LIVING IN NGCA

#### Why?

Persons in NGCA and near the contact lines may be among the most vulnerable. They face human rights violations including major protection concerns such as right to life (shelling, mines and UXOs); economic isolation with the cut in payments of social entitlements and restricted movement across the contact line; absence of local authorities in some villages.

Access to fundamental economic and social rights, including those related to an adequate standard of living, and the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health may be curtailed by current circumstances. Access to medication has become an issue (shortage of medical supplies for TB, HIV, Opioid Substitute Therapy, for chronic illnesses (diabetes, haemodialysis)

Please consider these factors if prioritising people living in NGCA:

- Are the persons suffering under additional economic hardship? Can they use their farmland? Lost their job?
- Is the area or target group covered by assistance?
- Rural or isolated villages may be receiving less attention
- Have family members been killed/injured during the conflict?
- Have members of the families been detained or are missing?
- Persons living in institutions which have been cut off from services and staff payments may need additional attention
- The gender and age related issues that may affect their experiences.
- Do people have particular issues when it comes to housing, land and property (HLP) rights?

## WOMEN AND GIRLS<sup>1</sup>

### Why?

Women and girls may face protection risks particular to their gender (trafficking, harmful survival mechanisms such as survival sex).

Please consider the following groups if prioritizing women and girls:

- single heads of families
- widows, particularly if husband has been killed due to the conflict
- unaccompanied girls
- women who are survivors of violence
- pregnant and lactating women.

<sup>1</sup> (Including women who face protection risks particular to their gender, whether they are single heads of families, widowed, unaccompanied girls or accompanied by a male family member, as well as women who are survivors of violence)

## PEOPLE WITH SOCIO-ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

### Why?

Their pre-existing poverty may have worsened following the war/displacement and may have been triggered by these conditions.

Please consider the following factors if prioritizing people with socio-economic hardship:

- Working-age unemployed people with 0-2 children receiving neither benefits nor humanitarian aid
- Main breadwinner killed, injured or disabled
- People whose livelihoods suffered: farmland impacted by ERWs/ Factory workers whose workplace no longer operates
- Persons living in sub-standard accommodation which could trigger displacement and other risks
- Does their gender impact their experience of hardship?

## PERSONS WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS AND SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITION (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES)

### Why?

People with chronic illness and serious medical condition are under care treatment of a medical doctor. They require regular medical attention and medication. Their life can be at risk if their treatment gets interrupted and they may require targeted assistance for survival.

Please consider the following factors if prioritising persons with chronic illnesses:

- Are they able to have continuous access to their medication (especially in NGCA)?
- Are not receiving any state support (free of charge medication)? Do they require targeted assistance for survival?
- Does the condition require a specific diet?
- Does the person's gender affect their access to medication and support?

## MEMBERS OF MINORITY GROUPS

### Why?

They might be facing higher risks of isolation and discrimination (lack of documentation to access registration, social services, etc), and therefore may require support.

Examples: Roma community, stateless persons, LGBTI, Tatars

Please consider the following factors if prioritizing persons from minority groups:

- Does the person have documents and access to registration?
- Has the person been refused access to services due to her/his minority status?
- Has the person has been affected by untreated medical condition (TB, HIV)?
- Does gender heighten their experience and discrimination?

## PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OR INJURY<sup>1</sup>

### Why?

They have specific needs in regards to shelter; access to services; health; NFIs, wash facilities, may not have the required documents to prove their disability/injury/sickness etc. and are likely to face more difficulties in accessing services.

Please consider the following factors if prioritizing persons with disabilities or injured:

- Does the disabled person meet any discrimination?
- Is the disability linked to an injury that was caused by the conflict?
- Does the disability/injury impacts daily life and restricts independent movement e.g. access to toilets, collective centres; travel to check on property or employment
- Does the disabled/injured person enjoy any kind of support to assist with daily life?
- Does the disabled/injured person have access to specific services (medical, rehabilitation, etc)?
  - Is the person with disability/injured the main breadwinner and how that impacts the household?
  - If untreated (for lack of access to medical care), would the injury lead to disability?
  - Does their gender have an impact on their access?

<sup>1</sup> including an adult or child who is physically or mentally impaired by illness, infection or injury which impacts daily life and restricts independent movement

## CHILDREN

### Why?

Due to the conflict and the changes in their lives, children are more at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. Some might no longer have access to education and their mental wellbeing can be affected. Male and female children, adolescents, and young people are exposed to specific risks due to their gender, so it is important to take gender into account.

Please consider the following factors if prioritising children:

- Unaccompanied minors, orphans and children separated from parents.
- Children in state care institutions (particularly in NGCA).
- Children at risk of being abandoned or institutionalized (i.e. coming from large families, poor families, children with disability, newborns).
- Students from NGCA having moved to GCA for study reasons (particularly aged 16-18).
- Displaced children that do not qualify to be registered as IDPs because they are not with their legal guardians.
- Adolescent at risk of trafficking, recruitment or association with armed groups due to socio-economic hardship, family situation, etc.
- Children with disabilities.
- Children living in crowded spaces (collective centres, with host families) may be at greater risk of domestic violence.

## OLDER PERSONS

### Why?

They may suffer from health problems and/or have difficulty in adjusting to their new environment and knowing where to seek assistance, in particular those who have been separated from usual caregivers.

Please consider the following factors if prioritising older persons:

- Does the older person enjoy any kind of support to assist with daily life?
- If the older person is in NGCA, pension entitlements are limited and irregular there.
- Does the older person also have a medical condition that requires additional support?
- Does the older person have dependents (especially minor children or adult dependants with disabilities/serious medical condition)?
- Does the older person's gender have any impact on their activities, and participation and access to services?

### TIP: CONDUCT A VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS AS PART OF PLANNING YOUR ASSISTANCE

This will help to identify those persons for whom it will be harder to recover without support or who may face particular protection risks if assistance is delayed

**PERSONAL FACTORS:** (Household composition? Newly disabled bread winner? Elderly? Children?) Special needs of family members (e.g. disability)

**LOCATION OF HOUSEHOLD:** (e.g. NGCA or along the contact line)

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS:** (level of poverty, loss of livelihoods, assets, "seasonality" vulnerability, etc.)

**DOCUMENTATION:** Do people have the documents they need to register and access services?