

INTERACTION PROTECTION WORKING GROUP

PROTECTION IN PRACTICE:

A Guidebook for Incorporating Protection into Humanitarian Operations

The following is one section of what is intended to be a collection of tools for incorporating protection into humanitarian and post-conflict operations. The intended audience is the program designer or practitioner in the field of non-governmental organizations engaged in humanitarian response. The objective is to convey the basic concepts of protection in a user-friendly and practical format to maximize its integration across all sectors.

This guide was produced by members of InterAction's Protection Working Group, whose aim is to enhance the capacity of humanitarian actors in the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and civilians affected by conflict.

InterAction is the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations. With 160 members operating in every developing country, InterAction works to overcome poverty, exclusion, and suffering by advancing social justice and basic dignity for all.

INTRODUCTION

In an effort to help promote a culture of protection within humanitarian organisations and advance the development of a more comprehensive system for delivering protection in the field, InterAction's Protection Working Group has prepared the following document to highlight what protection means in a practical sense and show how it can be incorporated into various aspects of humanitarian assistance programming. The exemplars shared here are not exhaustive, but are best seen as recommended actions to be set within a broader protection framework. Not all organizations are expected to have the competency or mission and mandate to address all the issues presented here. Rather this document is intended to allow readers to draw upon examples relevant to their particular areas of work while recognizing the wider scale and scope of the context in which they are operating. These approaches are drawn from existing documents on protection developed by both international and non-governmental organisations and from shared operational experiences. (A number of these publications are referenced within the following and there is a comprehensive list at the end of the document noting the specific publications).

Protection Problems

Prior to highlighting how humanitarian assistance can prevent, mitigate or respond to protection problems, it is perhaps useful to consider the protection problems that affect the conflict-affected populations with whom we work. Among others, these include:

- Denial of humanitarian assistance and humanitarian access
- Forced displacement
- Arbitrary execution, systematic killing of civilians
- Torture, mutilation, rape, beatings
- Forced conscription of children
- Targeting humanitarian personnel
- Trafficking of women and children
- Separation of families
- Denial of access to basic services and rights (e.g. education, medical care, food, shelter, etc.)
- Denial of freedom of movement and association
- Denial of administrative and legal due process
- Denial of freedom of religion
- Abduction of children
- Forced child labor
- Forced repatriation, relocation

A primary vehicle for incorporating protection into humanitarian assistance is through effective program design, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and ensuring accountability in our work.

Special Note Regarding Women, Children, and Other Vulnerable Groups

Promoting and incorporating protection into humanitarian programming is vital for all civilian populations, who are the primary casualties of conflict. This is particularly true for vulnerable groups who may be marginalized or discriminated against for numerous reasons such as religion, politics, ethnicity or linguistic differences. Discrimination and marginalization are also very common among women and children. Because women and children usually comprise approximately 80% of any displaced or refugee population, humanitarian agencies must undertake special measures to ensure that the basic safety and needs of women and children in complex humanitarian emergencies are addressed adequately and effectively. Because children have a dependent social status and are particularly vulnerable to illness, malnutrition and abuse, children require special attention and positive developmental support. Gender inequality in most settings makes many women particularly vulnerable. When designing, implementing, and evaluating humanitarian programs, a special effort must be made to protect women and children from physical and psychological injury and social marginalization. The needs of other vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, people who have physical and mental disabilities, and people living with HIV/AIDS, must also be identified and addressed. These groups could especially benefit from effective protective programming, one of its aims of which is to close the gaps through which vulnerable individuals and groups sometimes disappear and are marginalized.

Participation

It is important to note that participation underpins all protection-related matters. Participation as both a process and an outcome is fundamental in diverse stages of protection activities such as designing and managing programs or developing an advocacy campaign. The inclusion of the community is essential in all phases of protection activities. The participation of community members must not be limited to leaders but should include women, children of different ages, and people from minority groups.

PROTECTION IN PRACTICE

Based on the InterAction Protection Working Group's paper *Making Protection a Priority*, five specific areas are identified in which protection may be put into practice. The following discusses each of these areas—multi-sectoral integration, data collection, capacity building, coordination, and advocacy—in order to highlight how protection can

be integrated into humanitarian assistance. The examples provided are neither exhaustive nor prioritized but are intended to illustrate what integrating protection means-at an operational level. It is assumed that particular activities will be initiated only if implementing agencies have the expertise and capacity needed to achieve appropriate standards of impact and ethics.

Multi-Sectoral Integration

Protection concerns should be considered and inform the design of humanitarian service across sectors.

Camp Management

Displacement implies that violations of human rights have occurred. The creation and management of refugee and internally displaced camps attempt to address the problems caused by displacement by providing a fundamental level of physical protection and access to services during displacement. The manner in which services are provided has a significant impact on the protection of displaced populations, particularly vulnerable groups. When camps are established for displaced people, the following approaches can strengthen the protection of the residents.

Location Considerations:

- Secure the goodwill and support of the host government at local level
- Support authorities in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in the design and management of camps
- Include local community groups in the design and management process
- Raise awareness among the local host community about the situation and rights of the displaced people
- Promote activities that enable positive interactions between people from the host community and the displaced populations
- Depending on the circumstances, provide services for the host community that are available for the displaced
- Develop plans for the effective handover of programs to local hosts

Design:

- When the displaced population consists of groups that identify themselves as separate communities or entities, design the camps to include sub-areas in which members of the respective groups can live
- Involve women and children in the design and layout of the camps to ensure that their needs are addressed and to help protect them from sexual violence by taking steps such as providing adequate lighting around latrines and showers and locating facilities in a safe location
- Conduct risk mapping exercises by gender for youth and children in order to learn how perceptions of risk and safety vary by age and gender

- Establish an information center where people can find out more about their home and current location, the local situation, food distribution quantities and schedules, and the location of family members to help reduce stress and assist families with making informed decisions
- Post signs that indicate clearly that abuse or exploitation are prohibited and that indicate how to report any infraction. Establish a general ‘complaints box’ as a mechanism for anonymous submission of abuse and exploitation claims
- Where illiteracy is high, post animated signs and provide verbal information to all community members so that they are informed about what is happening around them
- Determine the utility of establishing a perimeter fence; consider whether this will improve or hinder security
- Ensure that plans are in place to govern the controlled growth of the camp, if necessary

Management:

- Facilitate regular coordination meetings that include all camp service providers. Camp managers are in an ideal position to insure effective collaboration between all service providers and to promote a cross-sector integration of protection approaches
- Establish a protection working group that meets regularly to discuss protection related issues
- Ensure that staff hired reflects an appropriate diversity along the lines of gender, ethnicity, religion
- Develop and maintain a database, with information disaggregated by age and gender, in each camp that also details special needs (according to established confidentiality protocols)
- Ensure women have equal and active participation in camp decision-making structures and ensure children and youth are able to have their voices and concerns heard and acted on by decision-making mechanisms. Ensure that ethnic or other minority groups are represented in decision-making structures
- Meet with groups of refugee women and learn what they see as the main protection problems and as possible solutions to the problems
- Include sexual violence issues in health coordination, protection and community service meetings
- Establish women’s and child-to-child support systems, networks or self-help groups that allow women and children to discuss protection issues that affect them, and ensure their participation in the design of interventions regarding protection issues they identify as a priorities
- Provide extra support for single parent families, such as help in physical tasks (building a shelter, collecting wood and water, planting gardens, etc.) and child-care; this should be monitored effectively to ensure against potential exploitation
- Promote community support approaches by camp committees that provide assistance to vulnerable people
- Watch for and respond to signs of abuse, neglect or exploitation of children. This is especially important when children are living with families other than their own

- Seek children's opinions about their placement with guardians and keep siblings and other children who have developed close ties together to help ensure their safety and give them a sense of security
- Involve children and adolescents in organized activities to allow responsible adults to monitor their activities and the types of experiences they are being exposed to
- Establish complaint mechanisms as well as reporting and investigating protocols for identified problems (e.g. cases of abuse and exploitation, discrimination in service delivery, etc.)

Security:

- Provide women and children with whistles to use if threatened, and establish a community-based response mechanism
- Facilitate community watch groups to promote safety in the area
- Encourage NGO and UN staff awareness of and look for signs of potential protection risks and violations, and document and report incidents or concerns to camp management and relevant protection agencies

Registration:

- Coordinate with UN or government authority responsible for the registration process in order to provide complementary services, if necessary.
- Ensure that data are disaggregated by gender and age
- Establish criteria to identify and address separated families
- Determine whether displaced groups are provided necessary documents to live, work and meet basic needs and support government or UN efforts to provide documentation
- Ensure that all people have equal access to registration process. Establish a referral system for individuals or families who have not been registered
- Determine whether registration cards will be issued and used for food and non-food item distribution
- Establish processes for replacing lost or destroyed registration cards

Food and Non-Food Distribution:

- Ensure an equal ratio of men and women in distribution teams responsible for food and non-food items
- Ensure that the distribution location is logistically accessible to all groups
- Ensure that women are consulted in regard to the design and implementation of the food distribution
- Assign a female Liaison officer to work with communities prior to distribution to sensitize the communities to recipients' rights and the process for collecting distributed items
- Rotate distribution teams so no one team constantly visits the same settlements/camps
- Maintain an expatriate presence at a high percentage of the distributions

Water and Sanitation

While water and sanitation is regarded as a technical sector of humanitarian operations, it is as relevant to protection as any other sector or activity. Depending on how the service is designed and implemented, populations may suffer more harm than good. Water and sanitation projects can have an impact on reducing the incidence of violations against people through effective and quality programming.

- Develop a profile of at-risk populations, with data disaggregated by gender and age, while conducting water and sanitation assessments-or collecting monitoring and evaluation data
- Adopt measures to ensure that women and children have access to resources and that these systems and resources are located in safe, secure areas
- Involve both women and men in developing public information campaigns on safe water practices. Make such information accessible to children
- Involve women and local authorities in decision-making, planning, implementation, and management of services. In developing sanitation systems, take both gender and ethnic differences into consideration
- Consider children when designing water points. Women and children are the primary collectors of water in most developing countries. Water points should be accessible and easy to operate by children as well as adults
- Design latrines and bathing facilities in central location (within safe distance of housing areas), secured with locks and well lit to protect children and women from violence
- Ensure that the facilities are not dominated by a particular group and that resources are not being bartered or sold
- Conduct spot checks throughout the camp to determine whether individuals and families have adequate access to water and sanitation services

Health

People involved in the health sector often witness directly and indirectly the adverse effects of violations against conflict-affected populations such as the physical result of rape.

- Ensure that health staff are trained on the identification and referral of vulnerable groups and that there are mechanisms in place in hospitals for reporting protection concerns
- Develop and publicize a ‘patient’s charter’ that details patient rights, shows how to access services, and outlines hospital rules and regulations
- Research, respect and promote traditional health practices that are healing and helpful and strive to eliminate harmful traditional practices that affect the health of women, children and adolescents
- Ensure that health care facilities are strategically located—they should be located close to each other and equally/easily accessible for refugees or IDPs, women, youth, children, and people who have a disability. This means there are female medical staff,

no physical barriers, and the capacity to accommodate sufficient numbers of people so as to prevent discriminatory screening practices and the necessity for clients to travel long distances to reach clinics.

- Establish or support community outreach health networks that include health care professionals who make home visits, who have the training and equipment needed to provide effective care and to identify, report and support women and children regarding protection concerns.
- Establish health education for families, including topics such as the risks and means of preventing diseases having public health importance, including sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection. Give particular attention to the needs of adolescents for such information and complementary services
- Monitor and document cases of sexual violence reported to health services, protection and security officers, taking steps to uphold safety protocols and principles of confidentiality
- Work with authorities to issue birth, death, and other legal identification documents

Education and Psychosocial Well-being

Education and psychosocial well-being are also intimately linked with protection. Again, depending on how the service is provided, people's sense of safety is either improved or reduced.

- Establish play areas in refugee camps, settlements or reception centers which are free from hazards and encourage activities that respect the culture of the displaced people.
- In consultation with local people, establish non-formal education activities to enhance children's sense of safety, stability and predictability, to strengthen their life skills and coping mechanisms, and to support their emotional, social and intellectual development
- Ensure education and recreation initiatives that promote and enable equal participation by girls and boys and by children who have disabilities
- Establish for teenage girls and boys age-appropriate supervised activities such as literacy training that contribute to hope for the future
- Ensure the recruitment of female teachers and/or female teaching assistants to act as positive role models and to reduce the risk of exploitation or abuse of female students
- Create adult-supervised recreational activities for children that promote safety and positive social integration
- Encourage children to participate in identifying risks in the camp and in generating ideas about how to reduce them
- Encourage the creation of support groups where children have an opportunity to express themselves through activities such as singing, dancing, drawing, and storytelling. Children should not be forced to talk about their experiences, but if they talk about their experiences and problems, they should be listened to in a supportive manner and helped to understand that they are not alone and that they are not responsible for what has happened.
- Escort girls to and from school if necessary in order to protect them from sexual violence that can occur en route to school

- In promoting the restoration of cultural practices, strive to eliminate harmful traditional practices affecting women, children and adolescents such as child marriages and female genital mutilation
- Find out whether there are local rituals that can help to reduce people's suffering or resolve problems, and encourage or facilitate the conduct of traditional customs that promote healing and coping

Gender-based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response

GBV prevention and response is a crosscutting issue by nature aimed to promote individual care, well-being, and safety of survivors and vulnerable groups. The following activities illustrate what is involved in initially responding to GBV and are typically taken on by organizations having the appropriate cross-sector expertise to address GBV comprehensively (See *Gender-based Violence: Emerging Issues in Programs Serving Displaced Populations* by Beth Vann and other relevant publications by the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium for additional details).

- Support community participation in site set-up and services to prevent GBV
- Prevent and manage the consequences of sexual violence through implementation of the Reproductive Health minimum initial service package (MISP)
- Establish referral and reporting systems for GBV
- Provide immediate emotional support, information, advocacy for survivors and plan for the provision of psychosocial support to survivors
- Include GBV issues in multi-sectoral camp meetings
- Establish safe spaces for survivors to receive immediate care and support
- Develop basic community education and awareness activities
- Support an integrated multi-sectoral response to GBV
- Ensure principles of confidentiality, respect and safety are incorporated into response
- Ensure survivor security
- Ensure code of conduct, reporting system in place

Tracing and Family Reunification

During and following flight, family members often become separated from each other, creating significant stresses on everyone. Separated children are at increased risk of a wide range of abuses such as forced recruitment, abduction by traffickers, and involvement in early marriage. Maintaining family unity is key to preventing a wide range of protection problems, and family tracing and reintegration is needed to restore family unity and strengthen protection. Although tracing and family reunification is usually done by organizations that have the required expertise, the following highlights what other non-child focused agencies can do to support these efforts.

- Encourage children and families or caretakers to stay together during flight from or return to home. Give adults mechanisms to keep track of their children to avoid family separations. For example, family identification cards can be pinned on children's shirts or can be worn as tags or wristbands

- Establish systems for identifying and documenting separated children at border areas, transit centers and refugee/IDP camps
- Information that should be collected at registration includes all family names; date of birth/approximate age; place of birth, nationality, home area/village, tribe/caste/ethnic group; identifying marks, handicaps, etc; religious affiliation
- Record the last location in which the child had been with his or her family as part of the information collection process
- Detail the circumstances that had led the child to the current location. Collect as much information as possible regarding the immediate and extended family, what the child remembers about where he or she had been and what the child thinks may have happened to him or her
- Tracing for parents or other relatives is essential. Begin tracing as early as possible. In addition to the possibility of family reunion, it can be very important to a child to know that someone is looking for his or her parents
- Immediately establish coordinated, community participatory tracing activities to reunify children separated from their parents, and establish interim child-safe community-based care systems with appropriate adult supervision for unaccompanied children

Access

There are two primary types of access that are relevant to protection efforts. The first is humanitarian access to conflict-affected populations, without which assistance cannot be provided. The second is equal access to services for all populations, ensuring that no individual or group is marginalized. The following are general examples to illustrate that conducting activities in a certain manner can potentially improve access.

- Place female protection officers at border areas, transit centers and refugee camps
- Support and monitor registration processes when needed
- Establish networks within communities that are able to regularly access populations
- Facilitate issuance of legal and other identity documents for displaced persons
- Create a dialogue with state and non-state actors in efforts to reach populations
- Coordinate aid distribution efforts among all relevant actors
- Ensure remote or marginalized populations can access services

Data Collection

Having accurate statistics and data disaggregated by age and gender are critical to understanding trends, specific risks, and potential solutions. All humanitarian agencies can contribute to enhancing protection through data collection (see the Protection Working Group's document "A Guidebook for Incorporating Protection into Data Collection in Humanitarian Assistance" for additional details).

Monitoring, Documenting and Reporting

Monitoring, documenting, and reporting are part of every humanitarian organization's efforts, regardless of its specific focus. There is always a need to collect data from the population being served. However, information collection raises a host of complex ethical issues, and the risk exists that well-intentioned efforts will cause more harm than good depending on how that information is solicited and handled. Moreover, there is a need to understand the context in which organizations are working and to monitor the environment as a means of gauging the situation and determining appropriate responses to protection problems. These ethical issues are beyond the scope of this paper, and the reader is urged to consult the companion paper developed by the Protection Working Group on "Making Protection a Priority: A Guidebook for Incorporating Protection into Data Collection in Humanitarian Assistance" for further discussion. The following highlights points to keep in mind with regard to the importance of collecting sound quality data as a means of identifying and addressing problems, bearing in mind the sensitive nature of this task

- Monitor regularly in an effort to prevent, mitigate and/or document human rights abuses and other violations of the law
- Facilitate the establishment of community structures or systems to monitor and address protection issues identified by women and children, and to monitor and support appropriate foster family care arrangements
- Document in a confidential manner all violations of women's and children's rights and protection standards and provide this information to relevant agencies
- Ensure that interviews take place in a safe and private manner
- Disaggregate all data by age and gender to facilitate the mapping of trends and to inform program planning, including data sets collected during initial rapid assessments
- Regularly gather and analyze data regarding the current political context in order to maintain timely information about the larger issues

Capacity Building

Humanitarian staff must be trained in the skills and tools needed to design programs that integrate protection and humanitarian services, prevent exploitation and abuse, identify risks and threats, and take appropriate steps to report violations. Building the capacity of governments and local authorities is also highly important, as they bear the primary responsibility to protect people within their territory. Donors, too, can build capacity within the international community by identifying and bringing forward best practices, creating venues for the exchange of learning, and ensuring that their grantees pay specific attention to the protection implications of their planned activities and include such concerns in their documentation.

Organizational Capacity (Internal)

This refers to internal organizational efforts and structures and processes designed to integrate protection into a given agency's mission and operations. Management must understand and support the principles of protection in order to achieve organizational engagement on this issue.

- Ensure staff are well trained in preventive measures against rape, sexual harassment and exploitation, and agree to abide by the IASC Code of Conduct. Staff should also be familiar with the issues of confidentiality and have a system for reporting abuses and investigating alleged abuses.
- Employ protection advisors or assign protection focal points who are responsible for identifying and addressing protection-related issues within organizational programming
- Train staff on protection and human rights principles including national laws, policies, and practices as well as relevant international laws
- Devise organizational mechanisms to infuse protection into the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation for programs

Institutional Capacity (External)

- Train government officials, police, and law enforcement officials in human rights
- Support the training of legal officials, human rights groups, etc. on protection issues and strategies
- Provide support for civil society groups who are addressing protection-related issues
- Support the creation of or improvement to laws and standards by supporting research
- Support development of new or improved legislation that safeguards protection
- Research traditional justice mechanisms
- Support transitional justice efforts

Coordination

Protection is often enhanced simply through the presence of international staff. Sectoral and inter-agency coordination should ensure that regular monitoring visits are scheduled to all locations where protection is a priority concern. Agencies should designate protection focal points within their organizations, collect and present protection issues and concerns across sectors, participate in local protection meetings, and provide inputs to the lead protection agencies.

International Presence

An 'outsider' present in a humanitarian crisis can serve as a witness of the violations committed. This presence alone can often serve as a deterrent to additional violations.

- Provide protective presence through accompaniment of vulnerable populations (i.e. across border)
- Work among at-risk minorities
- Encourage high-level and/or official visits to areas where there are large numbers of vulnerable groups

Developing Networks

Since no organization can address all protection problems, humanitarian organizations should coordinate and develop complementary efforts to address these problems.

- Participate in or take the lead in developing a local protection working group that meets regularly to discuss and coordinate protection issues with all organizations working in the area, including national and international NGOs, UN agencies, and police/security forces. This kind of forum should include women, local authorities and community leadership representatives
- Involve key community leaders, women and girls in the development of culturally appropriate avenues for confidential reporting of abuse and measures to prevent sexual/physical abuse
- Identify and address the special needs of children with physical and/or mental disabilities, and promote their access to and integrate their participation in community services or activities

Advocacy and Awareness Raising

Dialogue and discussion, as well as public statements, may be effective tools to bring about change and enhance protection and raise awareness in any given context. Such choices depend upon the mandate of the agency and the profile of activities within the local environment. Agencies can also work locally to raise awareness about how to deliver aid in a manner that assists the most vulnerable people, and they can speak out when appropriate about certain issues facing the displaced or returnee communities. The following approaches may be useful for particular organizations.

- Use bright and colorful cartoons to teach children to recognize landmines, local land mine signs and unsafe landmine situations, e.g., abandoned or exploded cars in fields, shelled out/empty buildings, or seemingly untouched open fields with high foliage
- Distribute leaflets, hang posters in the camps and at border crossings (in local languages, with pictures for non-readers), and provide public service announcements on local radio and TV to educate all about landmine safety
- Involve children in the design and production of public awareness promotional material about safety risks and safe practices
- Convene meetings that discuss how to integrate protection into humanitarian assistance in different sectors
- Publicly condemn the recruitment of children as soldiers

- Provide information to communities regarding child soldier recruitment practices and avoidance tactics
- Launch information campaigns to inform communities about current country conditions, policies and laws to support an informed decision making process
- Facilitate information campaigns or 'know your rights' booklets
- Build community awareness on human rights issues
- Provide advocacy training for civil society groups
- Increase public awareness on protection-related issues associated with gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS

Additional Resources:

- Code of Conduct on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises (IASC)
- Easy Reference to International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights (UNOCHA)
- Gender-based Violence: Emerging Issues in Programs Serving Displaced Populations, Beth Vann (Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium)
- Growing the Sheltering Tree: Protection Programs and Practices Gathered from the Field (IASC)
- Guidance Booklet on Humanitarian Protection (ALNAP)
- Guidelines on Protection of Refugee Women (UNHCR)
- Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UNOCHA)
- If not Now, When? Addressing Gender-based Violence in Refugee, Internally Displaced and Post-Conflict Settings, Jeanne Ward, (Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium)
- Mainstreaming Gender in Unstable Environments (UNICEF)
- Protecting Refugees: A Field Guide for NGOs (UNHCR)
- Protecting the Future: HIV Prevention, Care and Support Among Displaced and War-affected Populations (IRC)
- Refugee Children: Protection and Care (UNHCR)
- Sphere Project
- Strengthening Protection in War (ICRC)
- Working with Separated Children: A Field Guide (Save the Children)