



KEY MESSAGES

Protection Interventions and Coordination as Life-Saving and Supporting Stability and Solutions

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Note: This is a working document and should not be taken as final or formally endorsed. This document aims to provide Protection Clusters with a menu of key messages to support their advocacy and engagement with humanitarian actors, donors and any other relevant actors to explain the added value of protection interventions and coordination, including contributing to / part of life-saving objectives of humanitarian assistance. These messages are not exhaustive but rather a basis that Protection Clusters can use, and tailor as needed to best fit their operational contexts.

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1. Key Messages on Life-Saving Protection Impacts

- **Protection remedies, mitigates and prevents direct loss of life and harm.** It enhances conditions that ensure the physical (and material and legal) safety of people experiencing or at risk of abuse, violence and exploitation. It protects dignity and avoids long-term harmful impact on communities.
- **Fulfilling the leaving no one behind commitment.** Protection reaches those most at-risk of abuse, violence, exploitation and exclusion, and who, due to their specific situations and/or vulnerabilities, may not be able to reach and seek assistance. Protection actors actively support humanitarian actors to identify those in a community who are experiencing the greatest vulnerabilities, what capacities exist and what kinds of humanitarian assistance and support is needed to effectively respond. Mobile protection teams and community-based case management models enhance service accessibility in hard-to-reach areas.
- Where no action is swiftly taken to address protection threats and risks, communities are at a significantly higher risk of death, injuries, trauma and exclusion than when there are a protection interventions / when protection is a core element of humanitarian assistance.
- **Protection is an enabler of effective humanitarian action and is central and critical to all humanitarian operations (Centrality of Protection)**
The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) recognizes that protection is one of the main purposes and intended outcomes of humanitarian action. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) states that “Protection of all persons affected and at risk must inform humanitarian decision-making and response (...). It must be central to our preparedness efforts, as part of immediate and life-saving activities, and throughout the duration of humanitarian response and beyond.”
- **A lack of consideration for protection in lifesaving emergency interventions is detrimental to the entire humanitarian response and, ultimately, affected populations.** This, in addition to recognizing that protection risks are often the very drivers of humanitarian need in emergency situations.
- Protection Clusters, in addition to ensuring the effective coordination of the protection response, also play a key role in advising and supporting humanitarian leadership and other sectors and actors in identifying and addressing critical protection risks in a coherent and collective manner.
- Protection is inherently interlinked with other sectors of the humanitarian response. Gaps in service provision or limited or constrained access to essential services such as food, shelter, or health challenge the resilience of affected populations and often amplify existing or create new protection risks.
- Protection interventions and actions contribute directly to early recovery and durable solutions frameworks to foster longer-term changes (*see chapter 3 for specific messages on the Impact of Protection on Social and Economic Stability and Durable Solutions*).

Examples of Life-saving Protection Interventions

(The document from the [Mozambique Protection Cluster](#) and the [CERF Life-Saving Criteria](#) can be used as reference for language on protection as lifesaving):

- **Protection Monitoring and Analysis – evidence-driven action saves lives.** Protection monitoring systems, real-time data and analysis, combined with community engagement efforts, enable the identification of high-risk areas and factors driving violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation experienced by children, men and women. It helps detect emergent or changing trends related to serious protection and rights violations (e.g. forced recruitment, abductions, indiscriminate attacks, presence of explosive ordnance), often before they escalate / to prevent atrocities. Protection clusters and actors are often the first ones to alert on, document and report on serious risks and violations (e.g. via Protection monitoring, CAAC/MRM, MARA, etc.), and to identify which groups and individuals are particularly vulnerable, excluded and in need of tailored assistance. It allows humanitarian actors to enhance proactive prevention, immediately mobilize and inform effective and well-targeted humanitarian responses and advocacy and can help prevent further escalation and secondary harm. Similarly, humanitarian actors rely on risk assessments to ensure safe access to aid. Protection monitoring and analysis provides context-specific security assessments, allowing agencies to adjust operations and prevent aid worker targeting, attacks on convoys, or restricted access due to armed group presence
- **Protection Advocacy:** Protection clusters and actors engage in robust, evidence-based public and private advocacy with duty bearers and other relevant stakeholders to raise the protection risks faced by people affected by conflict and crisis and to influence policy and practice in support of their safety. Such advocacy efforts are done with a range of protection and humanitarian actors and affected communities themselves and can galvanize concrete action by duty-bearers to stop harmful actions and ensure active measures that enhance protection, including improved humanitarian access and response, legal reforms and protections and protection-focused policies and funding. Advocacy and engagement based on solid monitoring and reporting of serious violations also supports longer-term deterrence, compliance with legal frameworks and norms and accountability.
- **Humanitarian Negotiations & Mediation:** Protection clusters and actors are engaging in negotiations with a range of stakeholders in support of protection outcomes. Such negotiations may be done with armed actors to facilitate access to besieged communities or to enable safe passage for civilians to nearby markets and clinics. Other negotiations efforts may focus on engaging with local authorities to enable needed permissions and acceptance of protection and humanitarian actions in an area. Many local protection actors are also advancing critical mediation and peacebuilding efforts, that contribute to reduced levels of inter-communal tensions and the effective prevention of escalating/further violence and abuse.
- **Mine Action:** In conflict situations, mine action actors play a key role in creating immediate conditions of physical safety of affected populations, including by disseminating information on how to prevent exposure to and risks related to explosive weapons and enabling communities to more safely access markets, fields for farming, essential services and humanitarian assistance. These interventions are designed to save lives and are equally critical for any eventual recovery and solutions interventions.

- **Protection Services and Referrals – Survivor-centred care is a lifeline:** Survivor-centered services and community-based protection programs work together to prevent further harm and revictimization by ensuring survivors’ access to basic and specialized services, including legal assistance, medical care, and economic support, while also strengthening social safety nets, peer networks, and justice mechanisms that provide long-term protection and stability.
- **Community-Based Protection:** In practice, communities are the first responders to humanitarian crises. Investment in community mechanisms and local protection responses are critical to enhance their self-protection capacities and mitigate harm in life-threatening situations. Community-based groups also serve as a bridge between humanitarian response and affected communities. They are essential in activating early warning systems, providing frontline response, community watch groups and peer-support structures that enable people to respond immediately to protection threats before external assistance arrives and enable timely referrals to life-saving essential services.
- **Gender-Based Violence:** In emergency contexts support to health service providers with relevant supplies such as for clinical management of rape is critical and to ensure that appropriate psychosocial interventions are in place and accessible. Identifying high-risk areas and factors driving GBV in an emergency is critical to saving lives.
- **Legal Identity and Civil Documentation:** Lack of legal identity and civil documentation expose civilians to protection risks and rights violations, including arbitrary detention, statelessness, and denial of essential services. Protection actors support direct access to civil documentation for IDPs, returnees, those forcibly evicted and other excluded groups to ensure access to legal aid, birth registration, education, housing/land/property registration and nationality determination, among others, and enhancing individuals’ coping capacities and resilience.
- **Family Tracing:** Family separation exposes separated women and unaccompanied children to abuse, disappearance, exploitation, recruitment, among others. The first hours following displacement are essential to family tracing efforts, which can in turn prevent long term impact and violations towards those separated. Lack of civil documentation and lack of communication means further complicate the tracing of family members.
- **Information to Support Life-saving Decisions:** Lack of access to accurate information (including due to dis- and misinformation) can lead to violations of rights and increases exposure to life-threatening situations, including unsafe migration choices, human trafficking, and return to unsafe areas. Protection actors ensure crisis-affected populations receive verified, timely, life-saving information on security risks, legal rights, and services. Timely dissemination of information through community radio, mobile messaging, and digital platforms, among others, ensures that communities receive real-time alerts on conflict zones, disasters, and humanitarian aid, enabling them to make life-saving decisions and avoid dangerous situations.
- **Strengthening National and Local Protection Systems to Prevent Harm:** Enhancing institutional and local capacities and preparedness ensures that governments and local actors can respond swiftly to crises, uphold human rights, and prevent systemic abuses. This includes for example working with law enforcement to prevent arbitrary detention and excessive force, integrating trauma-informed medical and psychosocial care into national health systems, and establishing rapid response mechanisms to protect displaced populations from further harm. Pooling humanitarian and national resources further increases efficiency, reduces duplication,

minimizes reliance on aid, and supports sustainable, cost-effective protection to save and protect human lives.

Field Protection Clusters: Examples of Life-Saving Protection Coordination Work

Country-level examples for inspiration

Emergency Response Rooms in Sudan: *The establishment of early warning and community protection mechanisms, led by local actors and communities, has proven effective in adapting to increasingly coercive and dynamic contexts. Emergency Response Rooms provide essential coordination and assistance, while local women's and IDP groups coordinate evacuations, women led organizations are the frontline responders to survivors of GBV.*

Gaza Frontline Protection Responder Model: *During the ceasefire, the Protection Cluster mobilized its network of 400 trained Emergency Protection Responders (EPRs) from multiple organizations to quickly identify and respond to protection risks. As more than 500,000 people returned to their homes in northern Gaza within a 72-hour period, the Protection Cluster ensured EPR presence at flow monitoring points with the primary focus of identifying and supporting those experiencing protection risks and the most acute vulnerabilities and humanitarian needs, including unaccompanied and separated children, and enabling connections with needed supports, assistance and services. These frontline EPRs also played a crucial role in disseminating vital information to communities, educating people on how to mitigate the risks associated with explosive ordnance, and providing guidance on where to access essential humanitarian support. As movements stabilized, the Protection Cluster shifted the approach, deploying EPRs in mobile protection teams preset at multi-sector distributions to ensure timely and safe access for the most vulnerable people to humanitarian assistance.*

Community-Based Protection in the DRC: *In South Kivu, 122 community-based protection structures supported by 25 organizations were mapped, playing a crucial role in safeguarding vulnerable populations, especially in the context of the MONUSCO withdrawal. These community networks, including local leaders and focal points, have become essential in monitoring protection needs and threats, particularly during the recent crisis with M23. Their capacity to gather and share real-time information through protection monitoring has proven to be an invaluable tool for informing timely and effective response strategies.*

South Sudan Multi-partner Protection Risk Monitoring: *The South-Sudan Protection Cluster runs a multi-partner flexible Protection Risks Monitoring system (PROMO), coordinated through a dedicated working group. The system combines primary and secondary data collection, adapting tools and mechanisms to each area and existing partners ongoing data collection. It provides monthly updates on payams (administrative divisions) situation across 15 risks and their worst consequences, and it is critical to HCT-led discussions on durable solutions, transitioning and strategic liaison with development actors. The system feeds the entirety of Protection Clusters analysis needs, including HNRPs, substantially reducing IM related tasks and allowing pooling of resources and data.*

2. Additional Key Messages on why Protection Coordination Matters in both Emergency and Transition Settings

- Protection Clusters / coordination mechanisms enhance the effectiveness and impact of collective efforts to better protect, and support affected populations, including by avoiding duplications and lessening the burden on and potential harm to affected populations. They play

a critical role in an essential role in leading, collating, harmonizing and disseminating protection risks analyses and information that serve the entire humanitarian community, planning and response plans.

- In situations of cluster transition or deactivation, Protection Clusters play a critical role not only for the protection sector but for the entire humanitarian system. As highlighted in the [IASC Guidance on Cluster Transition and Deactivation](#), Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations are amongst the most critical principles and considerations to be respected. Protection Clusters are essential to enable effective protection risks analysis and support arrangement to address residual protection risks.
- During cluster transition/deactivation the role of protection is critical to safeguard people's rights and dignity throughout the process. Carrying out protection risk analysis and monitoring risks is important to identify population groups or geographical areas that might experience more pronounced risks, such as exclusion or discrimination.

3. Key Messages on the Impact of Protection on Social and Economic Stability and Durable Solutions

- **Protection fosters stability and resilience, reducing future displacement risks:**
 - By ensuring displaced persons and displacement-affected communities have access to rights, legal identity, and basic services, Protection Clusters and their partners make direct contributions to social cohesion and prevent cycles of displacement.
 - Early protection interventions, including risk identification, protection analysis and advocacy, help address and reduce grievances, mitigate tensions, and inform policies and interventions that help governments and partners implement targeted strategies that prevent future displacement crises and reinforce stability.
 - Strengthening national protection systems creates more resilient institutions, contributing to local, national and global peace, security, and sustainable development.
- **Protection activities enable economic recovery and long-term development:**
 - Securing housing, land, and property rights, promoting legal identity access, and ensuring freedom of movement allow displaced populations to (re)integrate into local economies, reducing dependency on aid.
 - Protection efforts support access to education and livelihoods, enabling self-reliance and economic contributions that benefit national economies.
 - Protection analysis helps identify barriers to economic inclusion, participation and empowerment, ensuring that solutions are tailored to address vulnerabilities and promote economic inclusion.
- **Protection is essential for achieving durable solutions for IDPs:**
 - Durable solutions can only be sustainable if protection concerns are identified and addressed from the onset of displacement. Ensuring legal access to documentation, security of tenure, and justice mechanisms is crucial for IDPs to rebuild their lives.

- Protection-led approaches, guided by protection analysis, facilitate safe, voluntary, and dignified return, local integration, or resettlement, ensuring that IDPs are not left in protracted displacement.
- By conducting protection analysis and risk assessments, the Protection Cluster identifies the key challenges and opportunities for durable solutions, ensuring that interventions are evidence-based, context-specific, and aligned with national development priorities.
- By integrating protection into durable solutions planning, humanitarian and development actors lay the groundwork for long-term social cohesion, economic inclusion, and national stability.