



Protection Cluster Advocacy Messages:

Protection Interventions as Lifesaving and in Support of Stability and Solutions

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Protection actions mitigate immediate harm, prevent the loss of life, and safeguard the dignity of individuals in crisis. Protection ensures that those at risk of abuse, violence, and exploitation are physically, legally, and materially safe. Amid shifts in the humanitarian landscape - driven by new conflict, protracted crises, climate shocks, geopolitical tensions, and shrinking budgets - the 2025 Humanitarian Reset led by OCHA and IASC, calls for fundamental reimagining of humanitarian work. Where funding is increasingly constrained and expectations around efficiency, impact, localization and accountability are rising, **protection must be reaffirmed as a life-saving component of humanitarian action.**

- 1) Preventing Immediate Harm and Saving Lives:** Protection actions directly address violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect — threats that can be as lethal as food shortages or lack of shelter or medicine. By preventing gender-based violence, child recruitment, family separation, and other risks, protection can immediately save lives. Mitigating risks for vulnerable groups is the responsibility of all sectors to ensure that humanitarian interventions do not inadvertently cause further harm. Protection actors play a key role in guiding other sectors to reduce risks for vulnerable communities.
- 2) Restoring Dignity and Reducing Long-Term Harm:** Survivors of trauma, displacement, and abuse require psychosocial support, legal aid, and safe spaces to recover. By addressing these needs, protection helps reduce the risk of mental health crises, self-harm, or suicide, all of which can be life-threatening. Restoring dignity is crucial for reducing long-term harmful impacts.

e.g. Separating children from armed groups and ensuring they receive interim care, psychosocial support, and family reunification is vital to avoid re-recruitment or further harm.

- 3) Mitigating Future Risks through Preparedness:** Protection efforts are not just reactive but also proactive. By identifying risks early — such as through mine risk education, child marriage prevention, safe shelter planning, and early warning systems — protection can prevent future casualties. Protection actors also work with communities to build resilience, reducing future vulnerability and safeguarding lives in the long term.

e.g. Mine Action actors disseminate life-saving risk education and clear explosive remnants to allow communities safe access to markets, fields, and services, supporting both immediate survival and recovery.

- 4) Ensuring Access to Essential Services:** Protection is a critical enabler of humanitarian action. Without it, individuals may be too afraid to access vital services such as healthcare, food distributions, and water. Protection actors monitor and mitigate risks such as discrimination, checkpoints, and attacks, ensuring that humanitarian services reach those in need.

e.g. Legal identity and civil documentation — such as birth certificates, education records, and housing titles — are critical for displaced people to access services, avoid statelessness, and claim land or property upon return. Without them, people face arbitrary detention, forced return, or denial of aid.

- 5) Leaving No One Behind:** Protection efforts ensure that the most vulnerable are fully included in humanitarian responses. This involves identifying individuals who may be excluded due to physical, social, or cultural barriers. ‘Leaving no one behind’ is more than an inclusion goal — it is a life-saving imperative. In emergencies,

older people, women, girls, and persons with disabilities are often excluded from essential services due to discrimination or lack of accessibility.

e.g. Women and girls with disabilities, for example, are at heightened risk of GBV and may be unable to access services without intentional inclusion and support mechanisms. Older people or persons with disabilities, for instance, often cannot reach nutrition centers or water points unless services are adapted. Mobile protection teams and community-based case management models increase service accessibility.

- 6) Gender-based Violence (GBV) and Support for Survivors:** Protection in emergencies includes critical support for survivors of GBV. Protection actors work to ensure that survivors receive timely, appropriate interventions, enabling them to recover and rebuild their lives.

e.g. medical care for survivors, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, supplies for clinical management of rape and confidential referral pathways are essential for survival and recovery in emergency settings. Without these, survivors may suffer long-term physical and mental harm.

- 7) Protection Advocacy and Accountability:** Advocacy is central to protection. Protection actors engage in ongoing advocacy to influence decision-makers and duty-bearers, ensuring that the risks faced by affected populations are addressed. Protection actors advocate for the safety and dignity of those impacted by crises, ensuring that humanitarian responses are aligned with international protection standards.

e.g. Advocacy includes calling for safe access for displaced populations, preventing forced returns, and ensuring all humanitarian actors integrate protection, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and inclusion of gender, age, and disability considerations into their responses.

- 8) Community-Based Protection: First Responders to Crises:** Communities are often the first responders to crises. They activate early warning systems, provide peer-support, and respond to protection threats before external aid arrives. Community-based protection programs empower local populations, ensuring that protection and support systems are in place. These efforts reduce harm, strengthen social safety nets, and contribute to long-term stability.

e.g. Community watch groups, youth and women's groups, and informal justice or mediation networks are often the only immediate source of support and protection in remote or high-risk areas. Strengthening these systems supports self-agency and recognize communities' strength and resilience.

- 9) Strengthening National Protection Systems for Durable Solutions:** Strengthening local and national protection systems is critical for long-term solutions. By collaborating with local governments and law enforcement, protection actors help prevent human rights abuses and ensure that national systems are equipped to uphold human dignity and rights during crises. These efforts include ensuring access to legal and health systems and creating rapid response mechanisms to protect populations from further harm and facilitate durable solutions for displaced populations

e.g. Working with law enforcement to prevent arbitrary detention, integrating trauma-informed health care into national systems, and conducting protection analyses to guide durable solutions such as safe return or resettlement of IDPs.

- 10) Amplifying Voices and Ensuring Accountability:** Protection gives a voice to affected people, enabling their participation and feedback in decisions that impact them. Community engagement, advocacy, and mechanisms hold duty-bearers accountable for preventing and responding to harm.