



It Takes a Village to Protect People in Humanitarian Crisis

Joint statement by Oxfam and the Global Protection Cluster on World Humanitarian Day

On this World Humanitarian Day, Oxfam and the Global Protection Cluster join the humanitarian community in celebrating frontline humanitarian leaders working to protect the lives and rights of people living through crises.

As the impacts of conflict, climate change, displacement and human rights abuses are affecting more people around the world, our humanitarian commitment to a networked and collective response must be stronger than ever.

The theme of this year's World Humanitarian Day, **#ItTakesAVillage**, is a powerful reminder that collective humanitarian action must be driven and shaped by local communities and leaders on the frontlines. Whether they are women's groups, religious elders or youth change-makers — they all must have the space, resources and platforms to lead the response.

"Women leaders around the world are at the forefront of life-saving humanitarian action — delivering healthcare, food, protection and water. This has been true for a long time and I'm heartened to see increasing recognition of their value, strength and capabilities. But we can't stop there. We need to ensure these women leaders are receiving tangible resources, accessing decision-making spaces at all levels and that they are able to truly shape humanitarian responses", said Gabriela Bucher, Executive Director of Oxfam International.

Our organizations are privileged to see a range of collective efforts underway — efforts that are saving lives, challenging the abuse of power, and ensuring more people everywhere can enjoy greater safety and dignity while working towards a more peaceful future.

The leadership of communities and local humanitarian responders and change-makers are the foundation for realizing strengthening protection and rights for people impacted by crisis. Local communities already daily engage in self-protection actions to keep themselves safe – whether it is negotiating with armed groups for the safe passage of children to their school or finding ways to acquire urgently needed medical care amidst active conflict. Communities are also organizing themselves into 'early warning networks', serving to alert others when armed groups may be approaching, and women community leaders are establishing peer support groups where women can provide urgently needed support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Their day-to-day work, tirelessly and consistently operating on the frontlines, is indispensable to achieving greater protection outcomes. *"Amidst the bleak outlook globally on protection risks, I have to say, I am continually impressed and proud of the very meaningful protection focused actions underway by the members of the 32 Protection Clusters currently operating – against all odds and amidst impossible conditions. These partners are saving lives and protecting rights every single day", William Chemaly, Global Protection Cluster Coordinator.*



There are, however, worrying trends in the shrinkage of space for protection and humanitarian aid providers — including due to inaccessible active conflict zones and the targeting of aid workers and climate-related emergencies, such as flooding and earthquakes. At the same time, the need for protection and humanitarian aid is spiralling. Local actors and communities are too often left to fend for themselves, working to assist people with severe and complex protection risks.

The most effective way we can support the rights and safety of communities living through crises is to ensure communities and local humanitarian leaders are recognized and supported as frontline responders and that they are shaping every step of the response. The entire humanitarian system should be dedicated to achieve this objective.

This World Humanitarian Day, we commit to support local protection leaders and groups by:

1. Advocating for holistic humanitarian access as our global priority, to ensure communities are empowered and able to better access protection, and humanitarian actors have increased access to communities, enabling further delivery of protection supports and services.
2. Ensuring that frontline protection workers, many of whom are women leaders, youth organizers and community activists, are not a target of armed conflict and violence and can access needed safety supports.
3. Fully implementing the 2021 IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of local and national actors in IASC humanitarian coordination systems to accelerate change.
4. Working with donors, UN Agencies and International NGOs to ensure increased quality funding for local protection leaders, including womens rights organizations and women and LGBTQAI-led groups, in line with Grand Bargain commitments of 25%.

Today, we want to especially acknowledge their dedicated perseverance and strength as the first and last responders to crises. We celebrate them in their myriad roles across the world.

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