

Protection during displacement

This handout aims to present the activities that organisations can undertake to secure the rights of IDPs. It first reviews the concept of protection and then turns to models used by humanitarian organisations to analyse a specific displacement situation and design programmes to provide assistance and protection to IDPs in an optimal way.

What is protection?

“The concept of **protection** encompasses all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights law, humanitarian law, and refugee law).”

This definition was devised after a series of workshops organised at the end of the 1990s by the ICRC with humanitarian practitioners and academics, and enjoys broad support.

When we talk about protection, physical protection generally first comes to mind. But extensive harm often occurs when IDPs lack access to adequate means of meeting basic needs as well. By helping to meet basic needs such as those for food, shelter or basic health services, humanitarian intervention helps to protect IDPs.

The need to pay attention to protection when providing assistance: illustration

A few years ago, Refugees International reported that UNHCR had run out of funds to purchase soap for approximately half a million refugees in Tanzania. Not only did girls – who relied on the soap for personal hygiene – drop out of school, but it was also noted that incidence of girls having sex in exchange for soap increased.¹

Providing protection to IDPs

In practice, protection activities aim to prevent or lessen the most damaging effects of armed conflict on the civilian population. Such activities must be integrated into the design and delivery of assistance programmes deliberately and early in the process.

Guiding Principle 27

Organisations “when providing assistance should give due regard to the protection needs and human rights of IDPs and take appropriate measures in that regard”.

Concrete protection activities generally fall under the following four categories²:

- 1. Humanitarian assistance:** health, water, shelter or livelihood programmes are best designed with IDPs’ protection from violence in mind. For example, in a refugee camp in Sierra Leone, sanitation experts consulted with women to map risks and develop a camp protection plan, including proper lighting and location of latrines, as well as the construction of lockable latrines for girls and women.

¹ Refugees International, The Impact of Soap Shortages on Female Refugees in Tanzania, 1 August 2001, <http://www.refintl.org/cgi-bin/ri/note?nc=00051>

² ALNAP, Humanitarian Protection, by Hugo Slim and Luis Enrique Eguren, March 2004, pp.39-44.

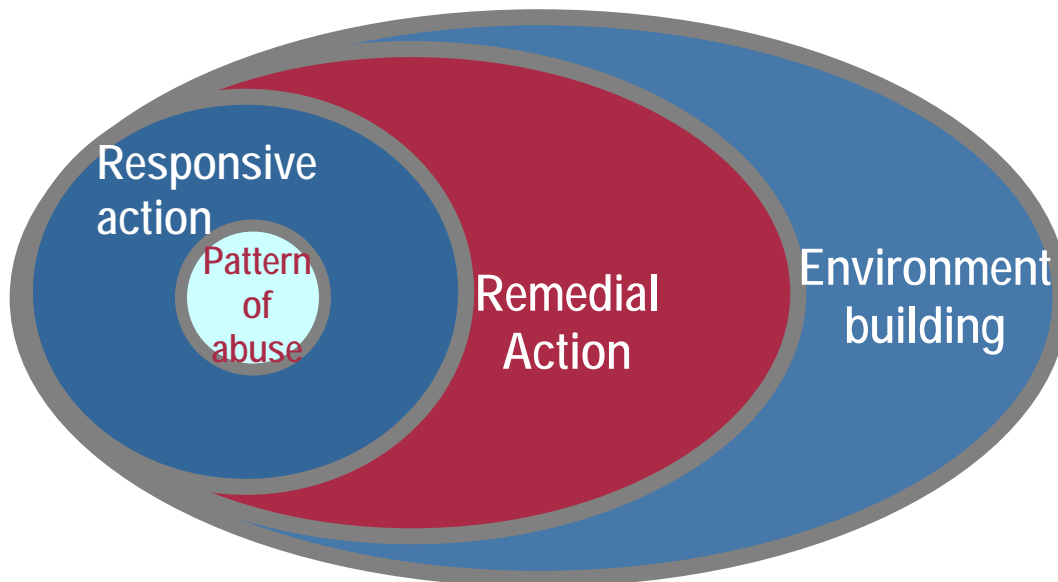
2. Humanitarian presence: the physical presence of humanitarian workers can provide a restraint on some of the acts of violence.

3. Monitoring and reporting: particularly important for protection assessments and situation analysis.

4. Advocacy: with knowledge of, and information on, violations, humanitarian agencies are in a position to engage authorities to ensure their respect of the rights of IDPs. Advocacy activities should be impartial, target the right actors and be well-timed. It is important to assess whether humanitarian advocacy will in a particular context jeopardise humanitarian access and staff security.

The "Egg" protection model³

The "Egg Model" is the most widely used model for humanitarian protection. A critical element for the success of this model is the recognition that no organisation can protect all IDPs on its own. Government and agencies need to cooperate in protection work and have a sense of which is best placed to act in a particular moment and on a particular issue.



- **Responsive action:** activity undertaken in connection with an emerging or established pattern of violation and aimed at preventing its recurrence, putting a stop to it, and/or alleviating its immediate effects. Such activities have a sense of real urgency, and aim to reach a particular group of civilians suffering the immediate horrors of a violation.
>> example of responsive action: *demobilisation of child soldiers.*
- **Remedial action:** activity aimed at restoring people's dignity and ensuring adequate living conditions subsequent to a pattern of violation, through rehabilitation, restitution, compensation and repair. This is a longer-term process than responsive action, such as the recuperation of health, family tracing, livelihood support, housing, education, judicial investigation and redress.

³ ICRC, Strengthening Protection in War: A Search for Professional Standards, Geneva, 2001.

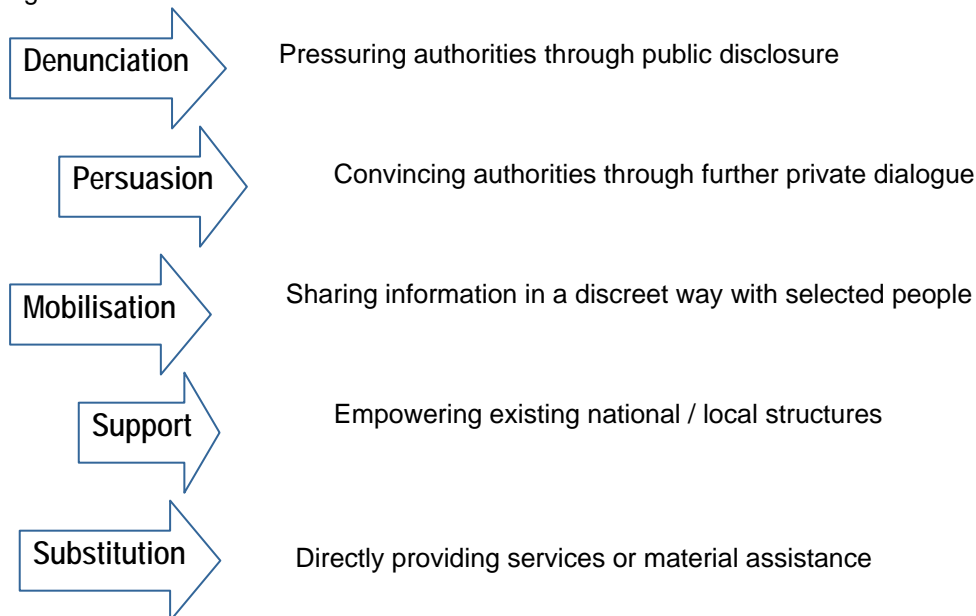
>> **example of remedial action:** *education of children following their demobilisation.*

- **Environment-building:** any activity aimed at creating and/or consolidating an environment – political, social, cultural, institutional, economic and legal – conducive to full respect for the rights of the individual. This is a deeper process which is likely to involve the improvement of laws, the training of security forces, development of a non violent political culture, etc.

>> **example of environment-building activity:** *advocating for the ratification by the government of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.*

Modes of action

There are five main “modes of action” that humanitarian organisations can use to secure the rights of IDPs.



IDP protection programming

The delivery of humanitarian assistance and protection occasionally places affected communities at increased risk, for example when assistance is provided to IDPs without paying attention to host communities. It is therefore essential to assess the following, in order to decide which activities should be carried out in a particular IDP situation and lessen unintended consequences:⁴

1. **Violations:** What is the nature of the violations against IDPs and who are the perpetrators?
2. **Impacts and effects:** What is the general effect on the people suffering them in terms of physical, social, gender, health, economic, political and emotional terms? Are there

⁴ Based on ALNAP, Protection, An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies, by Hugo Slim and Andrew Bonwick, August 2005

immediate or longer term needs for safety and assistance as a result of the impact? How are different groups of people (in regard to age, gender, class) affected?

3. Legal standards and responsibilities: What are the specific legal standards in law that are violated? Which authorities have the primary responsibility under national and international law? Which international agencies or international human rights mechanisms are mandated? What is the responsibility of your own organisation?

4. Protective capability, intent and compliance attitude: What are the coping mechanisms of affected IDPs and how can these be supported? Is access good and are there sufficient human and material resources? How willing are the government or military actors to comply with legal standards?

5. Inter-organisational complementarity: What are the competences and capacities of the agencies present? How can organisations combine their strengths in order to complement one another? Should a protection focal point be set up?

Build on IDPs' self-protection capacities

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement emphasise the necessity to consult IDPs when planning assistance and protection activities, and to involve them in the implementation phase.

GP 3: IDPs have a right to request assistance;

GP 7: Free and informed consent of those to be displaced shall be sought; involve IDPs in planning and management of relocation;

GP 18: Participation of women in planning and distribution of supplies;

GP 28: Participation of IDPs in planning and management of durable solutions.

In considering the views of the displaced, it is essential to solicit the views of all segments of the population. Too often, the importance of consulting women is overlooked and their capacities ignored, notwithstanding the fact that women and children typically constitute the overwhelming majority of an internally displaced population.

Importance of soliciting the views of women: illustration

In the Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania, there were so many women without husbands that specially marked tents were set up and situated in an area designated "safe". During the brief period when the system was used, the number of sexual attacks increased markedly. The bright orange tents acted like beacons pointing to unaccompanied women. Had the women been consulted, more suitable and safer arrangements would have been made.⁵

Organisations should draw on the knowledge that IDPs have regarding the nature and timing of the threats confronting them, as well as the history of previous threats and coping strategies used to face those threats. This will help organisations to complement the responses of the displaced.

Especially with a view to the longer term, designing programmes in a way that draws and builds upon the resources and capacities of the displaced is essential. So long as the displaced lack the means to be self-reliant, they will remain dependent upon relief assistance, generally long after the emergency phase.

Resources

⁵ Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, *The Gender Dimensions of Internal Displacement: Concept Paper and Annotated Bibliography*, 1998, p23

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