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PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING Cabo Delgado



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Protection Mainstreaming

- **What is protection mainstreaming?**

Protection mainstreaming is an imperative for all humanitarian actors engaged in humanitarian responses, it ensures that protection lens is incorporated into operations, allowing the identification of vulnerabilities, gaps and trends. It is a way of designing and implementing all programs so that protection risks and potential violations are taken into consideration.

To mainstream protection, actors need to understand who is at risk, from what or whom as well as why, and the consequences their actions or inaction may have on the threats people experience and their vulnerability and capacity vis a vis these threats. This includes knowing how and where to refer people in need for specialist support to prevent or recover from violence and exploitation, as well as understanding when, how, and to whom to refer specialized protection issues.

The following four elements must be taken into account in all humanitarian activities:

1. **Prioritize Safety and Dignity, and Avoid Causing Harm:** Prevent and minimize as much as possible any unintended negative effects of your intervention which can increase people's vulnerability to both physical and psychosocial risks.
2. **Meaningful Access:** Arrange for people's access to assistance and services in proportion to need and without barriers. Pay special attention to individuals and groups who may be particularly vulnerable or have difficulty accessing assistance and services.
3. **Accountability:** Set-up appropriate mechanisms, through which affected populations can measure the adequacy of interventions, and address concerns and complaints.
4. **Participation and Empowerment:** Support the development of communities' and individual capacities and assist people to claim their rights, including – not exclusively – the rights to shelter, food, water and sanitation, health, and education.

- **Why is the mainstreaming of protection important?**

Humanitarian actors increasingly recognize that the dissociation of sectorial intervention cannot be considered apart from basic protection principles. Protection considerations include safety and dignity, ensuring meaningful access, being accountable, and ensuring participation of all groups in the affected population. All humanitarian actors have the responsibility to mainstream protection into humanitarian response programs.

The centrality of protection is affirmed in the IASC Principals Statement on Protection in 17 December 2013, which stated 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.”

In line with IASC’s statement on centrality of protection, the 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. To implement that commitment, respective role and responsibilities of Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams and Clusters have been clarified:

- **Who is responsible?**

The primary responsibility for assistance and protection lies with states, which have legal obligations to protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of all persons within their territory, in accordance, for example, with the standards of international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law (IHRL), and refugee law.

Some humanitarian actors including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) employ protection officers and advisors and implement specialist protection programs, such as prevention and response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Child Protection programs, or legal assistance programs. Some UN agencies are particularly mandated to directly implement protection activities. On the other hand, not all humanitarian actors are expected or mandated to directly implement protection programs or have the necessary staff and skills to do so. However, **all humanitarian actors have an ethical responsibility to incorporate protection principles into the humanitarian response programs.**

Humanitarian actors frequently encounter situations where affected populations face specific protection risks and where states and other responsible authorities are either unable or unwilling to fulfil their protection responsibilities. While assessment, analysis and response to specific protection risks is best undertaken by trained protection or human rights actors, all humanitarian actors must be able, at a minimum, to reduce potential harm, implementing activities in a safe and dignified manner. Humanitarian actors must also be able to recognize protection issues, refer and support affected individuals and populations to access appropriate care and support, recover from abuse, claim their rights and access available remedies.

GRAPH 1: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN MAINSTREAMING PROTECTION

Donors and Funding Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider protection mainstreaming as a key concept of their funding strategy. • Include specific requirements related to protection mainstreaming as part of the allocation and reporting process. • Support protection mainstreaming initiatives undertaken by fund recipient agencies.
Humanitarian Coordinator and HCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive the development and implementation of a comprehensive protection strategy to address risks. • Ensure protection mainstreaming is integrated in all stages of the humanitarian programme cycle and in all cluster plans. • Place protection mainstreaming at the centre of humanitarian action.
Inter-Cluster Coordination Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure protection mainstreaming is central to the work of the ICCG and that a collective approach is taken from the clusters to put protection mainstreaming into practice. • Support and facilitate the integration of protection mainstreaming in joint assessments, joint analysis, planning and monitoring under the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. • Support the mainstreaming of protection in all pooled fund allocation papers.
All Clusters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream protection in cluster strategy to address risks that take place within a sector. • Support the mainstreaming of protection in sector-specific programming through advice, guidance and training. • Make use of existing protection mainstreaming tools, guidance and resources.
Protection Cluster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct and compile comprehensive Protection Analysis that details the main protection threats, vulnerabilities and coping strategies of affected population to inform decision and programming. • Provide the technical lead and support in ensuring protection mainstreaming is both regularly discussed in ICCG meetings and put into practice (and as appropriate at HCT meetings). • Provide protection mainstreaming support to other clusters.
Operational Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream protection into all stages of their programmes. • Support peer agencies/local partners to mainstream protection in all stages of their programmes.

- **How to mainstream protection in humanitarian action?**

Humanitarian action must be grounded in a collective protection analysis informed by:

- a) a deep understanding of the dynamics within, perspectives of, and resources available within affected communities and
- b) an understanding of the external environment (national, international political and security dynamics) impacting on their situation.

This can only be achieved by taking the perspectives of affected communities - and the diverse perspectives and experiences within those communities - as our starting point. Hence the critical role of community participation in the assessment, design and delivery process.

The protection analysis is a continuous activity. It needs to start right at the beginning of the emergency phase, when the protection risks are often most acute and hence a rapid understanding of the protection environment is particularly critical, but should be refined and deepened through a more structured process as part of the Humanitarian Program Cycle.

In order to operationalize protection mainstreaming, clusters need to ask themselves whether the core protection principles have been taken into account in planning, implementation and monitoring.

Mainstreaming seeks to address a certain issue (e.g. gender inequality) or contribute to achieving a certain outcome (gender equality) without creating a specific sector, program or project for it. It aims to maximize the positive impacts of an existing sector program or project (e.g. a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene project) on the

situation or issue being mainstreamed (e.g. gender). The goal of protection mainstreaming is to **focus not on what we do (the product)**, but rather on **how we do it (the process)**.

Safety & dignity, and avoid causing harm

Safety can be impeded by physical threats such as violence, assault, coercion and environmental threats. Dignity can be impeded by physical and psychological threats such as lack of respect, lack of confidentiality and privacy, and lack of consultation and participation. Humanitarian actors need to ensure that the manner in which their assistance is administered and delivered does not increase a group or person's safety and security risks.

Indicators:

- Services and facilities are available in safe locations, and locations that are accessible in safety.
- Access to services respects the culture and customs of the community and promotes the integrity of the family and community.

Meaningful Access

Access can be hampered by conflict and/or insecurity and violence, the presence of checkpoints and blockades, inaccessible locations for particularly vulnerable individuals and groups, or denial of access for reasons of belonging to a particular ethnic group.

Indicators:

- Disaggregated data is used (women, men, girls, boys)
- Specific needs, including based on age, gender and diversity, are taken into account in planning, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian action

Accountability

Accountability is about giving account, ensuring communication approaches that include the widest spectrum of the community; taking account, establishing a two way communication ensuring the community becomes more empowered and is directly engaged in decision-making; and being held to account, providing the community the opportunity to assess and, where feasible, alter or sanction the activities and decisions of humanitarian actors.

Indicators:

- Humanitarian information systems communicate effectively with affected communities and other local actors
- Affected populations have opportunity to register complaints, provide feedback and to get a response

Participation and empowerment

Effective participation is about taking the perspectives of affected communities - and the diverse perspectives and experiences within those communities - as the starting point for the assessment, design and delivery of humanitarian action.

Indicators:

- Active and effective participation of affected people both in planning, response and monitoring processes
- Number of consultations with affected people both in planning, response and monitoring processes

Protection Mainstreaming and the Core Humanitarian Standards:

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out Nine Commitments that organizations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. At the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), stakeholders highlighted the urgency to put people at the center of humanitarian action and singled out the Core Humanitarian Standard as a practical way to improve humanitarian effectiveness.

Indeed, the Chair's Summary Report stated that: "Participants at the Summit recognized the need to ensure people affected by crises are not only informed and consulted but put at the center of the decision-making processes. People affected by crisis should be treated as partners, not beneficiaries. Numerous commitments were made towards addressing this shift by donors, UN agencies and NGOs including the adoption of the Core Humanitarian Standard." The CHS is a verifiable standard, available to all humanitarian and development actors.

The CHS verification framework allows its users to establish an objective baseline for their performance and work towards continuous, evidence-based improvement². The nine commitments that make up the CHS cover the issues of Safety and Dignity and Avoid Causing Harm, Meaningful Access, and Accountability, Participation & Empowerment, which together form the four pillars of protection mainstreaming.

