Key Elements of Results-Based Protection

There is broad recognition of the need to enhance protective impact through outcome-oriented and results-based approaches to protection. There remain questions, however, as to exactly what this entails. Listed below are the main key elements of results-based protection as developed through an InterAction-led initiative.  

“Results” refers to the measureable components of an intervention that contribute to and include the outcome or impact (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of the response. Outcome is measured in terms of reduced risk.

Risk arises from the combined effects of threat, vulnerability to the threat and capacity vis a vis the threat and takes the form of severe and prevalent, violence, coercion and deprivation and their consequences for individuals (for examples, as manifested in displacement, loss of property and assets, physical or mental injury, discrimination, exclusion, etc.). Efforts to reduce risk may be preventive, responsive, remedial, or seek to create an environment conducive to compliance with relevant norms more comprehensively.

What are the key elements for a results-based protection, how are they applied throughout the program cycle, and why do they measurably contribute to the reduction of risk?

1. **Robust context-specific protection analysis**, based on the experience of the affected population as the starting point, is critical. This entails thorough understanding of the threats and of the behavior, motivations, and practices of actors driving the threats. It requires understanding who is vulnerable vis a vis a specific threat and why, as well as what capacities people have to address the threat. A detailed disaggregation of the most severe and prevalent risk patterns is the essential basis for problem-solving.

   *WHY?* Without detailed understanding of the specific context from the viewpoint of those affected, program design is based on generalizations and assumptions rather than measurable risk reduction.

2. **Ensure that protection analysis examines the situation of the entire affected population**, without pre-defined criteria, groups, or individuals labeled as most vulnerable.

   *WHY?* Targeting specific groups and standardized vulnerability criteria creates a bias, excluding individuals and risk patterns from analysis, skewing choices about how to respond and resource allocation for protective impact.

3. **Identify the protection norm that needs to be fulfilled in order to reduce risk**. Relevant norms standards include national law, international humanitarian law, human rights law, and refugee law as well social, cultural, and religious norms.

   *WHY?* Identifying the relevant standard or benchmark enables working backward to determine what leverage or opportunities exist to influence actions, behaviors, and attitudes in order for risk to be reduced. It helps identify who should undertake what action in order to bring about the desired results.

4. **Develop a context-specific theory of change** or causal logic to describe the pathway and milestones between the status quo – i.e. the risk people are experiencing – and the desired end state or outcome of reduced risk. This also helps describe the roles of various actors to contribute to the desired protection outcome and identify assumptions made about the intervention and its limitations. Comprehensive and context-specific protection analysis lends itself directly to a context-specific theory of change.

   *WHY?* Context-specific pathways to reduce risk establish measurable milestones of progress towards a protection outcome. It serves to enhance understanding about the complementary role of diverse actors towards a common outcome.

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1. [https://protection.interaction.org/](https://protection.interaction.org/)
5. Start with the affected population to identify and build on individual and community-based protection mechanisms as much as possible.

*WHY?* Research indicates that community-driven approaches to protection lead to better designed programs that are relevant, sustainable, and support more outcome-oriented methods to enhance protection.

6. **Design for the contribution of different actors and multi-disciplinary approaches** to achieve protection outcomes.

*WHY?* Protection outcomes most often require multi-disciplinary efforts targeting various components of risk at multiple levels of intervention. This demands a conscious approach to mobilize relevant actors and cultivate complementarity between their roles. The relationships, boundaries, and synergies between humanitarian actors and other relevant stakeholders, including human rights, development, diplomatic, and peace operations, must be acknowledged and considered.

7. **Flexibility** is a critical factor in a problem-solving, rather than formulaic, approach.

*WHY?* A response should be designed not by way of predefined activities or predetermined vulnerabilities, but by the methods that inform the appropriate action. A methodological approach to design allows for an adaptable process and allows multiple actors, including the affected population, to shape the activities appropriately and inform the response. Meaningful impact often necessitates a multi-year strategy whereby flexibility in funding and approach enables adaptation to changing patterns of risk.

8. **Invest in information management systems** that are purposefully designed against the original protection analysis to track changes in risk patterns, and enable decision-making and adaptation in real time.

*WHY?* Real-time information and secondary data (including the use of indicators (*direct* and *indirect*) to measure changes in patterns of risk) is the basis for strategic prioritization and the relevance of the intervention to meaningfully reduce risk.

9. **Monitor, Evaluate and Learn.** Build in deliberate space and time to reflect on all aspects of the response including the protection analysis, strategy, operations, monitoring, and evaluation. Professionally develop and manage program teams to adopt a reflective practice that enables them to question their actions on a consistent basis in order to regularly review and adapt goals, objectives, and actions as it relates to achieving a protection outcome.

*WHY?* Adopting results-based approaches throughout the program cycle greatly enhances the ability to evaluate outcomes and impact (rather than simply program outputs) and to absorb learning. Routinely critiquing our assumptions, organizational models, and mandates helps to create an environment for learning that can drive change and fill gaps in the protection learning deficit.

10. **Establish organizational policies that comprehensively support** results-based protection. Internal policies, processes, and structures should allow the time, methods and allocation of human and financial resources necessary for results-based approaches.

*WHY?* Establishing clear policies allows for clarification of expectations and sends a clear message of intent to staff, partners, donors and other actors. It serves to inform and orient all aspects of management and strategy in humanitarian action which gives primacy to outcome-oriented protection.

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