



Results-Based Protection Practitioners' Virtual Roundtable

Getting Practical with Prevention: What does it take to reduce risk?

InterAction held a [Results-Based Protection](#) (RBP) Practitioners' Roundtable event virtually featuring a series of five online sessions held between Thursday, June 11th – Wednesday, August 5th 2020.

Preceding the Roundtable, InterAction held a public webinar featuring expert panelists who responded to issues raised in InterAction's 2020 publication [Embracing the Protection Outcome Mindset: We All Have a Role to Play](#).

The following five virtual sessions convened expert practitioners from various country contexts, including Nigeria, Honduras, Iraq, and others, to discuss pertinent themes.

Overall objectives for the Roundtable included:

- Exchange experience, good practice, and challenges related to addressing the threats faced by vulnerable people in armed conflict and other situations of violence
- Explore how to adopt and promote practical problem-solving methods for risk reduction
- Cultivate a peer group of practitioners experienced in results-based protection

This document is a collection of the background information and speakers for the five online sessions.

SESSION 1: WHAT DO THREATS HAVE TO DO WITH RISK?

Background

Risk and Threat: Where are we starting?



Risk reduction--what we refer to as the protection outcome--is at the core of Results-Based Protection. Risk reduction requires breaking down each risk into its component parts: threat, vulnerability, and capacity. Analyzing each of these components in relation to the others – for a specific risk – is a crucial step to finding strategies to reduce that risk. While different actors can and should play different roles in addressing the different components of risk, a holistic analysis can help to identify contextualized patterns of the threat, the vulnerability vis-à-vis the threat, and the capacity vis-à-vis the threat. Together, this nuanced understanding can provide clearer pathways for understanding the relevant actors, leverage points and opportunities, the necessary skills, relationships and other program components needed to reduce a risk.

InterAction's work on Results-Based Protection globally has found that humanitarian actors have a lot of experience working to reduce the vulnerability that people and communities face in crises. More recently, humanitarians have made strides to improve how we understand and engage with existing community/individual capacity to overcome risk. Unfortunately, tackling the threat remains a gap within most organizations.

What are the challenges with addressing the threat?

There are good reasons why addressing the threat poses challenges to humanitarian action. Threats can come from a myriad of sources, from inside the family, to members of the communities we work in, to armed groups, both state and non-state actors. Oftentimes, addressing the threat component of risk involves upsetting power dynamics, whether within a community or in relation to an armed actor. When the threat comes from armed groups, it can bring organizational risk, or personal risk to our staff or to communities we work with. These risks need to be thought through and managed effectively.

We believe the humanitarian community should be more ambitious about incorporating the threat and how to address and reduce it in protection strategies. There are good examples across disciplines that demonstrate effective methods for addressing the threat. Unfortunately, these remain scattered across contexts and approaches vary among organizations. We still have much to learn about what is needed to strengthen our ways of working, our program models, and the skills and experience we hire for when it comes to addressing the threat.

Framing Questions:

- Why is the threat component of risk so often omitted or minimized in protection analysis and consequently, from program strategies and design?
- What existing strategies can we learn from, particularly across disciplines, that can contribute to our understanding of, addressing, and/or reduction in threat?
- What are the barriers that we encounter at a field level for addressing the threat?
- What are the necessary skills and competencies across our teams, including at senior management levels, that are needed to strengthen our ability to reduce threats?

SESSION 2: COMMUNITY STRATEGIES FOR RISK REDUCTION

Background: Community Strategies for Risk Reduction

The humanitarian community has committed to ensuring that the affected population is at the center of our response. Results-Based Protection emphasizes the same core principle. Communities need to be at the center of all our efforts to reduce risk. This means several things: ensuring we have enough staff based in communities, whose job it is to listen to and engage with community members, ensuring we have the right language capacity to communicate with populations in their own language and dialect, developing enough flexibility in projects so that we can adjust based on new understandings of the community, and maintaining enough humility to change our own minds when our assumptions about what will reduce risk differ from community-led strategies. At the core, it means we have to invest in understanding and supporting a community's own strategies to reduce risk.

This effort, of course, is complex. The communities we work in are not monolithic, and sometimes have conceptions of security that do not align with our principles. Often, conflict has disrupted traditional strategies and disturbed social cohesion. The realities of humanitarian programs and staffing mean that those in decision-making positions often do not have time to gain in-depth knowledge in culture, history, and context. Too often, subsequent efforts fail to engage with other disciplines who may have this insight, for example, long-term development actors or anthropologists. Given all of this, how do we put into practice and effectively center community strategies in our program strategies? How do we create space for this throughout the project cycle?

How do community strategies fit into risk reduction?

Previously we discussed, through examples from the field, why the threat component of risk is crucial, yet under-considered. In this session we turn to community strategies; many of these focus on the capacity component within the risk equation and what we can do to understand and increase capacity. However, community strategies are also important when it comes to reducing threat and reducing vulnerability. What are some of the tactics that communities themselves work to reduce threat? How can local traditions be called upon to reduce vulnerability? How can we learn from communities themselves about effective strategies and work to support them?

Framing Questions:

- What efforts are needed to ensure we understand different community strategies so as not to undermine them, and/or to better identify ones we can support?
- How can community strategies help to inform humanitarian action?

- Are there underlying principles or effective ways of working when supporting community strategies for protection?
- What can community strategies tell us about the threat and types of risk that communities are facing? Likewise, how does analysis of the threat help us to better connect with community strategies? How does the nature or characteristic of the armed groups in the environment change the kinds of strategies we should be looking to support?

SESSION 3: PROTECTION ANALYSIS FOR DECISION MAKING

Background: Protection Analysis for Decision-making

Much ink has been spilled on protection analysis in recent years, and it is generally understood to be a crucial component of outcome-oriented approaches to protection. Good protection analysis must be continuous, must begin from the perspective of the affected population and must be nuanced and context-specific. It can be challenging for agencies to produce collective analysis that takes a holistic view of risk, and agencies confront real risks about sensitive information in many contexts.

It continues to be the practical components of how to do protection analysis, and how to tie it to decision-making, that throw up challenges. Who, precisely, is positioned to do this analysis within organizations? How are agencies able to safely share information and the analysis? How can analysis from non-protection actors be integrated? There is generally agreement that a lot of data exists in our programs, and that our staff have a wealth of knowledge and the ability to do more analysis than they are often asked to do. We want to spread the view that protection analysis is within reach for all humanitarian actors, and that it is not as complex as we sometimes make it out to be. We need analysis systems – or ecosystems – that are conducive to both rigorous and flexible analysis that is used to inform protection strategies at a field and a strategic level. This requires a mind shift within the culture of organizations and the humanitarian system writ-large.

Framing questions:

- How can we strengthen protection analysis to inform decision-making?
- What are key decisions that need to be made in order to achieve protection outcomes? What analysis is required for those decisions?
- What are ways to utilize the analysis that we already produce in our program? What about analysis that happens informally, through regular verbal interactions, or that lives in the head's of field staff?
- What are ways that we enable flexible decision-making? What can we do to improve this? What do we need to ask for from the donor community?

SESSION 4: HOW WILL WE KNOW IF RISK HAS BEEN REDUCED?

Background: why do we measure?

There are a variety of reasons why we measure the outputs and outcomes of our programs: to prove we did what we did, to understand if our methodologies have been effective, to influence the direction of future programs, to comply with donor requirements, to contribute to cluster activities, and more. However, too often, our measurement becomes - from necessity – focused on what and how donors want

us to measure within particular projects. This can result in our measurement becoming inflexible, tied to globally designed indicators, and focused on outputs. We also have a tendency to think about measurement as an add-on as the final project deliverable. Rather than invest sufficiently in monitoring and evaluation of outcomes from the start of the project, M&E can become a box-ticking exercise. Consequently, this can lead to poorly designed indicators, the collection of data not relevant to understanding outcomes, and a gap in learning how interventions are genuinely contributing to risk reduction.

As we shift our mindset to a greater focus on protection outcomes – risk reduction – we must also ensure we are using measurements that reflect whether or not the risk we are trying to stop or prevent has actually decreased. Too often, measurement is used after a program is completed; to shift towards measuring outcomes, we need to get into the habit of measuring changes in risk patterns as we implement. In other words, measuring along the way throughout program implementation helps to guide our protection strategies and helps us react to changes in context.

What do we want to shift to?

In order to be adaptive in measuring results and protection outcomes, we must recognize that the kind of measurement commonly written into donor contracts and log frames is only one kind of measurement we should be doing. Measuring protection outcomes can be challenging, but it's not impossible. To begin, we should aim to measure changes in risk by measuring changes in the threats, vulnerabilities, and capacities that underlie the risk. These changes, called results, include changes in policy, behavior, attitudes, and practice, and should be considered under each element of risk.

There are a variety of methods that, used in conjunction with one another, can help us to track risk over time:

- **INVESTING IN COMMUNITY-BASED METHODS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** We should continue to invest in community-based methods to measure perceptions of safety, security, and dignity. These efforts must take into account context-specific manifestations of risk and safety, how they change over time, and how they might vary for different members of the community; 20 communities are often attuned to very minute changes in their own security context.
- **DRAWING ON INCIDENT TRACKING:** Incident tracking, where possible, can provide useful context and understanding of risk patterns and trends. There are often opportunities to use aggregate and anonymized information from case management programs or security analysis to inform our understanding of trends.
- **DEVELOPING AND USING PROXY INDICATORS:** Proxy indicators are another way that agencies are exploring how to measure changes in risk patterns with a lack of robust data. Defined as indicators which “track measurable changes that are understood to represent the occurrence of a related, but unmeasurable change,”¹ proxy indicators are often used in early warning systems or where there are ethical or practical barriers to direct measurement. Effective proxy indicators rely on well-reasoned assumptions that link the desired result to the observable proxy.² For example, how late the shops in a town are open, land area cultivated, or how many children are walking along a road to school, can signal changing risk patterns.

¹ Christoplos, I. and Dillon, N. with Bonino, F. *ALNAP Guide: Evaluation of Protection in Humanitarian Action*, pg. 40 (ALNAP, October 2018)

² Corlazzoli, V. and White, J. *Measuring the Un-Measurable: Solutions to Measurement Challenges in Fragile and Conflict-affected Environments* (Search For Common Ground, March 2013)

- **MEASURING AGAINST LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES:** Many protection outcomes require longer time horizons than can necessarily be accommodated by short-term grant cycles, either because the change required simply takes a long time (i.e., behavior change), or due to the dynamic nature of conflict environments. Many agencies maintain a presence in particular communities for years at a time, giving them the opportunity to achieve outcomes. However, it's important to be able to measure progress across project grants. Interim or progress indicators can measure decreases in risk components over shorter periods of time.

Fitting these modes of measurement into our current ways of working is not always easy, particularly given how much current methods are tied to funding. While it is not always feasible to understand the specific indicators of reduction in threat, increase in capacity, or reduction in vulnerability that might emerge in a short project, NGOs must enable their staff to develop interim indicators that can be tracked to guide a risk reduction strategy. Donors should expect and encourage approaches that entail the identification of new information and indicators that embrace iteration and adaptability to achieve protection outcomes.

Guiding Questions

- How can we demystify the measurement of protection outcomes to make it more practical and accessible to everyone?
- What do organizations need internally and from donors, to support a shift towards the measurement of protection outcomes?
- Practically, what does it look like to monitor results continuously in order to measure risk reduction?
- What methods are most useful for measuring changes in risk patterns?
- How can we move away from global indicators to the use of more context-specific indicators for better problem-solving and measuring results?

SESSION 5: ACCESS AND PROTECTION

Background

Access and protection are often considered to be two, unrelated components of humanitarian action. However, we would argue that rather, access and protection are linked in a number of ways, and by better understanding this connection and complementarity, we can improve access and support protection outcomes.

Conceptually, access and protection are both fundamentally concerned with the treatment of the affected population. When we are undertaking any kind of liaison, dialogue, or negotiation about access of affected populations, this engagement is – whether implicitly or explicitly -- about how people are being treated. In other words, it is about their *protection*. Access negotiation can quickly become bureaucratic and transactional and it is common for it to be limited to issues such as convoy arrangements, distributions, moving people and fuel, and so on. It is important to be mindful, however, that the underlying purpose of these negotiations and that the agreements reached about humanitarian activities are effectively agreements about how people are being treated. This is also at the core of many efforts aimed at achieving protection outcomes.

The mind-shift we are seeking when we emphasize using results-based protection is one that ensures that protection is the ultimate goal we aim to achieve. When we consider protection in this framing, it is easy to see how the deliberate deprivation or denial of access to basic services needed to survive (humanitarian services as well as land, markets, family networks and more), is in fact the risk we aim to reduce. Increasing access, in essence, helps to achieve protection outcomes. As such, both access and protection practitioners are concerned with changing the attitudes, behavior, policy and practice of authorities and duty-bearers as it relates to the communities we work with.³

When we begin to think practically, we find that the work that is needed for protection outcomes and for improved access requires similar skills, tactics, and methods. To begin with, analysis is crucial for both efforts. We often use similar tools and techniques, that help us understand the attitudes, behavior and practices of authorities, armed groups, and other and relevant stakeholders. Unfortunately, these efforts are often siloed from each other within organizations as well as within coordination structures in a response. Improved coordination and collaboration among protection and access specialists could potentially improve analysis efforts on both sides.

Negotiation is widely understood to be a core skill and tactic used to improve access; however, it should also play a larger role in strategies to achieve protection outcomes. At their core, negotiations are attempts to change the behavior of authorities, and require an investment in relationship building. This requires time and a certain set of interpersonal skills for the staff responsible. These skills, what we might refer to as soft skills (i.e. communication, active listening, patience, mediation, establishing rapport, flexibility) are often not the priority that we look for when we hire. To improve the quality of both protection and access, we must consider how we prioritize these soft skills for both hiring processes and for ongoing capacity building efforts in our trainings, coaching and skills building.

Furthermore, there is a need to better understand the tactics used by affected populations as their own strategies for securing access to their basic needs and/or preventing parties to a conflict from committing violence and other forms of abuse. As noted in results-based protection, the importance of understanding and supporting community strategies to achieve protection outcomes, is also a critical entry point for supporting access initiatives and minimizing the risk of undermining community efforts towards access.

We explore, both access and protection are cross-cutting issues that require significant investment and prioritization within humanitarian action. Understanding the complementarity between the two can go a long way in supporting protection outcomes.

Guiding Questions

- What are the access issues in your context that are connected to protection outcomes?
- What are the shared skills among humanitarian personnel that are needed to effectively achieve both access and protection outcomes?
- How can access move beyond a transactional focus to a more strategic understanding whereby protection of affected populations is at its core? What does this mean for negotiations and other forms of engagement with parties to conflict?
- What can we learn from the methods populations use themselves to secure access and prevent various forms of abuse?
- How can our respective teams in the field work together to improve both access and protection?

³ The scope of protection actors is broader, as it also includes the behavior, attitudes, and practices of other stakeholders, including within the family and community.



List of Presenters

Session 1

MODERATOR:

[Tiffany Easthom](#) is the Executive Director of Nonviolent Peaceforce, a protection-focused NGO whose programs focus on risk reduction. She opened the panel by speaking about the importance of addressing the threat component of risk, and where the humanitarian community as a whole needs to invest further.

PANELISTS:

[Redi Misho](#) is the Regional Program Manager, Middle East and North Africa for Cure Violence based in Erbil, Iraq. Redi spoke about Cure Violence's use of a public health approach to violence reduction, and how he has seen it work in programs in Iraq and Syria.

[Bulus Mungopark](#) is the Community Engagement Manager at Centers for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) in Nigeria. He spoke about CIVIC's community-based protection programming in northeast Nigeria and how their model allows communities to lead in engagement with armed actors to address their own protection risks.

[Jenifer Fernando](#) is a Director at JHAJA, a Honduran civil society organization that works with young gang members, former gang members, and those who are at risk. She spoke about the work that JHAJA has done in analysis of gangs in Honduras and the strategies they have developed to build trust and relationships.

Session 2

PRESENTER:

[Oliver Kaplan](#) is an Associate Professor at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver. He is the author of the book, "Resisting War: How Communities Protect Themselves" (Cambridge University Press, 2017). He was a Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace and previously a postdoctoral Research Associate at Princeton University in the Woodrow Wilson School and at Stanford University. As part of his research Kaplan has conducted fieldwork in Colombia and the Philippines. Kaplan received his Ph.D. in political science from Stanford University and completed his B.A. at UC San Diego.

Session 3

PRESENTER:

Lara Peter Nissen currently works as director at ACAPS. He led ACAPS since its inception in 2009. Peter's passion is to give evidence as large a voice in decision-making as possible. He has worked with humanitarian action his entire career. Most of his experience comes from the RC/RC movement (ICRC, IFRC and Danish Red Cross) as well as various NGOs. He has lived and worked for extended periods of time in Central America, South Asia, Southern and Eastern Africa and Europe. An interesting fact about Peter bakes sour dough bread and brews (excellent) beer.



Jessica Lenz is the Senior Advisor-Protection at InterAction and leads the work on Results-Based Protection since the start in 2012. Jessica has over 20 years of experience working on protection, specifically child protection and gender-based violence in humanitarian action. As an independent expert for most of her professional career, Jessica worked with countless INGOs, UN agencies, and donors supporting both policy and programming on child protection. Her area of expertise focuses on the issue of child recruitment committed by parties to conflict. She has advised and supported programming focused on prevention, response, and reintegration of children forced into armed groups.

Session 4

Lea Krivchenia joined InterAction as the Senior Program Manager for Protection in May of 2019. She provides field support to NGOs in the field on results-based protection, with an initial focus on Nigeria and Myanmar. Lea has more than 10 years' experience in protection and humanitarian work in Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Turkey, and Syria, and has supported programs in Iraq, Guatemala, Malawi, and Lebanon. Prior to joining InterAction, Lea worked for several NGOs including Nonviolent Peaceforce, GOAL, and Project Concern International. Lea has a B.A. in Women's and Gender Studies from Yale University and is currently pursuing an M.A. in International Policy and Practice at the Elliot School of International Affairs at George Washington University.

Session 5

Melody Knight is the Global Humanitarian Access Advisor for NRC USA and is responsible for managing global projects aimed at improving humanitarian access through policy development, research, advocacy, and capacity building for frontline humanitarian aid workers. Ms. Knight's humanitarian experience began when she moved to a refugee camp in South Sudan in 2013. Thereafter she joined NRC, first as the Conflict and Policy Advisor based in South Sudan (2015-2016), and then as the Access Advisor in Afghanistan (2017-2019). In her five years with NRC she has conducted field missions to Bangladesh, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Myanmar, and Somalia, as well as served as an access consultant in the Field Operations Department of NRC's Oslo Head Office. She holds a bachelor's degree from University of Wisconsin-Madison and a master's degree from the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs in Washington, DC.

Jenny McAvoy joined InterAction as Director of Protection in 2011. With over 25 years' experience, Jenny is an expert on protection in armed conflict and is passionate about ensuring coherence between field-level realities and policymaking for strategic outcomes. Prior to joining InterAction, Jenny was a policy advisor with the OCHA Protection and Displacement Section in the U.N. Secretariat where she coordinated country-focused and thematic policy initiatives with U.N. Member States, shaped the Security Council's Protection of Civilians agenda, and led on analysis and advice for field operations on strategies to increase humanitarian access and address other protection concerns, including through humanitarian negotiations with parties to conflict in contexts such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen. Jenny previously worked for 13 years with local, national, and international NGOs in Southeast Asia and in Sudan, including several years with Oxfam GB as Humanitarian Coordinator in Indonesia and subsequently as Oxfam's first Humanitarian Protection Advisor.