

Protection for People: What Do We Mean?

Guidance for NGO Senior Leadership

The humanitarian community works in situations where civilians are subject to a great deal of violence and harm. All humanitarians have the ability—and the responsibility—to do something about it. To begin, we must agree on what our responsibilities are and what we are trying to achieve.

What is PROTECTION?



In humanitarian crises, protection is commonly defined as **“freedom from violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation.”**

What is a PROTECTION OUTCOME?



A protection outcome is a reduction of risk for people affected by crises. In this case, “risk” is people’s exposure to all forms of violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation.

What is the CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION?



The Centrality of Protection means that all humanitarians should work to reduce protection risks experienced by the affected population. The objective is to prevent and reduce the risks that people face due to the crisis; risks like killing, rape, forced recruitment of children by armed groups, as well as existing risks exacerbated by crisis, including Intimate Partner Violence and child labor.

The **IASC Affirmation in 2013** lays out this responsibility for all humanitarian actors and **2016 IASC Policy on Protection** outlines specific responsibilities for Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Team, and clusters.

RELATED CONCEPT: SPECIALIST PROTECTION WORK

In most humanitarian crises there is a need for interventions which require specific knowledge, expertise, and approaches. These can be called stand-alone protection programs and can include, for example, case management for GBV survivors, psychosocial support services, legal services, mine action, family tracing and reunification for separated and unaccompanied children, and others.

THE PROTECTION RISK EQUATION

The protection risk equation describes how protection outcomes and risk reduction fit together. It works at global, national, and local levels and can be helpful for both analysis, design, and measuring protection outcomes.



Action Toward a PROTECTION OUTCOME

- ➔ Undertake a **PROTECTION ANALYSIS** as part of the overall needs and risks assessment process.
- ➔ **IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE** protection outcomes, being specific about the risks you want to reduce.
- ➔ Develop **APPROACHES THAT CAN REDUCE THE SPECIFIC RISKS** identified. This may include a theory of change, pathways, or clear steps.
- ➔ **BUILD PARTNERSHIPS** to draw together diverse skills and experience to help reduce the specific risk.
- ➔ **ENGAGE MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND LEARNING (MEAL) TEAMS** to support continuous measurement of risk patterns, and use that measurement to learn and adapt interventions.
- ➔ **DOCUMENT AND SHARE** experience.

How Organizations Can Strengthen Protection Outcomes

All organizations have a role to play in reducing risks for affected populations, whether they have specialized protection programming or not. Leadership plays a particular role in setting strategy, dedicating resources, and providing guidance. Protection analysis and risk reduction should be central.

Preparing Organizations to Achieve PROTECTION OUTCOMES



IDENTITY

Put protection at the heart of the organization's vision, mission and goals.



STRATEGY

Develop an organizational strategy that includes the intent to support people to feel safe and secure.



POLICY

Ensure that protection is threaded through organizational policies, language, capacity, and risk appetite.



PRACTICE

Set expectations that all humanitarian responses will be designed and implemented building on protection analysis.



PARTNERSHIPS

Develop partnerships that embrace different skillsets, relationships, and mindsets that can contribute to reducing risk.



QUALITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Assess organizational performance against protection outcomes.

COMPLEMENTARY STRATEGIES and Entry Points

As senior leaders, there are different strategies that, in combination, can contribute to protection outcomes.



STRATEGIC

Place protection outcomes at the center of strategic level discussions and development, while planning, and in all coordination mechanisms.



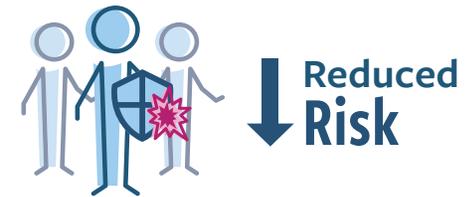
SPECIALIST

Plan specialist protection work with protection outcomes in mind.



ACROSS SECTORS

When relevant, any sector and discipline can contribute to risk reduction for affected populations.



Where does PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING fit in?

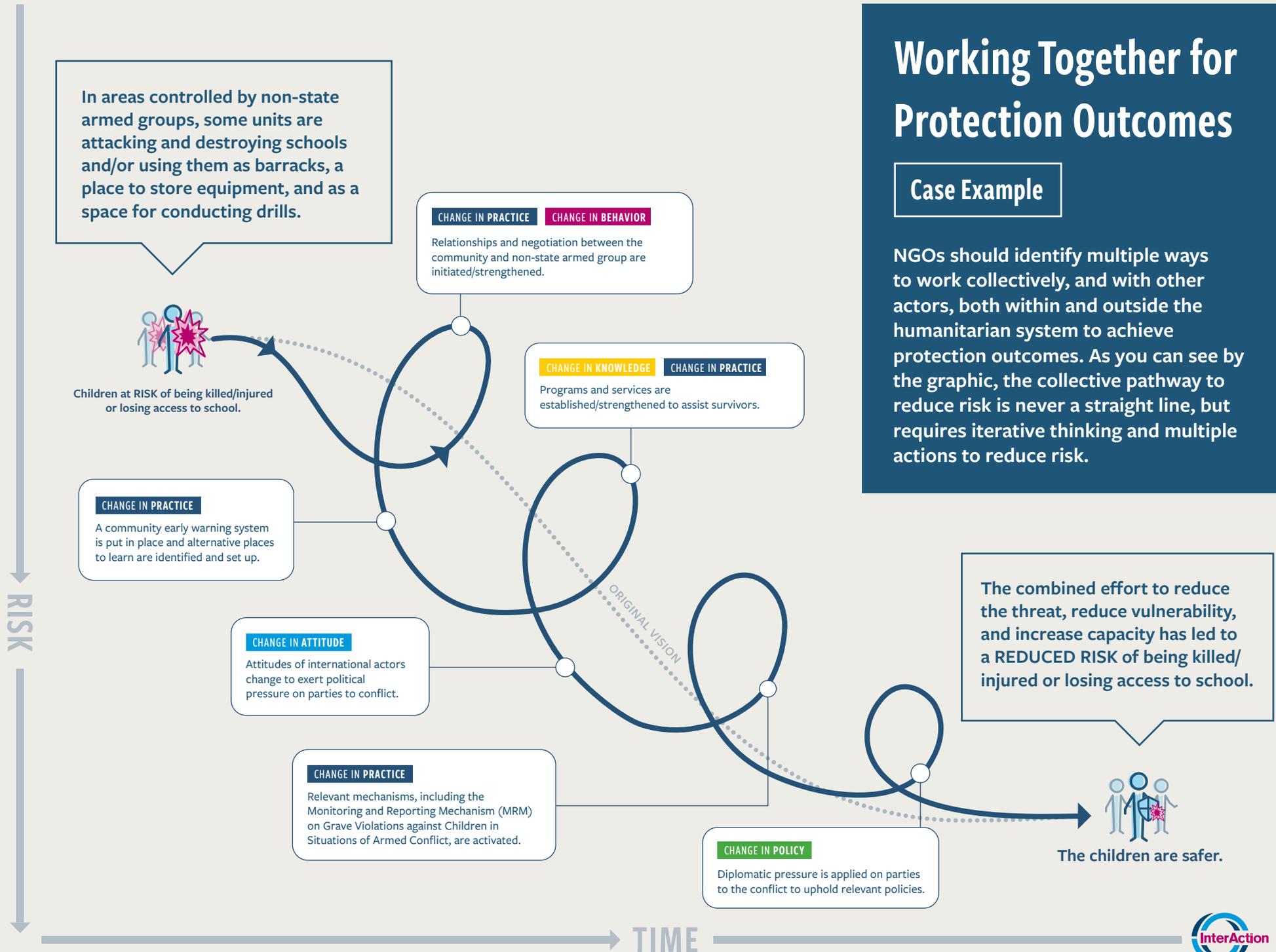
Protection mainstreaming, referred to by some organizations as safe and inclusive programming, is ensuring that the design or implementation of humanitarian programs do not cause harm in the form of increasing protection risks for the affected population.

While protection mainstreaming is an important component of quality programming, it does not encompass all risks that populations face, which is why a focus on protection outcomes is crucial. In other words, protection mainstreaming is not enough.

Working Together for Protection Outcomes

Case Example

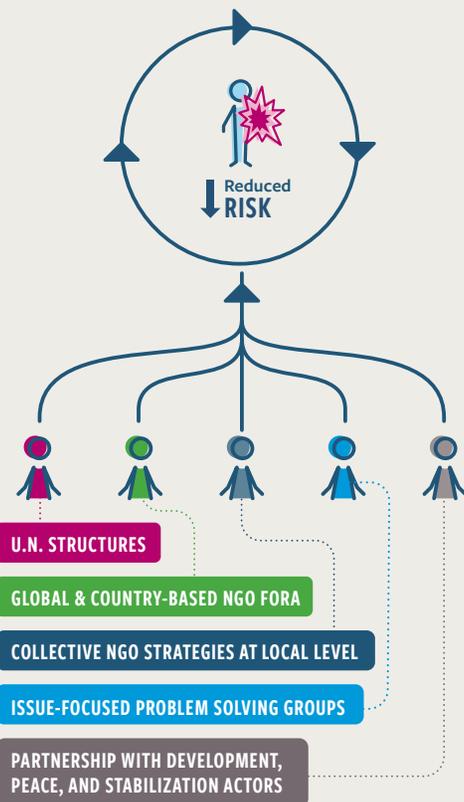
NGOs should identify multiple ways to work collectively, and with other actors, both within and outside the humanitarian system to achieve protection outcomes. As you can see by the graphic, the collective pathway to reduce risk is never a straight line, but requires iterative thinking and multiple actions to reduce risk.



Working Together for Protection Outcomes

Case Examples

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GLOBAL COALITION TO PROTECT EDUCATION FROM ATTACK



[GCPEA](#) is an inter-agency coalition formed in 2010 to address the problem of targeted attacks on education during armed conflict. They work to

measure and analyze the risks, provide support to local actors and governments, and influence armed actors. This work includes collaboration with governments, humanitarian NGOs, human rights organizations, the U.N., civil society, and other stakeholders. In at least 37 countries globally, there is a pattern of attacks on education by state security forces and non-state armed groups. GCPEA works toward solving this problem and also promotes the [Safe Schools Declaration](#), an inter-governmental political agreement to protect education during armed conflict.

PRACTICAL TOOLS TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTION ANALYSIS



As part of the broader momentum within the humanitarian community to improve protection analysis for better decision-making and risk reduction,

the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) are developing a results-based protection analysis resource package of practical tools tailored to frontline staff, coordination actors, and those steering broader humanitarian strategies. This package includes a [Protection Analytical Framework](#), which was developed in close collaboration with other agencies in the Information and Analysis working Group through the Global Protection Cluster. This new initiative will support collective efforts to analyze the risks faced by affected populations.

USING THE COMMUNITY PROTECTION APPROACH (CPA) IN OPT



The CPA is a collection of tools and methodologies used to produce analysis, starting from the perspective of the affected

population. This information is fed into an interactive dashboard that, in turn, facilitates multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary strategies. The CPA is currently being used by many NGOs and other actors in several country contexts. In the oPt, for example, a DG-ECHO-funded Consortium comprising five partners—WeWorld-GVC, NRC, Action Against Hunger, Premiere Urgence Internationale, and ACTED—came together to do joint analysis to understand community protection risks (threats, vulnerabilities, and capacities) through an outcome-oriented, multi-sectoral quantitative system of indicators and qualitative narratives. This collaborative effort is explored in [Mindshift: A Collection of examples that promote protection outcomes](#), published by InterAction in 2021.

COLLECTIVE APPROACHES BY LOCAL NGOS AND CSOS IN MYANMAR



The role that local NGOs and Civil Society Organizations can play to highlight and tackle protection threats and risks is well illustrated by the work of the Joint Strategy Team (JST). The JST brings together nine CSOs to coordinate aid and advocacy activities in Kachin State, Myanmar. Their work highlights self-protection and local protection strategies that can be adopted by local organizations and communities in situations of armed conflict. More [HERE](#).