

Protection & Prioritising the most Vulnerable Persons in the Gaza Humanitarian Response

Who is this document for? This document provides guidance for non-protection actors on how to address protection and vulnerability in their work and highlights aspects to consider in programming to ensure a protection based humanitarian response in Gaza. It should be used alongside cluster specific factsheets on protection.

Everyone in Gaza is in need- why a protection and vulnerability focus?

- Those most in need. The entire population of Gaza has been affected by the recent conflict, previous conflicts and the blockade but there are some groups and individuals who are more in need than others. When providing humanitarian assistance there is a global agreement that all humanitarian actors should focus on those most in need.
- Need for prioritisation. It will take time and resources to reach everyone in Gaza; this means that prioritisation is necessary to decide *who* to support; *where* (geographically) to support; *when* to support (start with whom) and *what* type of assistance. Such prioritisation should be done bearing in mind protection and vulnerability concerns to ensure that the most urgent cases receive appropriate and timely assistance, i.e. although the plan is to reach all some have more urgent need for support.
- Avoid unintended consequences. *Example: how assistance is provided and to whom can create tension among IDPs (refugees and non-refugees) and non-IDPs. It is essential that the community understands how prioritisation was implemented.*
- Ensuring you have the full picture: *Include disaggregated data [details of gender, age, marital status, disability, economic situation etc.] in assessments and when deciding on who-where-what- to support, to ensure the project is based on the full picture*
- Funding: Many donors have identified protection and vulnerability as a key aspect of projects they support and require a protection and needs based approach.

What is the definition of vulnerability?

A person is not vulnerable from birth but life circumstances (e.g. poverty, education) and/or discrimination may impact on the ability to enjoy equal access to human rights and some persons may be more vulnerable and/or marginalised.

- People are, or become more vulnerable due to a combination of physical, social, environmental and political factors, and vulnerability is not a fixed category. Not everyone with the same characteristics will experience the same level of vulnerability, *i.e. being a woman does not make a person vulnerable but a pregnant woman whose husband was killed and no longer has ownership of her home will have protection concerns.*
- Responding to 'special needs' of the elderly, chronically ill, persons with disabilities, lactating or pregnant women means meeting their human rights to shelter, food, health and education and this sometimes requires the humanitarian actors to have a stronger focus on certain groups or individuals.

Can you provide a list of those most vulnerable that should be prioritised?

There is no generic prioritisation list. Each organization has to assess vulnerability for each project at the planning stage before humanitarian response is initiated.

Aspects to consider when looking to assist people most in need?

- Assessments and surveys – ensure that data and details related to vulnerable groups are included so you can identify them and address their needs
- Community participation should be broad based (men/women/disabled/elderly/children) in all phases of the programme
 - (i) assessment phase of **who** to support; (ii) in deciding **what** type of assistance; (iii) **when** and **how** information is shared; (iv) **during** implementation

The below is not in order of priority but highlights some key protection factors to consider when planning (to help you to prioritise)

Critical aspects

- People from the most damaged areas [also consider who is most vulnerable within this area] and the access restricted areas [ARA]
- Refugees or non-refugees. Equality of responses; avoid creating a divide between groups
- A main aspect is ensuring accountability mechanisms – ensure that you have set up a way for those receiving support to give feedback and identify gaps

Women and girls

- Female headed households: War widows and women in need of legal support for inheritance, custody and family law related issues
- Specific needs in regards to security; shelter; access to services; health; wash facilities including for pregnant and lactating women
- Adolescent girls, widows and separated women at risk of forced marriages
- Women are more susceptible to violence in crowded spaces

Children (60% of IDPs)

- Orphans and children separated from parents
- Children engaged in dangerous labour
- Children living in crowded spaces (collective centres, with host families) may be at greater risk of domestic violence

People with socio-economic hardship

- Pre-existing poverty that may have worsened due to conflict
- Main breadwinner killed, injured or disabled
- People whose livelihoods suffered: Farmers and fishers with damaged livelihoods/ farmland impacted by ERWs/ Factory workers whose workplace no longer operates

People with disabilities; injuries or chronic illness

- Are they a breadwinner and how does that impact on the household?
- Specific needs in regards to security; shelter; access to services; health; NFIs, wash facilities etc.

Elderly

- Specific needs in regards to security; shelter; access to services; health; NFIs, wash facilities etc.

People exposed to ERWs through work

- Men and adolescent boys involved in rubble clearance and reconstruction work
- Children, particularly boys are at risk of ERWs

Tip: conduct a vulnerability analysis as part of planning your assistance

This will help to identify those persons for whom it will be harder to recover without support or who may face particular protection risks if assistance is delayed

- Personal factors (Household composition? Newly disabled bread winner? Elderly? Children?) Special needs of family members (e.g. disability)
- Location of household (e.g. ARA or badly damaged areas)
- Socio-economic factors (level of poverty, loss of livelihoods, assets etc.)
- Security of tenure: (do people have the documents they need? Are recent widows vulnerable due to inheritance rights?)