

IDP PROTECTION STRATEGY – GAZA

INTRODUCTION

During the recent conflict nearly 500,000 people were displaced from their homes, and at the end of 2014 this was still 100,000, plus persons still displaced¹ from previous conflicts; the greatest number displaced since 1967. It is imperative that the response for internally displaced persons (IDPs), and others directly affected in Gaza, receive a humanitarian response that affords them effective protection of human rights.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Sphere Protection Principles must guide the humanitarian response to IDPs and for humanitarian actors to put protection at the forefront of their work.

“At the field level, the responsibility for placing protection at the centre of international humanitarian action rests with Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams, and all Cluster Coordinators. Protection Clusters play a crucial role in supporting humanitarian actors to develop protection strategies, including to mainstream protection throughout all sectors and to coordinate specialised protection services for affected populations.” Centrality of Protection²

DEFINITION OF TARGET GROUP IN THE IDP PROTECTION STRATEGY

In the Gaza context IDPs are persons or groups of persons who have fled their homes or normal places of residence, as a result of conflicts, forced displacement or flood situations. This includes persons who are currently displaced and vulnerable persons whom have returned home but continue to have reintegration needs.

Additionally the protection strategy includes responding to the needs of host families; and persons who are living in/near their badly damaged homes and at risk of displacement.

Under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) all clusters within the Humanitarian Country Team have the responsibility to implement the IDP Protection Strategy, with the Protection Cluster providing technical guidance and the IDP Focal Point (or chair of the IDP Working Group) providing strategic coordination on IDP specific issues.

PROTECTION STRATEGY GOAL

For people in Gaza to be afforded protection when they are displaced from their homes

Key principles and four protection priorities, outlined below, provide clear actions and standards to achieve the protection goal for IDPs, in the current response and towards ensuring preparedness for any future displacements³. This will provide guidance for national and local authorities, and humanitarian actors.

The Work Plan (Annexe 1 to this document) details lead responsibility for the overall implementation and critical actions under each of the Protection Priorities below.

PROTECTION PRIORITY ONE

For the humanitarian response to reach vulnerable persons and communities

1. Profiling and tracking of IDPs.

To ensure appropriate and targeted response the humanitarian community requires to know the location and profile of all IDPs, and this requires strong systems to be in place.

The mechanism to ensure information on all IDPs, (refugees and non-refugees) must be strengthened and include: registration, location, humanitarian situation and tracking of movement, this is for persons in collective centres and those in the community.

¹ People still displaced due to the lack of sufficient funds and accessibility of material (blockade restrictions)

² Annexe 2 – Centrality of Protection (2013)

³ This document should provide guidance when contingency planning and developing preparedness plans.

During this process, at risk persons should be identified. Note where children are living with persons other than their immediate family, additional effort must be made to monitor their situation.

2. Regular and systematic monitoring of the protection situation of IDPs

In Gaza many people have suffered either physical or psychological harm resulting directly from the conflict; additional to this are the difficulties being faced now with people living in overcrowded situations plus the impotence of many to change their situation. This stress has increased violence within families and tensions in communities. The impact on women and children is of particular note including domestic violence, legal concerns associated with inheritance rights, guardianship rights and being at risk of early or forced marriage.

Monitoring the protection situation of IDPs will assist in understanding the causes of concerns and inform decision making for provision of appropriate humanitarian responses. Monitoring must include: IDPs in collective centres and those in host communities; children who are separated and living in host/extended families; other vulnerable persons.⁴

It is essential the specialist teams monitoring the protection situation of IDPs keep the humanitarian community informed, and for humanitarian programmes to use this information to enhance their responses and target appropriately.

3. Targeting humanitarian response based on need

Whilst all displaced households require a response, some families and individuals are more vulnerable than others. Given the recognition that it will take years to respond to humanitarian needs for the population, it is imperative that those who are more vulnerable or who have special needs are prioritised. There are four avenues to assist you do this in your programmes:

1. "Protection and Prioritising the most Vulnerable Persons in the Gaza Response" is a 2-page guide to assist in all phases of programming: i) assessment; ii) designing response; iii) sharing information; iv) during implementation. (See Annexe 4)
2. The Ministry of Social Affairs can be approached for information on individuals in specific geographic locations who are vulnerable.
3. At municipality level the authorities can advise on vulnerable persons in the locality – (supported by the profiling detailed in Action 1 above).
4. In collective centres vulnerable persons identified by UNRWA protection team

A one size fits all approach cannot work when taking into account the range of needs that must be considered, including; needs of women; children; situations where the main breadwinner is disabled or whose livelihood was effected in the conflict; persons who are elderly or frail; persons at risk of exposure to explosive remnants of war (ERWs).

4. Access to legal support

UN agencies and civil society organisations who monitor protection and document human rights violations should provide advice to people, on accessing appropriate support; including to obtain legal documents and pursue mechanisms for accountability and compensation for losses.

⁴ Identified vulnerable groups include: female headed households, child headed households, adolescents, IDPs with chronic illnesses, IDPs with disabilities, elderly IDPs, IDPs that sustained injuries during the recent escalation, IDPs that have been subjected to violence, IDPs that have experienced human rights violations

PROTECTION PRIORITY TWO

For IDPs to receive an integrated response to humanitarian and protection needs

5. Establish a strong mechanism to effectively link monitoring of IDPs with humanitarian response.

During the critical period of responding to a large caseload of IDPs institute an IDP Working Group facilitated by an IDP Focal Point to ensure clarity in the response and for coordinating a cohesive approach towards the protection of IDPs and host families. The Working Group should be comprised of the UDOC Steering Committee⁵ plus a representative from each cluster, as well as relevant authorities.

The IDP Working Group as a sub-group of the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group should aim to do the following:

- i Ensure an integrated response to IDPs in specific communities
- ii Identify gaps in response and seek to address solutions through referrals to appropriate cluster
- iii To provide a forum for protection concerns to be raised; and linked to humanitarian responses (*note these are not necessarily protection-cluster specific activities*) – for example, a lack of washing facilities and therefore loss of dignity may be responded to by the WASH cluster)
- iv For critical protection concerns identified by humanitarian actors to be referred to the Protection Cluster for specialist response where required
- v Liaise with relevant local authorities and government as appropriate
- vi Under the guidance of the Protection Cluster Lead, maintain an oversight of the Strategy and that it's actions are being implemented as in the Work Plan.

The Working Group should meet on a regular basis (weekly or daily depending on need) during the critical phase of a crisis and then ad-hoc as required when the situation is stable. In the current situation the group should agree on meeting at regular intervals for the next 3 months and include planning for preparedness of any future IDP situation.

6. Targeted advocacy to ensure IDP needs can be met

PROTECTION PRIORITY THREE

Resources made available to address the protection concerns and humanitarian needs of IDPs.

Rooted in the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and in international humanitarian and human rights law, the oPt Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) implements an advocacy strategy on the situation for people in the occupied Palestinian territory. The HCT Advocacy Working Group should ensure that the specific needs and rights of IDPs in Gaza are integrated in the HCT Advocacy Strategy and receive special attention.

These include the need for durable solutions; equitable access to humanitarian assistance and services, including for vulnerable groups; and accountability and access to justice for violations of international law.

PROTECTION PRIORITY FOUR

For all humanitarian response to be delivered in a manner that achieves the greatest protection for internally displaced persons in Gaza

With guidance from the Protection Cluster, all humanitarian actors have a responsibility to mainstream protection in their programmes including through the following actions.

⁵ UDOC – Urban Displacement outside of Camps is a mechanism to profile and engage communities. In Gaza work is being done with the local government at municipality level to achieve this being implemented.

7. Provision of protection mainstreaming training.

All staff and volunteers must have an opportunity to access protection mainstreaming training, with a practical focus for their programmes; to ensure understanding of protection principles and how this must be implemented in their work.

8. Meaningful participation.

Ensure full participation with IDPs and the wider community when planning responses; this is particularly crucial when considering displacement options, planning for return and for reintegration. This will not only empower IDPs but if communities get clear concise information that is accessible to all, resentment and possible violence can be avoided.

There are different ways to empower IDPs to participate: through the Municipality level forums, specialist groups (e.g. women's groups, persons living with disabilities, CBOs working with the elderly etc.) and through the collective centres. See guidance in the IDP Protection Handbook.

To enable meaningful participation and informed engagement, programmes should reach out to all IDPs including boys and girls, women and men, older persons and persons with disabilities.

9. Provision of accessible information

For people to access services and remedies it is essential that information is not only available but proactively distributed to ensure communities and in particular vulnerable persons are aware of their entitlements and options.

- i Authorities and humanitarian organisations must ensure that IDPs and people in host communities are fully informed – ensure that information is accessible to all in user friendly formats.
- ii Support should be provided to vulnerable persons with applications and the registration process, where this is needed.

10. Provision of support for IDPs to access documentation

All persons should have access to all documents necessary for the enjoyment and exercise of their rights. In the Gaza context this is of particular concern to recent widows and orphans who may need support with their inheritance situation.

- i IDPs should be supported to access appropriate documents, this may require the authorities to issue new documents to replace those lost during displacement.
- ii Humanitarian actors should ensure that IDPs are aware of what documents they require for different responses and that people know where they can access assistance in legal matters.

11. Responding to serious protection concerns

All staff have a responsibility to report serious protection concerns. Organisations should have in place a policy and procedures to guide staff on how to respond if they become aware of or witness violations of human rights or other protection concerns, and to ensure that victims/beneficiaries are treated with dignity and respect. This must include a mechanism to ensure information can be kept confidential. Reporting of protection concerns can be made to the Protection Cluster or to identified protection service providers. For this purpose refer to the contact list included as Annexe 8⁶. Only trained monitors should interview people in regard to violations of human rights or serious protection concerns.

12. Establish complaints mechanisms

All programmes should have a complaints mechanism so people have an avenue to raise programme or protection concerns; designed so it is accessible by different members of the community including women and children.

⁶ Annexe 8 provides contacts for protection concerns and also other sectors of humanitarian response who can be contacted depending on the need.

PROTECTION ESSENTIALS FOR ALL HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

1. In line with Sphere Protection Principle⁷ 1 – avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions.

Ensure that programmes take into account potential protection concerns when providing a response – all clusters should refer to the **Cluster Specific Guidance** that has been developed for Gaza (Annexe 5) and specific for collective centres the **Guidance on Basic Protection Issues in Shelters and Minimum Standards for Collective Centres** (Annexes 6 & 7)

2. Programmes must not discriminate nor appear to discriminate against any particular group – for example ensure that all IDPs, both refugees and non-refugees receive the same response; consider the support given to persons who previously rented accommodation as well as home owners. Ex-fighters and their families must have equal access to humanitarian response.
3. The Humanitarian Country Team must work towards ensuring that the support given by the Government, UNRWA and other UN agencies is consistent.

⁷ Annexe 3 – Sphere Handbook – pp 29 – 43 Protection Principles 2001