



Protection Mainstreaming Guidelines

These guidelines are intended to ensure that all organizations applying for AHF and CERF allocations in Afghanistan are provided with guidance on the prioritization of protection in their interventions and make sure that the safety and dignity of affected individuals, their families, their communities, and those who are trying to help them is properly considered.

The guideline epitomizes five subjects:

- 1- Background information,
- 2- What is protection mainstreaming,
- 3- Steps to mainstream protection in partners' projects' proposals,
- 4- Gender and Age Marker Code (GAM),
- 5- What is a gender analysis.

1- Background information¹

Ensuring effective protection of conflict or disaster affected populations is increasingly viewed as a main concern of agency and cluster practice in humanitarian response. It is also no longer considered acceptable for humanitarian actors to focus on material needs without considering the safety, dignity and rights of individuals, groups, and affected populations. In this regard the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action (2016), emphasizes the IASC commitment to priorities protection and contribute to protection outcomes in humanitarian action. It places a duty on Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) to ensure that protection is at the center of humanitarian action and requires all humanitarian actors, irrespective of their sector-specific expertise, to contribute to the protection of affected persons by committing to, inter alia, addressing protection issues that intersect with formal mandates and sector-specific responsibilities. Protection mainstreaming – the responsibility of all humanitarian actors – is one way of ensuring that protection principles are used to inform humanitarian response and address protection issues. It requires humanitarian practitioners to strive to minimize the harm they may cause by ensuring a protection lens is incorporated in the design and implementation of humanitarian programs.

The IASC Protection Policy underlines that protection mainstreaming is an imperative for all humanitarian actors engaged in humanitarian response. It is a way of designing and implementing all programs so that protection risks and potential violations are taken into consideration. To mainstream protection, actors need to understand who is at risk, from what or whom as well as why, and the consequences their actions or inaction may have on the threats people experience and their vulnerability and capacity vis a vis these threats. This includes knowing how and where to refer people in need for specialist support to prevent or recover from violence and exploitation, as well as understanding when, how, and to whom to refer specialized protection issues.

¹ IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2016, https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc_policy_on_protection_in_humanitarian_action.pdf



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Based on the policy, all Cluster Coordinators need to ensure that protection is incorporated in all phases of the Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC). In accordance with this, the Inter Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) should decide on the most effective approach to put protection mainstreaming into practice. The Inter-Cluster and Protection Cluster Coordinators (and Protection Sub-Cluster Coordinators) are responsible for ensuring protection mainstreaming is central to the work of the ICCG, and at the country level the Inter-Agency Coordination Team (ICCT) and the Protection Cluster have the responsibility to make sure protection is mainstreamed in all other sectors and humanitarian intervention, including of the emergency humanitarian live-saving assistance.

The Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF) - a Country-Based Pooled Fund (CBPF) - and the Country Emergency Response Fund (CERF) are managed by the Humanitarian Financing Unit (HFU) of the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) based in Kabul. The funds are open based on emergency needs in the country and allocated through clusters to partners, UN agencies, National and International NGOs. Eligible users apply to funding allocations according to modalities set up by OCHA HFU, to ensure quality and compliance in the provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance to affected population. HFU and the clusters review all received proposal through a competitive process. Based on the above-mentioned procedure, the Protection Cluster has been tasked to provide guidance to partners on the writing of two sections in project proposals: Protection Mainstreaming and Gender and Age Marker Code

2- What is protection mainstreaming²

Protection mainstreaming is the process of incorporating protection principles and promoting meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid. The following elements must be taken into account while partners are submitting proposals:

1. Prioritize safety & dignity and avoid causing harm: prevent and minimize as much as possible any unintended negative effects of the intervention which can increase people's vulnerability to both physical and psychosocial risks.
2. Meaningful Access: arrange for people's access to assistance and services - in proportion to need and without any barriers (e.g. discrimination). Pay special attention to individuals and groups who may be particularly vulnerable or have difficulty accessing assistance and services.
3. Participation and empowerment: support the development of self-protection, capacities and assist people to claim their rights, including - not exclusively - the rights to shelter, food, water and sanitation, health, and education.

Why should we mainstream protection?

Mainstreaming protection ensures that the protective impact of aid programming is maximized. Through the incorporation of protection principles into aid delivery, humanitarian actors can ensure that their

² GPC brief on protection mainstreaming, https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/aors/protection_mainstreaming/brief_on_protection_mainstreaming.pdf



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activities target the most vulnerable, enhance safety, dignity, and promote and protect the human rights of the beneficiaries without contributing to or perpetuating discrimination, abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation.

How do we mainstream protection?

Protection can be mainstreamed:

- By including the above elements in the general project management as central to delivering humanitarian aid;
- By incorporating the above elements into project cycle management through protection mainstreaming indicators for each sector.

Who should mainstream protection?

All humanitarian actors share an ethical responsibility for mainstreaming protection across the humanitarian response, including general and sector, programming, advocacy, design, monitoring and evaluation staff, and their managers. Cluster lead agencies and partners are responsible for ensuring that activities within their respective sector are carried out with a “protection lens”, and in particular for ensuring that their activities integrate protection principles. Field Protection Clusters can provide advice, guidance and training on protection mainstreaming.

3- Steps to mainstream protection in partners’ project proposals

Partners and clusters’ lead have the duty to ensure that protection is mainstreamed in their programs, particularly the principle of **participation and empowerment** is properly taken into account in the entire project cycle, and that men, women, boys, girls, the elderly, and persons with disabilities are consulted in order to understand their needs and preferences for location, design, and methodology of assistance of designed projects. Partners need to involve communities and beneficiaries in the need assessment, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of program so they can make informed decisions. While drafting proposal they should clearly indicate that protection mainstreaming is considered step by step, starting from:

1. **Need assessment and risks analysis** - Step 1: Partners should demonstrate that they assessed the overall situation of the targeted population, identified possible threats and vulnerabilities which may trigger additional risks by planned intervention, characterized the risks, assessed the community’s capacities and mechanisms to cope with those risks. To identify specific protection risks and make sure no one left behind and the principle of **non-discrimination is respected**, targeted population to be involved in the need assessment stage of the project, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to be conducted with the different categories of age, gender, minorities, persons live with disabilities, women and child head of household, communities’ elders, local authorities and a brief paragraph from the discussion note to be added into the project’s proposal-Protection Mainstreaming part. The process is supposed to form basis for identifying prevention and mitigation measures to ensure protection principles are mainstreamed in the intervention,



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the affected population is full involved in identifying their needs and vulnerabilities, and they understand about their capacity on how to address those vulnerabilities.

2. **Project design** - Step 2: Partners should define whether the project's design (project proposal) is aligned with protection mainstreaming principles, particularly the principle of ***prioritize safety & dignity, and avoid doing harm***. Humanitarian interventions may make targeted population more vulnerable and possibly expose them to certain protection risks, such as intimidations or physical attacks, mainly in cases when material assistance is provided. Individuals or groups in targeted communities may face problems at distribution sites, including extortion, sexual assault and robbery as well as problems at official or unofficial checkpoints while travelling to and from a distribution point.

Partners should clearly describe in the protect proposal-Protection Mainstreaming part- that their planned intervention considers the safety and dignity of targeted individuals and communities, how they will address the risks to make sure that vulnerable individuals including women and children head of household, person with disability, elders, minorities, or other particular individuals and groups are safe while attending the project activities and receiving assistance. The partner should also ensure that precautionary measures are planned to address identified risks. It includes being able to promptly address unforeseen risks arising during the implementation of the project in order to mitigate negative impact for beneficiaries, in an adequate and timely manner. Should this not be the case, partners should allocate resources to build capacity of staff on protection mainstreaming and whenever possible, appoint a dedicated protection mainstreaming focal point throughout the project implementation.

3. **Project implementation** - Step 3: Partners should explain in the project proposal- Protection Mainstreaming part- that during the project implementation phase, they will take into account all preventive and mitigation measures to ensure that the risks identified in Step 1 are fully addressed and the plan for the implementation of protection mainstreaming activities is applied, including details about necessary resources (both human and financial). The partner should describe that they will ensure that the environment in which assistance is provided is safe for all the groups in the targeted communities, as well as the environment through which the individuals travel is safe for all concerned population in order to ensure ***Meaningful Access***.

If some individuals, for example, older persons or persons with disabilities, cannot access the services, partners should ensure that special arrangements are made to identify individuals with limited mobility. Partners should also consider whether women and men may have different capacities to access particular assistance, e.g. cash compared with in kind resources. The interventions with displaced communities should not be at the expense of the local host population, consequently assistance should be provided to both groups where possible and when justified, in order to ensure social cohesion.



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4. **Monitoring and evaluation** - Step 4: Partners should define in the project proposal- Protection Mainstreaming part- that a clear monitoring and evaluation plan is designed in order to assess whether the protection mainstreaming activities have had positive impact on affected populations in terms of safety, dignity, meaningful access, accountability, participation and empowerment and take into account the lessons learnt. Partners should make sure that the targeted population is included in the project's monitoring and evaluation stage in order to ensure **Participation & Empowerment** of affected population and the population will know they have a right to equitable and safe assistance, and where and how to obtain it.

GBV and Child Protection:

Protection Mainstreaming can be seen as the umbrella comprising of the key principles mentioned above, including prioritizing safety and dignity and avoid causing harm, ensuring meaningful access, and participation and empowerment. The application of these principles includes GBV and Child Protection mainstreaming as well, and those concepts are not considered separately. However, in view of the Afghanistan context, a specific focus should put on both issues. Partners should take into account coordination with specialized entities on the subject while designing the project and make sure that the GVB and Child Protection cases, identified during the project implementation, are fully addressed with special attention payed to **confidentiality** and to the **principle of do no harm**.

4- Gender Age Marker (GAM) Code

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee GAM as one of the gender equality programming tools is required to be used in the Financial Tracking System (FTS) when partners submit their proposals to the AHF. The GAM identifies the extent to which essential programming actions address gender- and age-related differences in the humanitarian response and to measure the program effectiveness. All partners need to register their projects on the GAM site³, use the GAM tools and make sure gender equality is considered in their planned intervention and in the project's activities.

The GAM is based on consideration of 12 program elements (Gender Equality Measures or "GEMs") essential to gender equality programming. The partners need to take into account the below points in order to make sure the GAM is properly addressed throughout the project cycle:

- 1- There is demonstrated understanding of the different needs, concerns and priorities of different gender and age groups.
- 2- Sex- and age-disaggregated data is collected and analyzed.
- 3- Targeted individuals and groups receive assistance.
- 4- Assistance is tailored to the needs and interests of the different gender and age groups.
- 5- Steps are taken to reduce and mitigate gender-based violence.
- 6- Gender-related information and analysis is shared with other actors.

³ <https://qms.unocha.org/content/project-proposal-submission> <https://ee.humanitarianresponse.info/x/7pDownSS>



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- 7- Women, girls, boys and men in appropriate age groups participate in and influence decisions taken throughout the project.
- 8- Feedback and complaints mechanisms are responsive and effective.
- 9- Information about the project is shared appropriately with different groups.
- 10- There are distinct benefits for different groups, as a result of tailored activities.
- 11- Different groups are satisfied with the assistance.
- 12- Problems and unintended impacts or barriers are identified and addressed.

Automatic Coding: the GAM codes projects on a 0 to 4 scale and codes are generated automatically based on answers to multiple-choice questions in the system. Each GAM code is based on evidence of the required program action or step planned in the project proposal, plus considering gender and age. If all three are present, the GEM automatically codes 4; if none are included, it codes 0.

- 1- GAM code- 4 responds to both Gender and Age differences in key program actions
- 2- GAM code- 3 responds only to Gender differences in key program actions (but not age)
- 3- GAM code- 2 responds only to Age differences in key areas (but not gender)
- 4- GAM code- 1 key program actions do not address gender or age differences (none)
- 5- GAM code- 0 key program actions are not present⁴.

To ensure that proper GAM is considered in project's cycle, all partners need to undertake a proper gender analysis and make sure desegregated gender and age data is collected while conducting project need assessment, particularly understanding of the different needs, concerns, priorities and capacities of women, girls, men and boys are considered in all aspects of the project and activities are planned based on identified needs.

5. What is a gender analysis?

A gender analysis looks at the relationships between women, girls, men and boys and considers their respective roles, access to and control of resources and the constraints each group faces relative to others. It allows for an understanding of who in the population is affected by the crisis, what they need and what they can do for themselves during recovery. Thinking about the gender dimensions of one's work improves what an organization does, how it does it and ultimately how effectively the work done meets the needs of all those impacted by emergencies, especially the most vulnerable.

How to conduct a rapid gender analysis?

- 1- Find and gather gender information that is already available; in the areas where the project is supposed to be implemented. Start by gathering information about the gender context to develop an overview of gender relations and coping strategies of women, girls, men and boys. Look at

⁴ . The IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM) [https://fcluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/gam_overview .pdf](https://fcluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/gam_overview.pdf)



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opportunities that are available and accessible such as access to education, employment, livelihoods, health services, legal rights and ownership/control of assets including who made important decisions at the household and community levels, at what structures does the community use to make decisions and how do women and men participate in these.

- 2- Collect gender information that is related to the program and that is not already available; look for sex- and age-disaggregated information about the needs, capacities and preferences of the affected community including, information about protection and GBV risks facing women, girls, men and boys, and the capacities and preferences of women, girls, men and boys in the affected population.
- 3- Analyze collected gender information; list the distinct capacities, needs and preferences of women, girls, men and boys including roles and responsibilities for women, girls, men and boys. Find out that is there a fair (paid and unpaid) workload distribution, how does the distribution impact their respective rights and opportunities, who makes decisions about the use of resources, are needs met equitably. Note the dynamics between women, girls, men and boys. How do women and men help or hinder each other in meeting their needs and fulfilling their rights. Who perpetrates violence against whom, what roles do institutions and the community play in meeting needs and rights, as well as in addressing and preventing violence.
- 4- Recommend future action planning based on the analysis; It is important to use the results of the analysis to determine whether a program should provide assistance to all women, girls, men and boys or to specific groups. Keep recommendations short and to the point. Remember to take into account the context of the situation.

Ensure to undertake key informant interviews with some women community leaders, teachers and health workers (and other key female figures) to understand more about sensitive issues that are unlikely to be raised in a group setting or by men. If there are no women on the assessment team engage a female community leader to accompany a male assessor and therefore increase the chances of reaching at-risk women. If there is no field access speak with the local gender specialists about their views on the affected communities. Meet with displaced people from that area, and conduct phone interviews.

Always remember the below points:

- Put women, girls, men and boys at the center of the assessment;
- Understand the cultural context, gender analysis also provides insight into cultural and religious understandings of roles. It gives insight into the norms, values, traditions, attitudes and behaviors of the community within the local context. The careful analysis of relations and roles helps to identify vulnerabilities, potentials for backlash and solutions to critical issues.
- Consult all affected women, girls, men and boys, systematic dialogue with women, girls, men and boys — both separately and in mixed groups — is fundamental to good humanitarian programming. In some



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cultures, men and boys will not speak about certain issues in front of women and girls and vice versa. Women may defer to men in terms of defining priorities.

- In women-only groups, women may be more willing to address how best to approach men so that there is no backlash against women's increased activism. Adolescent girls and boys may have different ideas, as well as needs, that will not be captured if you consult only adults. It is also imperative to consult marginalized groups separately, including people of ethnic and religious minorities or people with disabilities, who are often excluded from participation⁵.

⁵ Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action at; https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2018-iasc_gender_handbook_for_humanitarian_action_eng_0.pdf