

NRC PROGRAMME POLICY



Photo: Christian Jepsen/NRC

NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

NRC

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Our vision

**RIGHTS RESPECTED
PEOPLE PROTECTED**

Our mission statement

NRC works to protect the rights of displaced and vulnerable persons during crisis.

Through our programmes, we provide assistance to meet immediate humanitarian needs, prevent further displacement and contribute to durable solutions. Through our stand-by rosters, we provide expertise as a strategic partner to the UN, as well as to national and international actors. Through our advocacy, we strive for rights to be upheld and for lasting solutions to be achieved.

We take action during situations of armed conflict, and engage in other contexts where our competencies will add value. We are a rights-based organisation and are committed to the principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality.



*A sandstorm quickly overtakes Goudebo camp, in Burkina Faso.
Photo: Ingrid Prestetun/NRC*



Introduction to NRC's Programme Policy

NRC's Programme Policy builds upon NRC's overarching Policy Paper. Our Programme Policy provides the framework for ensuring coherent, quality programming across all phases of displacement. It outlines NRC's operational focus within each of our core competencies (also known as sectors of intervention), and it articulates the principles and best practices guiding our programmes.

The complex challenges that people affected by displacement face require constant programme development and innovation. This policy outlines where NRC has technical expertise. In certain cases – when the need for assistance or solutions requires – we deliver services beyond what is outlined in this policy.

The Programme Policy provides broad guidance on our core competencies and on priority approaches, including protection, cash-based interventions and integrated programming. It is to be read jointly with our other key policies, in particular the NRC Policy Paper and the Protection, Gender and Partnership policies.

Practical guidance on programme and project design, implementation and evaluation can be found in NRC's Evaluation Policy, our Project Cycle Management framework, our Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook, as well as in the core competency and thematic handbooks and online resources.

A woman carries boxes of a corn soya blend for her children during an NRC distribution in South Sudan's Unity state.

Photo: Albert Gonzalez Farran/ NRC

Where, and for whom, we work

NRC is a humanitarian organisation specialising in displacement, with a particular focus on refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). We work in all phases of displacement, from sudden emergencies to durable solutions.

The people we assist

Our target group, as mandated in our mission, is “populations or people affected by displacement”. Displaced people often face threats to their safety and dignity, including violence, coercion, exploitation and deprivation, as well as restrictions on their access to services, assistance, livelihoods and other basic rights. For NRC, populations and people affected by displacement include: IDPs, refugees, returnees, people at risk of displacement and people who are unable to flee (whether they are being obstructed or because they lack the means or ability to do so). Given the important role that host communities have in supporting displaced people and in contributing to durable solutions, we also include members of host communities in our programmes. This aligns with our conflict sensitive approach and our efforts to understand and mitigate the potentially negative effects of our interventions and programmes on communities, markets and the environment.

NRC primarily works in situations of armed conflict, providing assistance, protection and concrete solutions. In some countries where we operate, we can expand our target group to include people affected by displacement from disasters caused by natural hazards (previously called natural disasters), adverse effects of climate change and generalised violence, and vulnerable migrants. In these contexts, we assess where our displacement expertise and competencies add value, and then engage accordingly. Wherever we are present, NRC prioritises reaching hard to access populations.



A lorry laden with household belongings and family members zooms towards Jalalabad after clearing the border in Mohmand Dara district, eastern Afghanistan, as thousands of families suddenly felt forced to return to Afghanistan.

Photo: Jim Huylebroek/NRC

Friends Ibrahim, Mustafa and Ibrahim sit against a background of smoke, after ISIS set fire to oil wells south of Mosul. The boys lived under ISIS for two years in Qayyarah, Iraq.

Photo: Wolfgang Gressman/NRC



Where we work

We provide assistance in emergencies where needs are often the most acute, and where community resilience may be at its most fragile. Our country operations must ensure that they are able to provide frontline responses to new crises that may arise. We frequently work in complex, protracted crises characterised by long-term or cyclical displacement as well as recurring violence and shocks. Our programme and advocacy work contributes to and promotes durable solutions for displacement. We also aim to prevent further displacement. Through this spectrum of work, we often bridge the humanitarian-development divide.

The contexts where we work are generally highly volatile, and we often see the different phases of displacement overlap. As such, programme responses developed in an emergency phase must also transition towards greater beneficiary, community and local government engagement, reinforcing community preparedness and resilience.

How we work

All NRC programming is based on the following approaches.

Principled

We are committed to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. We remain independent from political, economic, military or other non-humanitarian objectives, and abstain from taking sides in hostilities or engaging in political, religious, racial or ideological debates and controversies. Our goal is to prevent and alleviate suffering where we work, to protect life and to ensure respect for people. We develop and implement programmes without discrimination, give priority to the most urgent needs, and avoid exposing people to further harm.

Rights-based

We are a rights-based organisation that recognises the universality of human rights, and are committed to non-discrimination in all aspects of humanitarian work. We recognise individuals as rights holders with legal entitlements to protection and assistance. We encourage actors with responsibility – duty bearers – to respect and protect the rights of displaced and vulnerable people as set out in domestic and international law. Recognising that we cannot assist all individuals, our programme interventions prioritise those most in need, in proportion to their vulnerabilities and capacities.

Protection-centred

A commitment to protection is at the core of our mission and underlies all our activities. We reduce the risk of harm and rights abuses – such as violence, coercion, exploitation and deliberate deprivation and neglect – and we actively promote the rights of people affected by displacement. We integrate protection principles, objectives, and approaches across all NRC programmes and core competencies, at every stage of our interventions.

NRC staff prepare emergency aid, including water and baby supplies, for newly arrived Iraqi families in Khazar camp. Many have fled as Iraqi forces advanced towards the city of Mosul in 2016.

Photo: Karl Schembri/NRC



Participatory, accountable and in proximity

We ensure the participation of people affected by displacement in all phases of the programme cycle. We operate in a transparent and consultative manner, and always aim for greater accountability to the affected populations we serve, to the authorities, and to our partners and donors. This includes enhancing community governance structures and linking them with services and assistance. All NRC activities adhere to transparency and anti-corruption practices, including beneficiary selection, communication, procurement and contracting. We ensure that programmes contribute positively to local markets and people's livelihoods. Our programmes incorporate clear feedback and complaint mechanisms for both our beneficiaries and local communities. We respect confidentiality and are in compliance with data protection standards to safeguard personal and other sensitive information. Proximity to our beneficiaries is essential to participation, accountability and protection. We protect humanitarian access through advocacy, negotiations and risk management. Remote programming approaches are only used as a last resort.

Inclusive

NRC recognises that vulnerability is not inherent to these predefined categories of populations. A person or group becomes vulnerable in certain environments and in circumstances of rights abuses, deprivation, exploitation and discrimination. We recognise the different needs and vulnerabilities of men, women, girls and boys, as well as marginalised demographics such as older people, people with disabilities, displaced people or migrants, people belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, linguistic minorities and/or indigenous peoples, and members of the intersex, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTI) community. We recognise the risks and barriers they face, and identify responses that address inequalities and specific needs. We integrate a gender, age and diversity perspective into all our activities, by ensuring equitable, safe and meaningful access to our services, and supporting the inclusion of women, men, boys, girls and groups most at risk in relevant decision-making processes.

Partnership

We engage in partnerships to strengthen the impact of our programming. Partnerships can enhance both local capacity and our own, and offer options for broader integrated responses and sustainable programme and protection approaches. We aim to achieve greater equality between NRC and our local partners in terms of responsibility for joint programme design, implementation and monitoring. Working with the right partners can contribute to achieving durable solutions, and to prepare our eventual exit from an operation. NRC partners with a broad range of local and global actors to improve programme effectiveness, strengthen outcomes and increase access. Coordinated programme approaches through consortia – when we partner with one or several organisations to achieve a common goal – are an important mechanism for delivery of humanitarian assistance. We engage actively in strategic consortia, seeking leadership roles when appropriate.

Contextualised programmes

Context is a fundamental determinant in how we design and implement our programmes. Analyses take into account beneficiary capacities, needs, priorities and preferences, as well as challenges and opportunities in a given operational environment. Through strategic planning, we decide whether and how different sectorial interventions can be coordinated or combined to address needs and achieve common objectives. Particular attention is given to developing quality programming in insecure environments and minimising security threats to beneficiaries, partners and staff, as well as risks of loss or diversion of programme assets or funding.



Nafiso, left, waits for the plane on Dadaab airstrip to take off to Mogadishu, Somalia. Tens of thousands Somali refugees have begun to return to Somalia. NRC is working to ensure that they're given information about the areas they are going to, that process is well coordinated, and that they're protected.

Photo: Fredrik Lerneryd/NRC

Coordinated

Coordination between all relevant actors is crucial for an effective humanitarian response.

We actively participate in humanitarian coordination structures – namely, the cluster system – to encourage a concerted, complementary, coordinated and effective humanitarian response.

When appropriate and when possible, we may actively support and provide leadership to these coordination structures and mechanisms.

Do no harm and gratuity of services

We are committed to avoiding any infliction of harm on the people and communities we assist, their livelihoods, and the environment, while maximising the positive impacts of policies and programming. We consider the political, social and economic impact of our work, ensuring that programmes are conflict sensitive and that interventions do not further fuel tensions or conflicts. We aim to integrate environmental and disaster risk reduction considerations into the design of our operations. This mitigates the risk of negatively impacting the environment, climate and natural resources.

It also reduces exposure to natural and human-induced disasters and seeks to enhance community preparedness and resilience to system shocks. We never charge for our services, although certain activities may require beneficiary contributions to promote sustainability after our departure.

Gender sensitive

Across different contexts and cultures, men, women, girls and boys are affected differently by displacement. They have different roles, needs, vulnerabilities, capacities and opportunities, as well as different perceptions of what constitutes an appropriate humanitarian response. We recognise these differences and incorporate them into all aspects of programmes. While all conflict- and disaster-affected populations vulnerable to further harm, displaced women and girls are often exposed to greater risk and may have additional protection needs. Gender-based violence (GBV) can affect both females and males, but globally, women and girls are disproportionately affected. We aim to reduce the risks faced by displaced women and girls by integrating prevention and risk mitigation measures into all of our programmes. We ensure that all our work is undertaken in a gender sensitive manner and that it promotes the rights of women and girls.

Innovative and digital

Through innovation and the use of data and technology, we seek solutions to common problems and strive to improve the quality of our programmes and the number of people we are able to reach. We will invest in technology and innovation to enhance the impact of our programmes and improve

engagement with people affected by displacement. We understand that the increased use of technology and innovative programming entails risk, and that successful innovation comes through learning from failures and rapid repetition. We ensure that the wellbeing of our beneficiaries is not jeopardised when engaging in innovative programming and that proper risk management practices are followed.

Evidence-based

Programmes are designed on evidence-based needs assessments and context analyses. Feedback mechanisms provide further information during programme implementation. Monitoring and evaluation systems ensure that a programme can rapidly adapt to changing contexts and emerging trends. Evaluations use evidence from programmes to inform future programme design and strategies. Our frameworks for monitoring and evaluation and project cycle management also support continuous learning within programmes. We are committed to the use of research and evaluations to support policy dialogue and improve broader humanitarian outcomes.

Programme-based advocacy

We advocate in order to influence external policies and practices, so as to help strengthen displaced people's access to protection and assistance locally, nationally and internationally. NRC's advocacy is informed by our programming and engagement with our beneficiaries. Our operational experience, complemented by research, identifies obstacles to humanitarian access, assistance and protection. The resulting analysis, which incorporates beneficiaries' perspectives, is used to advocate towards duty bearers so the humanitarian community can overcome these obstacles. We define our advocacy objectives, and implement our advocacy actions and campaigns, to support programme outcomes and increase our beneficiaries' access to protection, assistance and rights.

Effective and quality focused

We aim to make the best use of the resources we are entrusted with, to our maximise impact. To ensure value for money, we regularly review the costs and results of our implementation modalities and compare them against alternatives. We adhere to relevant international standards, including the Sphere minimum and core standards, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergency (INEE) Minimum Standards and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS).

DURABLE SOLUTIONS

NRC supports displaced people's freedom of choice and self-reliance, and promotes the legally-defined durable solutions to displacement: return, local integration and resettlement in a third location. We always advocate for displacement to last no longer than required by the circumstances and that options for durable solutions to displacement must be informed, voluntary and sustainable.

Reaching a settlement option does not mean that all needs and vulnerabilities related to displacement have been addressed. We understand that durable solutions will only be attained once displaced people no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement, and when they are able to enjoy their rights without discrimination on account of their displacement. Their ability to secure a livelihood is critical.

Although we work to achieve durable solutions for the people and communities we serve, including in supporting their access to sustainable livelihoods, we may conclude operations in a country programme before durable solutions are attained (see the section entitled, Start-ups and Exits).

Core competencies

At the root of NRC's programmes are our solid technical expertise and specific sectorial knowledge. Our programmes aim for the highest possible quality, whether in stand-alone or integrated approaches.

Through decades of providing assistance and protection to displaced populations in complex contexts, we have developed expertise in six sectors, which we refer to as our core competencies. NRC will continue to develop our expertise within the six core competencies to ensure we become – and remain – a leading global actor in these sectors. We will continually draw from our experience and learning. In doing so, we will be able to develop appropriate programme designs and approaches adapted to changing humanitarian contexts, and will contribute to, and lead, on setting sector standards.

An integrated approach involving all our core competencies, closely linked to work by other agencies, is required to effectively ensure that individuals, households and communities are protected, that they receive appropriate assistance, and that they enjoy their social and economic rights. We apply a multisector approach to targeting and implementation based on the needs, vulnerabilities and priorities of people and communities in a given context.

CAMP MANAGEMENT

ICLA

EDUCATION

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY

WASH



NRC staff, forced to postpone an emergency distribution, seek shelter from a sand storm in Al Waffa camp in Iraq.

Photo: Balil Jaloob/NRC

Camp management

NRC's camp management programmes seek to ensure the protection of displaced populations and of their rights, to promote their participation, self-sufficiency and dignity, and to ensure provision of assistance and access to services.

We work in camps, in dispersed displacement settings, and within host communities in non-camp settings. We do not promote camps. Camps are not long-term or sustainable solutions – they are a last resort. For this reason, our camp management portfolio includes different approaches, such as assisting displaced people living with host communities. To carry out camp management activities, NRC must be mandated by the government or agency responsible for these settlements.



Five-year-old Farshad from Afghanistan is kept detained at Chios in Greece together with his family while they are waiting for a chance to seek asylum.

Photo: Tiril Skarstein/NRC

Our expertise in camp management

Camp management core functions include coordinating and monitoring assistance and protection, setting up and supporting governance and community participation mechanisms, managing and disseminating information, providing multisector feedback mechanisms, and maintaining infrastructure.

We facilitate two-way communication by strengthening the participation of community representatives in decision-making processes, including vulnerable individuals and groups, and developing complaints and feedback mechanisms. We facilitate camp set-ups and upgrades and, where applicable, the maintenance of communal infrastructure.

Our approach differs according to the needs of our beneficiaries, the type of settlement, the phase of the camp life cycle, the humanitarian response capacity, the humanitarian architecture and the actors on the ground.

OUR CAMP MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES PRIMARILY FOCUS ON FOUR THEMATIC AREAS

Camp management

In some contexts, displaced people are gathered in formal camps (planned camps, collective centres, transit centres, reception centres). We can assume the role of camp manager if requested by the authorities or mandated agencies. We carry out core camp management functions in these settings.

Mobile Site Management (MSM)

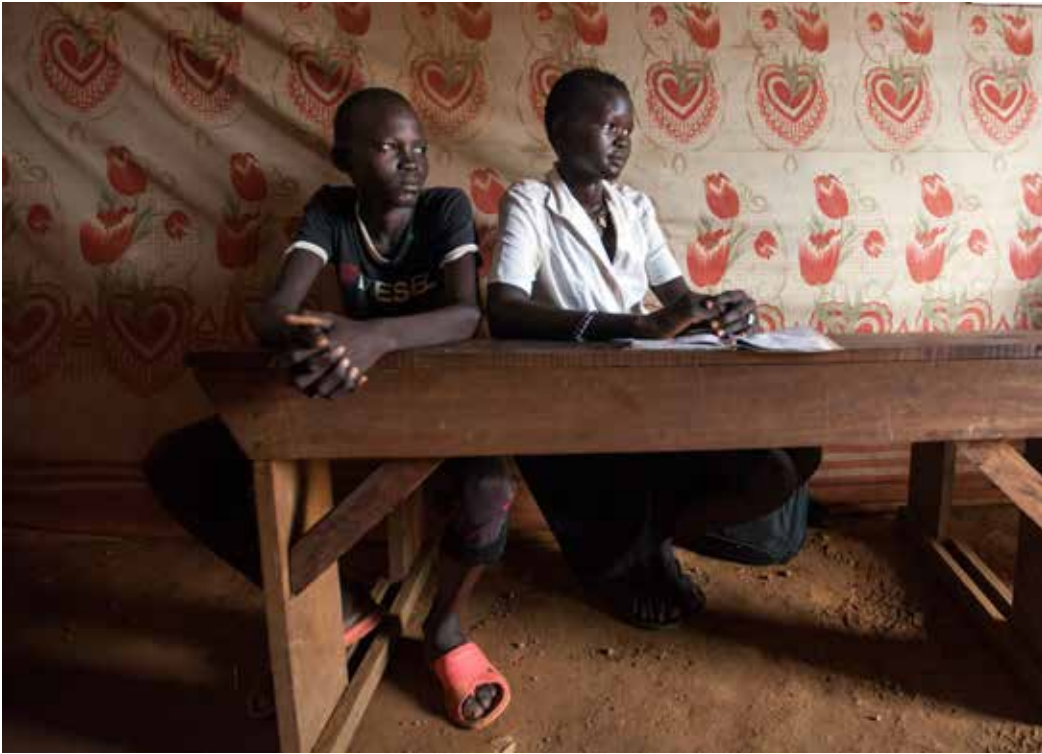
Sometimes, displaced people are gathered in small, dispersed settlements (self-settled camps, rural self-settlements, unmanaged collective centres). These are often not recognised by authorities. In these situations, we adopt an MSM response. Core camp management functions are done through MSM teams. Mobile teams cover several settlements.

Urban Displacement and Outside of Camps (UDOC)

In contexts where displaced people live with host communities, particularly in urban environments, we provide some camp management core functions. We seek to strengthen, not replace, existing governance structures. UDOC programmes are defined by the adoption of an area-based programming approach.

Capacity building/support

When the responsibility for camp management services lies with another designated actor (national authorities, the UN, displaced populations, NGOs, civil society), we can provide operational support or capacity building.



Benjamin (left) and Nyamandong are pictured at their school at the UN Protection of Civilians site in Juba, South Sudan. Displaced since the civil war started nearly 3 years ago, Nyamandong wants to become Minister of Education of South Sudan. But she says that education is not very suitable at the site.

Photo: Albert Gonzalez Farran/NRC

Education

Education is a fundamental human right for all children and youth. A quality education provides children and young people with the skills, capacities and confidence they need to allow them to live lives that they have reason to value. Education creates the voice through which other rights can be claimed and protected.

Displacement has a devastating impact on learning, and often leads to an education being denied or interrupted. Children and youth may suffer from traumatic experiences and a loss of social networks that provide protection and support. The capacity of education systems to deliver quality education is often significantly reduced during and after conflict. These factors weaken a young person's ability to learn, develop and access opportunities. Quality education provides protection, a sense of normality, a way of healing trauma, and hope for the future. Evidence consistently shows that education is a top priority for displaced people and should be made available from the onset of an emergency.

Our expertise in education

We aim to ensure that all displaced children and youth enjoy quality education that is relevant to their psychosocial, emotional and cognitive development, from the start of emergencies. Displaced children and youth are highly marginalised in accessing quality education. NRC provides opportunities for school-aged children (between six and 18 years old) and youth (between 15 and 24 years old, depending on the country) to complete a full cycle of basic education. We have a particular focus on those who are out of school or have had their education interrupted. Young women and men are provided with opportunities for post-primary education, including technical and vocational education and training, agricultural training, and tertiary educational opportunities. We only provide early childhood care where it supports access to, and retention in, NRC's programmes.

We promote and support the inclusion of IDP and refugee children and youth into formal education systems, so they can benefit from an accredited education that allows them to progress through all levels of the education system. Recognising that governments are the primary duty bearer, we

support governments to uphold their duties, including through teacher professional development and the construction or rehabilitation of schools. We use our evidence base to promote policy dialogue and change. Teachers are key to the achievement of quality education. They should receive adequate training, follow-up and compensation.

As not all children and youth are able to participate in a formal education, we provide flexible, and, if possible, accredited alternative (non-formal) learning opportunities that enable out-of-school children and youth to fully benefit from education. For youth in particular, a non-formal education should allow learners to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes that will allow them to find livelihood opportunities.

Our education activities primarily focus on four thematic areas:

- education in acute emergencies
- alternative and accelerated education
- youth education and training
- creating safe and inclusive learning environments

Forty-year-old Zia Gull has seven children, and her family is so poor that she could not apply for an ID card by herself. NRC helped her obtain the document in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Photo: Enayatullah Azad/NRC



Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)

People affected by displacement may be forced to abandon their homes and livelihoods, and often lose enjoyment of a range of rights. They are frequently at risk of multiple displacement, and may face obstacles to finding durable solutions.

Legal and institutional frameworks, whether statutory, customary or religious, can either provoke or perpetuate displacement and discrimination or serve as instruments of protection and empowerment. People affected by displacement require assistance to understand, interpret and navigate these frameworks.

NRC's ICLA programmes aim to enable people affected by displacement to claim and exercise their rights and to find lasting solutions. ICLA also aims to prevent displacement for those at risk. ICLA's activities are in accordance with the IASC Protection Policy. They promote understanding and respect for the rights of affected people and the obligations of duty bearers under international law.

Our expertise in ICLA

Our ICLA activities support people to claim and exercise their rights through information, counselling, legal assistance, collaborative dispute resolution, capacity building and advocacy. ICLA programmes may engage in public interest cases, if this will lead to a direct positive effect for a greater number of individuals or create legal precedents that can generate positive structural changes. ICLA may use international litigation mechanisms when domestic remedies have been exhausted or are ineffective. ICLA also advocates at all levels, including international bodies, to pursue the goal of promoting respect for the rights of people affected by displacement. ICLA programmes observe local legal, cultural and social norms without compromising our commitment to promote and respect rights established by international law. This includes the use of judicial or administrative remedies, customary or religious mechanisms, collaborative dispute resolution methodologies, and transitional justice mechanisms. As women and children may face particular obstacles in accessing their rights, we provide specific assistance to address these.

ICLA focuses on five thematic areas:

- housing, land and property (HLP) rights
- legal identity, including obtaining the civil and identity documentation necessary to access rights and services
- immigration and refugee laws and procedures, including refugee status determination and legal residency
- government legal procedures and policies for registration of IDPs, when access to rights and services is dependent on such registration
- employment laws and procedures

Livelihoods and food security

Every person has the right to a standard of living adequate for his or her health and wellbeing. This includes the right to food and livelihood protection.

Food security rests on four key pillars:

- availability of diverse and nutritious foods
- physical, economic and social access to nutritious foods
- adequate utilisation of food items consumed to maintain a healthy nutritional wellbeing
- strengthening stability of the pillars and systems people rely on over time

During conflicts, disasters and displacement, food production and market systems face potential collapse. People lose their assets and their ability to earn a living is disrupted.

Our expertise in livelihoods and food security

We provide food assistance to prevent loss of life and to contribute to the rehabilitation of local food and market systems. We promote livelihood strategies that protect, recover and strengthen individuals' and households' abilities to earn a living. To prevent repeated displacement, we support engagement in social and economic opportunities that reinforce the adaptive capacity of systems, individuals, families and communities affected by displacement.

Many refugees in Kenya's Kakuma camp complain that the firewood provided for cooking is not enough. Many collect firewood outside the camp, often resulting in conflicts with the host community.

Photo: Christian Jepsen/NRC



We follow the UN Food and Agricultural Organization's (FAO) definition of food security:

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

In both emergencies and protracted crises, we analyse the livelihood vulnerability context and situation. This analysis enables us to better understand vulnerability, needs and preferences, and is key to the development of holistic integrated responses that contribute to durable solutions.

Livelihood interventions must be undertaken in combination with other sectors.

Our livelihoods and food security work focuses on the following thematic areas:

- household and livelihood vulnerability analysis
- emergency food assistance
- asset creation (creating local assets that reduce food insecurity and build livelihood opportunities)
- school meals and gardening
- nutritious food production systems
- integrated natural resource management
- food infrastructure systems
- employment and income generation and/or diversification
- credit and finance facilitation
- initial business and value chain development
- integrated risk reduction

We work in three areas to enable livelihoods that are in support of durable solutions:

Meeting basic needs/livelihoods provisioning

Protect and stabilise affected households against further effects of risks and crisis by ensuring access to adequate and appropriate nutritious food. Provide other essential livelihood needs required for survival.

Livelihoods protection

Support affected households and communities in protecting household and livelihood systems, avert erosion of productive assets, and support households and communities in restoring productive assets.

Livelihoods promotion

Enhance household and community capacity to manage risks and shocks and to leverage their adaptive, financial and human capabilities. Invest in lasting solutions for improved economic and social wellbeing and dignity.

Shelter and settlements

Access to shelter is essential for one's dignity, privacy, health, and physical and social protection. It is a universal human right captured within the right to adequate housing.

Shelter solutions do not exist in isolation, and must be viewed through larger settlement considerations. When addressed in a timely and holistic manner, shelter interventions save lives and protect rights, meeting both immediate needs and promoting durable solutions. Adequate shelter is instrumental in reinforcing positive coping mechanisms and social structures, while also facilitating access to livelihoods opportunities and essential services in a broader settlement environment.

Our expertise in shelter and settlements

Our shelter and settlements programmes facilitate access to adequate shelter solutions for affected populations across all phases of displacement. This ranges from rapidly deployable emergency shelter solutions that save lives, to supporting early recovery and promoting durable solutions. We work with our beneficiaries to identify and develop solutions that meet their needs, benefit local suppliers, and use local labour.

Our experts consider different processes when developing NRC shelter and settlements programmes. These processes could be encouraging self-reliance to improve and maintain shelter solutions, maximising tenure security for men and women, and ensuring that short-term assistance is designed to take longer horizons into account. We also make assessments at the product level. This could be ensuring that shelter solutions are safe, secure and designed to resist natural and operational hazards. It could also entail ensuring that solutions meet local and international consensus-based standards. Our product considerations should also work to ensure accessibility for people with specific needs, and ensure that solutions provide adequate space, lighting, thermal comfort and ventilation.

NRC shelter and settlements programmes work across different settlement types, be they grouped (collective centres, self-settled camps and planned camps) or dispersed (host families, urban self-settlement and rural self-settlement). We work with different tenancy types, including owner-occupier, tenant and squatter. Whether in an acute or chronic emergency, or in support of durable solutions, our shelter programmes continuously adapt to changing needs of each shifting environment. Shelter programmes may facilitate access to existing shelter solutions, or develop and provide improved shelter solutions.

Our shelter and settlements programming focuses on five thematic areas. Each uses various inputs (cash-based, in-kind or information), which in turn support self-building or access to existing housing. They also help us hire contractors, directly distribute goods and/or services and work through partners.

The five areas are:

- individual and collective housing solutions
- schools and educational buildings
- planning and implementation of planned camps for displaced populations
- social and technical infrastructure for communities affected by displacement
- essential household items, whether through in-kind or cash-based



An NRC staff member works alongside the indigenous Jiw community in the Colombian municipality of Puerto Concordia to build homes and community structures. After years of displacement, they have returned to their ancestral land. Photo:Edwin Tinjacá/NRC



A woman carries water at the UN Protection of Civilians site in Juba, South Sudan. Since the start of the crisis, millions have been displaced and are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Photo: Albert Gonzalez Farran/NRC

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) promotion

For people displaced by conflict, access to clean water and appropriate sanitation facilities are amongst the most urgent of all needs. Without enough safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene, it is difficult to maintain good health and fight off illnesses. Without proper sanitation, water supplies can become contaminated and diseases can spread rapidly. We specialise in WASH services to protect the public health of displaced people and local communities, and to help protect their right to safe water and sanitation.

The lack of access to WASH facilities in shelters or camps deprives displaced families of the opportunity to make their shelters into homes, and their settlements into communities. By providing appropriate water and sanitation infrastructure, and educating people on good hygiene practices, we help displaced families achieve dignified living conditions.

Our expertise in WASH

Our WASH programmes seek to save lives, prevent diseases, promote dignity, and support access to better living conditions and livelihood opportunities. We do this through direct interventions, in collaboration with our shelter, education and livelihoods and food security experts, and through partnerships with other organisations. The mode of operation we choose depends primarily on the WASH needs of our targeted beneficiaries, and the quickest and most effective way to meet those identified needs.

We recognise that the need for water and sanitation goes beyond public health concerns.

The absence of functioning, safe and sex-segregated latrines or toilets can discourage children and youth, especially girls, from attending school. We actively support the right to education by ensuring safe WASH facilities at schools are accessible to all students and teachers. Our WASH teams collaborate with teachers and administrators on delivering up-to-date hygiene promotion curricula.

Our WASH programmes focus on five thematic areas:

- supplying safe water for drinking, cooking, personal hygiene and household cleaning
- providing and maintaining latrines or toilets segregated by gender, or family units that are safe for women, girls, men and boys to use at all times
- active disease surveillance and increased vigilance on water quality and sanitation practices during disease outbreaks
- solid waste management and site drainage activities, to reduce standing water and garbage where disease-carrying mosquitos or vermin can breed
- hygiene promotion and community mobilisation to promote safe hygiene and health-seeking behaviours, and to empower displaced people to take an active role in WASH operations

Priority programme development areas

Two forms of NRC interventions, protection and cash-based assistance, are cross-cutting – integral to all our core competencies – but can also be implemented as distinct, stand-alone programmes. NRC has already established expertise within protection and cash-based interventions in our programmes and we are further strengthening this work.

In addition, we are seeking to become a leading digital organisation. NRC will invest in technology and innovation, both to improve the efficiency of internal processes and to enhance the impact of our programmes. This will include efforts to generate better data, which will in turn inform programme design, learning and decision making, improve engagement with people affected by displacement, and reach more people through all of our programme interventions.

An NRC e-voucher is used to purchase food in Zaatari camp, Jordan.

Photo: Christopher Herwig/NRC



Protection

Protection is central to NRC activities. We use a protection lens in all phases of programming, and integrate distinct protection objectives into our programme planning.

Two approaches inform protection in NRC programming:

Working responsibly: ensure conflict and context sensitivity, and do no harm

Safe programming is about how we design and implement programmes. We operate in a way that responds to the specific needs and risks of displaced and vulnerable people and that minimises negative, unintended consequences of our interventions.

Working proactively: reduce protection risks and change the environments we work in

Integrated protection is about what we aim to achieve through our programmes. We take proactive steps to identify and reduce protection risks, and change the environments where we work. This aims to prevent harm and abuse, to assist displaced and vulnerable people exercise their rights, and to contribute to durable solutions.

We work to mainstream protection across our core competency programming. Where there are unmet protection needs and gaps, we may implement stand-alone protection programmes. We do this when there is a clear added value and when risks to beneficiaries, staff and NRC programmes have been assessed and mitigated.

In our programme development work on protection, NRC is prioritising child protection and GBV.

We subscribe to the Sphere Protection Principles:

- Avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions.
- Ensure people's access to impartial assistance in proportion to need and without discrimination.
- Protect people from physical and psychological harm arising from violence and coercion.
- Assist people to claim their rights, access available remedies and recover from the effects of abuse.



In the remote township of Myitta in Myanmar, NRC has constructed new schools. It's hard-to-reach learning spaces like these where our Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Toolkit for teachers becomes especially important.

Photo: NRC



Ataullah counts the money he has just received from NRC's unconditional cash grant project in Farayab, Afghanistan. He can use the grant for anything he and his family needs.
Photo: Enayatullah Azad/NRC

Cash-based interventions

NRC has substantial experience in using cash-based interventions both within each of the core competencies and through unconditional approaches. We are further developing our expertise as an effective implementer of multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA).

The use of cash-based interventions, including MPCA, provides our beneficiaries with flexible, dignified assistance, enabling people to make choices and prioritise their own needs. MPCA can complement sectorial assistance and be part of integrated programmes that involve our other core competencies. In addition to developing our capacity to deliver multipurpose cash assistance at scale, we continue to use cash as a modality within sectorial and integrated programmes.

Multipurpose cash assistance is a transfer which provides recipients with flexible assistance to meet a range of needs. They are in nature unconditional and unrestricted, and are intended to give maximum flexibility to recipients in how they are used. Grants are often calculated on the basis of a minimum expenditure basket, ie the cost for a household to meet a minimum level of needs. The minimal level of assistance, however, may not allow recipients to meet all needs over a period of time; needs might change and services required to meet those needs might not be available. For this reason, multipurpose cash assistance and sector specific interventions through the other core competencies should not be viewed as mutually exclusive, but as complementary.

We primarily use MPCA interventions in the emergency phase, when sector specific needs have not yet been identified. As the evidence base of displacement-affected people's needs grows, we will focus increasingly on tailoring sector specific interventions within our core competencies.

Recognising that cash-based interventions are not always the most appropriate response – as markets might not be functioning or required services not available to purchase – we are not modality led (cash or in-kind assistance), but prioritise appropriate quality interventions on the basis of broad needs assessments.

Start-ups and exits

START-UP CRITERIA

All of the following must be met:

- Conflict-displaced IDPs and refugees have needs for international protection and assistance that are unmet.
- The type of assistance we offer is needed.
- The safety of humanitarian workers has been adequately assessed and secured.
- We or our partners can negotiate genuine access to people affected by displacement, and be in a position to professionally implement evidence-based programme activities in line with the humanitarian principles.
- Our assistance will not merely assuage immediate needs, but will also help to introduce constructive lasting solutions for refugees and/or IDPs
- A sufficient amount and quality of financial, human and other resources are, or will be, available in the field and at Head Office.

EXIT CRITERIA

The decision to exit an operation must be made based on one or more of the following:

- People affected by displacement are no longer in need of protection or assistance related to their displacement, or these needs are being fulfilled by other actors.
- We can no longer access people affected by displacement directly or through partners, or are no longer in a position to implement professional, evidence-based programme activities in line with the humanitarian principles.
- The safety of humanitarian workers cannot be adequately ensured.
- Our activities will not in any substantial way contribute to constructive, lasting solutions.
- It is not possible to obtain sufficient financial, human or other resources to carry out the efforts.



Photo: Sofi Lundin/NRC



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