

## Protection in the Humanitarian Reset

### What we have done, will do, and what we need from others

In March, the ERC initiated a humanitarian reset to identify measures to contract, refocus, and improve the efficiency of interagency humanitarian responses in view of the funding crisis. NRC has closely followed the reset and worked to inform and influence its process. As part of this, we have given particular attention to ensuring that protection is not forgotten. The following note offers an overview of protection considerations and implications of different parts of the reset, how NRC has engaged on these issues thus far, what we plan to do in the future, and what we will encourage others to do moving forward.

#### 1. Accelerated transitions of country-level humanitarian systems

Shortly after the announcement of the US funding freeze, the IASC Emergency Directors Group (EDG) began discussing the possible need for an “accelerated transition” of the humanitarian system in a number of country contexts. The EDG ultimately recommended, and IASC Principals endorsed, an accelerated transition in eight countries: Cameroon, Colombia, Eritrea, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Zimbabwe. While this is a necessary measure to cope with the funding crisis, it will also have implications for protection capacities: there is likely to be less leadership and advocacy on protection risks and needs, there is no guarantee of a protection coordination space, humanitarian funding for protection activities is likely to withdraw, and as a result, capacities to identify new protection risks and needs may reduce. The overall posture of the remaining response at country level will shift towards development and greater government ownership, which could create sensitivities in difficult protection environments.

#### What NRC has done so far:

- Prior to the decisions on the eight countries, advocated for protection to be a key criteria in assessing the feasibility of an accelerated transition.
- Published a practice note on how to promote the continuity of protection during humanitarian coordination transitions.
- Provided suggested HCT discussion questions for post-transition planning that included a dedicated section on protection.

#### What we will do in the future:

- Continue supporting NRC Country Offices (COs) and coordination staff on protection coordination and policy in post-transition settings.
- Finalize and share a note on suggested criteria for deactivation decision-making (including protection considerations as one criteria) to prepare for future transition discussions.
- Explore options for maintaining residual interagency monitoring and analysis of needs, including on protection, for contexts that will deactivate.

- Initiate and/or participate in conversations around how to/who will lead support for the Centrality of Protection in deactivated contexts.

What we will request/advocate for with others:

- Monitoring of changes to the protection environment and/or protection needs at country-level following transitions (suggested lead: Global Protection Cluster).
- A light review following each transition, including how protection has been addressed and drawing on inputs from the monitoring proposed above (suggested lead: EDG).
- Clarity on if/how the Centrality of Protection will continue to be applied in contexts where the humanitarian system has deactivated (suggested lead: COP Champions and DCO).
- Global support in case of protection leadership gaps or other long-term post-transition protection challenges (suggested lead: OHCHR).

## **2. Prioritization of resources and Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) reform**

At the onset of the funding crisis, HCTs were asked to reprioritize their HNRPs focusing on the most severe needs and lifesaving assistance. Protection was not initially included as part of the scope of these lifesaving activities, though this was corrected quickly following interventions by NRC and others. The set of “hyper-prioritized” plans was published in June 2025. The ERC also directed the HPC Steering Group, where NRC holds an NGO seat, to look at broader HPC reform. This process is ongoing and will now also be picked up as part of UN@80. Continued attention will be needed to make sure that protection is recognized as a priority and built into these tools going forward.

What NRC has done so far:

- Lobbied to have protection recognized as lifesaving/within the scope of the global reprioritization process.
- Provided guidance to NRC COs and externally on prioritization with explicit protection messaging.
- Supported efforts to explore how protection risk analysis could be used more effectively to inform HNRPs.
- Highlighted protection risks associated with reduced funding in context-specific analyses shared with donors and member states.

What we will do in the future:

- Work to ensure protection remains a priority at each step of the future HPC – e.g. that it is considered within scope setting, is built into the needs/risk analysis process, is used as a triangulation point against intersectoral severity ratings, and is included within targeting.
- At a strategic level, reflect on how best to enable a multi-sector, Centrality of Protection approach within future HRP.
- If operational coordination tools are removed from the formal HPC, build protection into any complementary coordination tools that are developed.

- Together with ICVA and other partners, work to identify how to maintain attention to the protection and assistance needs of people outside “hyper-prioritized” plans.

What we will request/advocate for with others:

- Clarity on next steps for HPC reform and how protection will be reflected (suggested lead: OCHA).
- Simplified options for including protection risk analysis within JIAF 2.0 (suggested lead: the GPC and OCHA).

### **3. Coordination downsizing and cluster reform**

Following a consultation process led by the OPAG Co-Chairs, a set of proposals for coordination reform was endorsed by the IASC Principals on 17 June. The Child Protection (CP), Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Mine Action (MA) Areas of Responsibility (AoRs) will merge into the Protection Cluster, while the Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) AoR will merge together with the Shelter and CCCM Clusters. Area-based coordination will also be used more widely. Attention will be needed to ensure that protection coordination remains effective once the architecture is streamlined and adapted.

What NRC has done so far:

- As global Co-Lead of the HLP AoR and as Co-Chair of the Global Protection Cluster Strategic Advisory Group, engaged in efforts to find a more effective and simplified way of coordinating protection responses across technical areas.
- Convened the Shelter, CCCM, and HLP Lead Agencies to work together in shaping the new merged cluster, with continued emphasis on the protection dimensions of HLP.
- Maintained a two way flow of information with country-level Protection Cluster and HLP AOR colleagues to discuss the anticipated coordination changes.

What we will do in the future:

- Continue to work with the Shelter and CCCM Cluster Lead Agencies to find a path for the new Cluster that enables a protection-focused approach to HLP in the new space.
- Via the global HLP AOR Coordinator, support NRC’s current HLP AOR Coordinators at country level to navigate the new Cluster merge.
- Support Protection Cluster Coordinators and Co-Coordinators to navigate the changes associated with the CP, GBV, and MA AOR integration via NRC’s Field Support secondees in the GPC and via NRC’s internal Humanitarian Coordination Community of Practice.
- Support broader integration efforts via continued engagement in the GPC Strategic Advisory Group, including to ensure continued attention to HLP following its transition out of the Protection Cluster.

What we will request/advocate for with others:

- Within the protection coordination space, involve co-coordinating NGOs and agencies ASAP to further identify how co-coordination will be managed at country level as the Cluster and AoRs integrate (suggested lead: UNHCR).
- If/as the system moves towards greater use of multi-sector, area-based approaches, monitor whether protection issues are successfully addressed and escalated to national protection clusters and/or HCTs when needed (suggested lead: the GPC).

**4. Refugee responses**

Although the Humanitarian Reset does not include the refugee coordination system led by UNHCR, the funding crisis also affects refugee responses. UNHCR, NGOs and other organizations responding to refugee assistance and protection needs are having to scale back operations and find efficiencies. As with the IASC humanitarian reset, this will have implications for both where and how we respond.

What NRC has done so far:

- Advocated for the adoption of a system to better understand the severity of refugee assistance and protection needs to enable better targeting of resources.
- Explored how refugee protection indicators could be integrated into a common needs analysis tool to enable a shared system for refugees, IDPs, and other crisis-affected populations.
- Encouraged UNHCR to refocus on its core protection mandate when making internal decisions about where and how to cut.
- Engaged with incoming candidates for High Commissioner, including to promote a protection focus and encourage the adopting of a common needs analysis system.

What we will do in the future:

- Continue exploring and building buy in for a more harmonized system for refugee and IASC responses which remain sensitive to refugee protection issues.

What we will advocate for with others:

- Agreement to adopt a common needs analysis system for IASC and refugee responses (suggested lead: UNHCR and OCHA leadership).