2022–2025

Global Development Strategy: Protection from Violence

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Thank you to everyone who contributed to this document.

History of revision

Date:	Name:	Action:

Cover photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/NRC

Gulan camp in Khost province, Afghanistan.

NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

Protection from Violence

Protection from Violence is the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) newest core competency. It comprises our efforts to prevent violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation, and services that we provide to individuals who mitigate the impact of violence when it does occur. We seek to place an emphasis on proactive protection work – deliberate and structured approaches that contribute to preventing violence from occuring or recurring; and with particular attention to contexts with conflict or other forms of generalised violence. Our work builds on several years of experience trialling these approaches to protection from violence, and draws on our institutional expertise in principled action in hard-to-reach locations.

By the end of 2025, NRC will have evidence-based, effective programming in civilian self-protection, humanitarian mediation, general protection case management and site management. We will continue to be a recognised thought leader on protection, basing our influence on operational expertise and continuous learning. We will have the organisational culture, structures and processes in place to sustain both coverage and quality and contribute to broader protection outcomes.

To get to this point, the global Protection from Violence development strategy will focus on the priorities below. Click on each heading to go to the respective section.

1 Scale up community safety and violence prevention programming

2 Scale up individual response services

3 Reinforce site management programming

4 Strengthen thought leadership and influence

5 Promote conceptual clarity and alignment

6 Improve adherence to Safe and Inclusive Programming (SIP)

7 Systematically contribute to violence monitoring and analysis

8 Balance prevention and response investments

9 Ensure capacity to deliver in first- line responses

10 Explore digital and technology solutions

11 Increase collaboration and exchange of expertise with local actors

Introduction

What is the purpose of the development strategy? It shows where NRC will focus global programme development and innovation efforts, and towards what areas we will channel internal resources and global fundraising efforts in relation to the core competency (CC). The strategy covers NRC's global portfolio, therefore countries and regions will find workstreams that are more or less relevant for their particular context.

Who is the audience? The strategy is primarily intended for the core competency technical line and other relevant staff at country, regional and global level, but can also be shared externally.

Who will implement it? The global core competency leads are responsible for leading the implementation of the strategy. They will engage with regional and country colleagues, primarily through the technical line, to get input, exchange experiences, share work, conduct pilots, develop trainings and guidance, fundraise etc. This will be done both remotely and through face-to-face workshops and seminars at country, regional or global level. Global technical guidance and tools will be developed to support the implementation. The strategy is ambitious and will require successful fundraising if we are to achieve our goals.

What is expected from countries and regions? Except for prioritised workstreams (see below), country and regional offices can select the workstreams that are most relevant for them. The response policy provides a framework for the activities and themes falling within the scope of each core competency, and countries can implement any activities within that scope that are relevant in their context. Contributions to the core competency development strategies should be factored into the annual workplans and balanced scorecards of the core competency team. As guidance becomes available for new areas of work, countries and regions are expected to follow this. Please reach out to the global lead if your country/region is planning to do, or already doing, work or pilots in line with a workstream.

What does it mean if a workstream is prioritised? All country and regional offices implementing the core competency are expected to contribute to or implement elements of this workstream within the current strategy period 2022–2025. Prioritised workstreams are marked with orange in the overview on page 3 and with a grey flag (▶) after the heading.

How did we arrive at these workstreams? The strategy was developed through a participatory process across the organisation. The process identified areas of work needed to: 1) address quality issues discovered through monitoring, evaluations and risk monitoring to ensure we comply with the NRC Response Policy and the quality standards we adhere to; 2) stay relevant by responding to global trends in the sector and beyond; and 3) deliver on the NRC Global Strategy.

What does the strategy not do? It does not: 1) set boundaries for what NRC does and does not do within a core competency (see NRC Response Policy); 2) provide technical guidance on how NRC will implement certain activities (see framing papers, handbooks, guidance notes); 3) promote NRC's activities and approaches (see capacity statements, value propositions and programme presentations).

What is the duration of the strategy? The strategy reflects the duration of the NRC Global Strategy 2022–2025, and includes a mid-term review.

Please note: NRC has clear ambitions to make all our programmes more people-centric and improve how we design and implement responses as one – both across core competencies, and between programmes and advocacy. How we will go about this is still not decided. These two elements will therefore be strengthened across the core competency development strategies as part of the mid-term review.

Jhoanna* (name changed) had to flee with her family because of insecurity and armed conflict in Colombia. As a community leader, she has received training on how to promote community protection. Photo: Angela Penaloza/NRC

1 Scale up community safety and violence prevention programming

Strategic outcome:

Communities experience less violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation and feel more confident that they can prevent or mitigate further violence from being perpetrated against them.

As described in the NRC Response Policy, NRC focuses on reinforcing civilian agency and strengthening existing positive self-protection capacities to prevent, mitigate and respond to violence. We have a particular focus on communities affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, and nuance our approach to both inter- and intra-community conflicts.

By the end of 2025, we will have the relevant experience, systems and institutional confidence to scale up two key approaches:

Humanitarian mediation. Based on pilots, we will continue to facilitate emergency mediations to prevent escalation of conflict and to encourage communities to put appropriate measures in place to mitigate inter-community violence. We will also build on the learning from an independent evaluation in 2021 to progressively integrate our mediation expertise into first-line response, improve our focus on gender sensitivity and inclusion, and strengthen outcome monitoring systems.

Support to civilian self-protection. NRC will continue to work with communities to map and assess risks of violence, identifying (and where relevant, resourcing) early warning and risk mitigation strategies that civilians use to protect themselves from harm during conflict. This will also include, where relevant and appropriate, influencing the behaviour of armed actors. The approach includes facilitated sessions on early warning, risk and threat identification, solutions for risk mitigation, communication, dissemination, information sharing and mutual learning on self-protection strategies.

Global initiatives will include:

- finalising programmatic guidance and tools
- training, coaching and mentoring Protection from Violence staff and establishing structured learning and knowledge exchange partnerships with other agencies with expertise in humanitarian mediation and civilian self-protection
- strengthening output and outcome monitoring (including age and gender disaggregation) and undertaking at least one independent evaluation of each key approach

2 Scale up individual response services

Strategic outcome:

People who experience violence are supported to recover and have their safety improved.

The implementation of other humanitarian services will invariably identify people who have experienced violence, or those for whom community-level self-protection strategies do not eliminate the imminent risk of harm. For some, a specific, single intervention would be sufficient. For others, a more comprehensive case management service will be necessary to adequately eliminate or mitigate the protection threat.

By the end of 2025, we will be providing services in protection from violence that are time-bound and are provided as a one-off, targeted intervention. These may be standalone, or delivered alongside the suite of other services delivered through NRC's core competencies. We will also be providing general protection case management services, delivered by specialised protection case managers who will undertake a comprehensive risk assessment, facilitate a multi-sectoral case planning and review process, and provide practical support to ensure that services are accessed and that the threat is sufficiently mitigated.

Global initiatives will include:

- leveraging our operational experience and thought leadership roles to support partners to finalise existing, draft inter-agency guidance on general protection case management and to encourage the sector to align this with with legal, gender-based violence and other specialised case management systems
- finalising NRC-specific programmatic guidance and tools, including for the development and safe management of information
- training, coaching and mentoring Protection from Violence staff in the delivery of individual, one-off assistance (such as cash and voucher assistance, assisted or accompanied referrals, and psychological first aid)
- strengthening output and outcome monitoring (including age and gender disaggregation) and undertaking at least one independent evaluation of each key individual protection assistance modality

3 Reinforce site management programming

> **Strategic outcome:**
>
> Communities affected by displacement participate meaningfully in decision-making related to the management of the location where they live and enjoy a safe, secure and appropriate environment.

Displacement often compromises traditional community governance and coordination structures, in both displaced and host communities. Communities often require some external assistance and support to (re-)establish and resource their own self-protection and self-governance strategies. NRC recognises that our ability to support effective violence prevention and response rests on our acceptance in the communities and their trust that we will bring skills and expertise that complement local resources and capacity. This requires that we have robust community engagement and accountability (CEA) approaches and progressively transfer site management skills, capacities and responsibilities to local authorities and designated local organisations.

By the end of 2025, we will have reinforced capacities on community engagement in other core competencies, and clarified roles and responsibilities for CEA and the links between our traditional site management work and our evolving protection from violence responses, with a particular focus on women, girls and other marginalised groups. We will have strengthened connections between the safe identification of vulnerable people through site management interventions and referrals, including to our own protection case management services.

Global initiatives will include:

- revision of guidance, including the CEA Toolkit, to reflect changes in organisational community engagement and accountability functions
- pilot and document support to community self-governance within broader area-based approaches, together with the Shelter and Settlements core competency (particularly in relation to increasing ownership and maintenance of energy solutions) and linked to NRC's work on One Response
- internal cross-competency capacity strengthening on CEA
- coordination of a site management community of practice and inter-agency knowledge management initiatives, together with the Camp Coordination and Camp Management cluster
- development of guidance, tools and training to promote locally led site management
- refining programme models that address the urban displacement of communities

Herat camp in Afghanistan. Photo: Enayatullah Azad/ NRC

4 Strengthen thought leadership and influence

Strategic outcome:

Global and country level policy, standards and investments in protection reflect what communities need to prevent and mitigate violence at scale.

NRC is well regarded as a thought leader in protection, and partners at country, regional and global levels rely on this reputation to influence the protection sector and broader humanitarian community to promote principled, effective policy and to use our voice to highlight violent breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law. This requires a coherent approach to protection policy work that builds on our longstanding expertise in policy and advocacy linked to the centrality of protection, and increasingly draws from our operational experience in violence prevention and response.

By the end of 2025, we will have further enhanced our capacity to influence protection outcomes by building specific expertise in policy and advocacy directed at the prevention of, and response to, violence. Our advocacy will be systematically informed by the evidence and based on our operational experience and our engagement with the communities we serve, who are whenever possible encouraged and supported to speak out for themselves. We will be more systematically intentional and deliberate in promoting the voices of girls, women and other marginalised groups.

Global initiatives will include:

- developing a structured, multi-year global advocacy and policy reform agenda for the Protection from Violence core competency, with a particular focus on promoting the protection of civilians from violence
- building a collaborative culture and community of practice across policy, advocacy and Protection from Violence colleagues
- continuing to play leading protection thought leadership roles in the humanitarian coordination architecture and engage in structured dialogues with key donors, partners and other thought leaders to promote policy and programming coherence across the protection from violence community

5 Promote conceptual clarity and alignment ⚑

Strategic outcome:

All NRC violence prevention and response programmes are based on a predictable and common set of principles, standards and approaches, and are in line with the NRC Global Strategy and Response Policy.

The IASC Protection Policy Review notes that there is a need to reorient humanitarian action towards reducing risks. It highlights the need to draw a distinction between protection as a system-wide strategic goal and protection as a technical sector. Similar challenges exist in NRC, where protection has long been an organisational priority but has been interpreted differently across the organisation, and accountabilities have been inconsistently applied. NRC's protection approach is now outlined in the Response Policy.

By the end of 2025, and as new staff come on board, we will ensure that this conceptual clarity is promoted and maintained, and will seek to have similar influence externally. We will have realigned accountabilities and programmatic focus, such as shifting from vulnerability-based to threat-based targeting, and will have transitioned responsibilites for general protection advocacy and Safe and Inclusive Programming-related work from Protection from Violence core competency teams to others. We will be limiting our interventions to where we can assure the community that we have the insitutional capacity to guarantee quality.

Global initiatives will include:

- socialising NRC's protection approach (together with Partnerships and Policy and the wider Field Operations department), producing and documenting examples of targeting and inclusion criteria
- updating generic job descriptions and other HR tools to reflect appropriate roles and responsibilities
- providing specific guidance on what is within scope in relation to child protection and gender-based violence programming and guidance, as needed, for transitioning or closing out programmes that are outside of scope. We will also work with ICLA and other core competencies, and with the Access team, to develop guidance notes that clarify distinctions and identify opportunities for integration
- continuing to clarify and provide solutions to address the conceptual and practical challenges related to site management programming within the Protection from Violence core competency

6 Improve adherence to Safe and Inclusive Programming (SIP) ⚑

Strategic outcome:

All members of a community are able, safely, to participate in and benefit from Protection from Violence programmes supported by NRC.

To ensure that all displacement-affected people are supported to restore their right to protection from harm, we must deliver programmes in a way that responds to the specific needs and risks of vulnerable people, inclusive of gender, age and diversity considerations, and avoiding unintentional harmful consequences. This is particularly relevant to Protection from Violence programmes that intentionally seek to reach the most vulnerable people and that have both direct and indirect effects on conflict dynamics and power structures in affected communities.

By the end of 2025, we will deliver violence prevention that supports communities to take informed risks to reduce and mitigate harm, ensuring conflict sensitivity, safety and inclusion are at the heart of our support to communities. We will have measures in place to ensure our staff do not contribute to further violence, harm or abuse. Drawing on our site management and Urban Displacement and Out of Camps (UDOC) expertise in community engagement, we will have supported communities to progressively develop and implement inclusive and community-led coordination and governance systems. We will be applying the same inclusive, participatory principles to programmes that we establish and deliver.

Global initiatives will include:

- safeguarding and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (P-SEA) training for Protection from Violence staff
- promoting safe and accessible services in all formal and non-formal sites
- establishing inclusive community governance mechanisms and incorporating conflict sensitivity and risk assessments into our humanitarian mediation and civilian self-protection work

We will strengthen our information management to minimise risks to those who access our services, and ensure confidentiality and privacy in the delivery of our services. We will also systematically analyse and respond to feedback from community feedback mechanisms (CFMs).

Safe and Inclusive Programming (SIP):

SIP ensures the mainstreaming of protection, age, gender and diversity in NRC programmes. Our SIP Minimum Standards describe a number of actions, in a suggested hierarchy of urgency, that guide NRC country offices to ensure that our programming is safe, accessible, accountable and participatory.

Long lines of people are waiting outside the NRC office in Um Rakuba camp in Sudan. Most of the refugees waiting are young men who have fled Ethiopia. We were told stories of fear of recruitment to the militia, or of being killed if suspected of belonging to the TPLF. Photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/NRC

7 Systematically contribute to violence monitoring and analysis

Strategic outcome:

Violence incidents and trends are systematically monitored and analysed, and used to inform programming by NRC and the wider protection sector.

The Global Protection Cluster and donors frequently lament the lack of available quality and timely data to inform decisions and actions that could prevent or respond to violence. There are complex challenges facing agencies who seek to safely and responsibly collect protection monitoring data, and the analysis requires considerable technical expertise. Without regular and consistent analysis, however, it is also difficult to document trends over time, to assess the effectiveness of prevention efforts or to identify when we may be contributing to communities' reduced exposure to violence. NRC already undertakes broader protection monitoring in several contexts, but our approach is often inconsistent and we miss opportunities to explicitly include violence-related data.

By the end of 2025, we will have strengthened protection analyses, ensuring the inclusion of trends related to violence threats and risks, linking these with general protection monitoring efforts. These analyses will contribute to, and influence, sector monitoring and analysis systems and contribute to Protection from Violence programming and resource prioritisation processes, both internally and externally.

Global initiatives will include:

- revising guidance on protection monitoring and analysis to include standards and approaches related to the monitoring of violence trends, including clarifying functions, responsibilities and methodologies for monitoring other rights and the broader humanitarian situation
- strengthening gender- and age-sensitive referral processes and systems to ensure people affected by violence are supported, where necessary, to access services and advocate towards decision-makers to remove barriers to their full enjoyment of their right to protection from violence
- consolidating analyses and linking these with systems led by the Global Protection Cluster or other global mechanisms

8 Balance prevention and response investments ⚐

> **Strategic outcome:**
>
> All NRC Protection from Violence programmes and investments increasingly prioritise efforts to prevent violence from occurring or re-occurring.

In many humanitarian contexts, protection actors deliver assistance and remedial services, which help civilians to *mitigate* the harm caused by violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation. It is increasingly being recognised that humanitarian actors can – and should – play a more proactive role in *preventing* violence from occurring in the first place.

By the end of 2025, our strategy and activity will progressively shift towards a greater investment in prevention, compared with specialised responses for people who have experienced violence. To support programming teams to accomplish this, we will have invested in strengthening our monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, more effectively tracking the extent to which both violence incidence and protection trends change over time, and our contribution to this change. We will have progressively designed and promoted approaches that enable us to collaborate with communities who face imminent threats; to take gender, age and other relevant considerations into account; and to be present in greater proximity to where violence occurs.

Global initiatives will include:

- finalising and rolling out tools for measuring prevention
- adapting programme implementation tools to be relevant for, and implementable in, first-line responses
- strengthening programme and M&E staff skills in outcome monitoring for prevention
- tracking organisational investments in prevention and response
- facilitatating knowledge management related to transitioning to prevention-focused programming

9 Ensure capacity to deliver in first-line responses

> **Strategic outcome:**
>
> NRC's first-line Protection from Violence response is fast, targeted and focused on prevention.

Our capacity to contribute to the prevention of violence and harm rests on our ability to identify the communities most at risk of displacement and access them during the early stages of displacement. These communities are often mobile and hard to reach, and the delivery of services is further complicated by access and security constraints which are often beyond our capacity to influence significantly. This requires approaches that are more rapid, nimble and dynamic than those delivered to communities who are static and living in more well-established sites.

By the end of 2025, we will have strengthened our first-line response capacity to rapidly re-establish community coordination structures and processes, and support communities to recover from the impact of violence. This will include building and maintaining a workforce with the capacity to respond rapidly to new or escalating crises. We will have identified and supported those communities at greatest risk of experiencing an acute crisis to strengthen their capacities to prevent or initiate mitigation measures before further violence is inflicted upon them. We will have strengthened monitoring, recognising the need to adapt many of our monitoring processes for first-line responses.

Global initiatives will include:

- finalising first-line response standard operating procedures
- equipping first-line response teams to provide psychological first aid, to adequately assess the protection from violence situation and initiate site management activities
- identifying available technical specialists who have the competencies needed to deliver first-line response Protection from Violence programmes
- integrating regular and systematic outcome monitoring methodologies into programme implementation, and documenting lessons learned following first-line responses
- providing guidance, tools and good practices to support the strengthening of local actors in the management of collective sites

10 Explore digital and technology solutions

Strategic outcome:

NRC's Protection from Violence teams are capable of assessing available digital options for enhancing violence prevention and response efforts, including through the analysis of risks linked to the use of technology and their mitigation measures.

Digital solutions will be key to scaling up and strengthening the quality of our Protection from Violence work. These solutions will assist us to work more closely and efficiently in hard-to-reach locations, facilitate more sophisticated and relevant analyses of violence risks and threats, and support communities to more effectively influence our programme design and delivery.

By the end of 2025, we will have begun exploring different digital technologies that can enhance service delivery, and explored and tested innovative technological solutions that can make our work more efficient and effective. This will include exploring ways to keep the most vulnerable communities connected to response services, even in low connectivity environments; and to keep themselves safe online.

Global initiatives will include:

- training and equipping Protection from Violence teams to use NRC digital programme tools (both current tools and those under development)
- testing and exploring digital modalities to engage with affected communities so as to integrate their inputs in the design of a response
- collaborating with other key Protection from Violence service providers to explore digital solutions for information management, monitoring and analysis

Registration in Colombia. Photo: Vannessa Jiménez G./NRC

11 Increase collaboration and exchange of expertise with local actors

Strategic outcome:

NRC partners with accountable and inclusive local community governance structures to ensure their participation in humanitarian decision-making forums and support their capacity to represent the needs of different community groups, engage in decision making and lead community initiatives.

Local actors are the primary responders in any crisis, and we already collaborate with a multitude of local actors in the countries in which we work. However, we want to do much better and significantly increase our collaboration and exchange of expertise with local actors. There are a multitude of local actors that are relevant for NRC's Protection from Violence work, and in this strategic period we will prioritise local community governance structures and local authorities, recognising the critical role they play as duty bearers, particularly in identifying violence risks and threats, and in the management of sites.

By the end of 2025, we will have deeper experience in collaborative programme design and will have documented examples of how these partnerships meaningfully shape programme and service design and implementation. We will have amplified local voices in our advocacy work and influenced the formal humanitarian architecture to be more inclusive and accountable to these local actors, securing their place in leadership structures and strategic advisory groups, and where feasible, progressively transitioning coordination leadership and site management functions to these local actors.

Global initiatives will include:

- development and testing of guidance on structured capacity-strengthening site management partnerships, and for more effectively connecting community governance structures and local authorities with the different tiers of the humanitarian coordination and decision-making structures
- leveraging our leadership roles in global and country level camp coordination and camp management, and in protection clusters, to promote the role of local actors
- develop mechanisms, together with the Shelter and Settlements team, for participation in decision making within area-based approaches and in emergency settings, and with a particular focus on women and groups at risk within urban environments