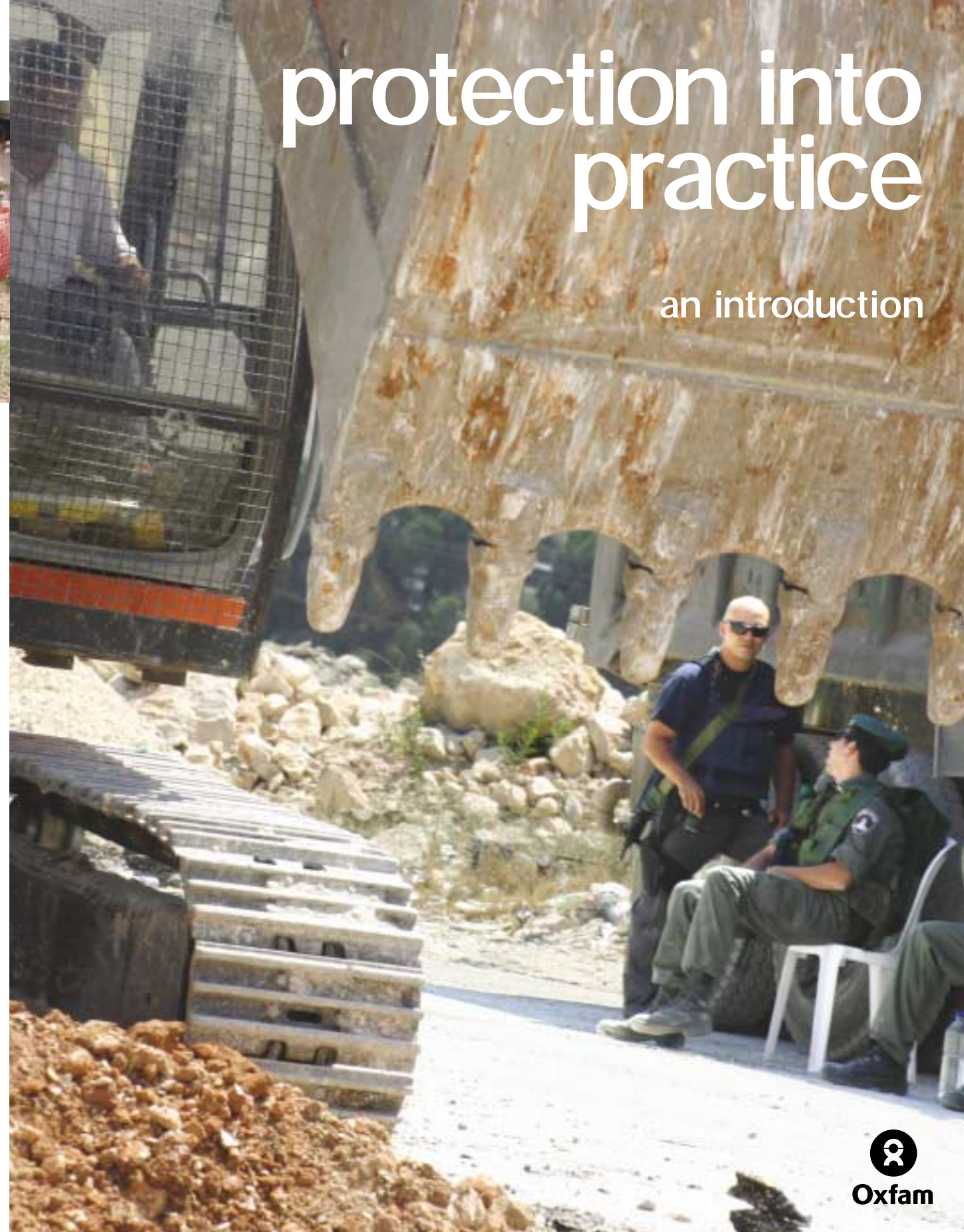




protection into practice

an introduction



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Preface

Oxfam aims to take a protection approach to all our humanitarian programmes in conflict situations.

Protection – or the lack of it – is increasingly defining our humanitarian agenda. Who needs protection from what? And who, including the communities themselves, has the capacity to secure that protection?

That said, protection is seen by some as “risky” because of its association with investigating and denouncing human rights violations, and by others as “arcane” because of its association with international law.

This introduction to putting protection into practice aims to demystify protection. It will help those responsible for managing humanitarian responses to resource protection appropriately throughout the programme cycle.

The introduction defines and illustrates ‘protection’, its impact on our humanitarian response, and its limits.

The second section is about how to put protection into practice, and where it must fit within the programme cycle in order to have demonstrable impact.

The third section looks at how to resource protection within a programme team in order to be successful.

The final section is a table of situations or issues that Oxfam has already dealt with in its protection work, and the types of activities that have been carried out. It suggests:

- areas for proactive development of protection-oriented interventions;
- minimum standards for all programmes in conflict areas;
- decision-making levels for riskier or more controversial activities;
- types of activity that Oxfam should not normally engage in.

For those who are interested in learning more about protection there is a substantial resource-bank of materials, including programme examples, case studies and links to external resources, on the Aim 3 section of the Oxfam Intranet.

Introduction

A definition of ‘protection’

Protection is, put simply, improving the safety of civilians. Oxfam aims to use our humanitarian response to reduce the risks of violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation faced by the people caught up in armed conflict or its unstable aftermath.

- Oxfam can protect indirectly through the influence we bring to bear: reducing the level of threat by persuading those with responsibility to fulfil their humanitarian obligations.
- Oxfam can also help people to seek their own safety; reducing the vulnerability of communities by providing them with safer options (e.g. avoiding the threat), or helping them to make informed choices and to influence key decisions that affect their lives.

So protection shields people from the worst effects of conflict and, when that is insufficient, provides a safety net to ensure they can survive its effects with dignity. Intervention may be within the community or at local, national and international level, depending where change needs to occur, and where we believe we can have the greatest impact on people’s lives.

Although one does not have to talk about rights to talk about protection, international law provides important benchmarks for the treatment civilians can expect, and shows who is formally responsible.

Reducing the threat of widespread, targeted attacks on civilians may involve international advocacy for the deployment of a peacekeeping force. Setting up safe evacuation centres or camps can provide communities with a viable option to avoid the very same threats for weeks or even years, thus reducing their vulnerability. Oxfam may give relevant authorities the technical and material support they require to do this, or even deliver services directly.

The impact of protection on Oxfam’s humanitarian response

Protection represents a shift in the way that we look at need, and in how we respond. In conflict, safety is often the primary concern of the people we serve. A protection approach allows us to address this through our humanitarian response. Although the core skills required for protection are ones that Oxfam is already familiar with, protection provides a framework for applying these techniques in new ways and to different issues.

A protection approach implies that:

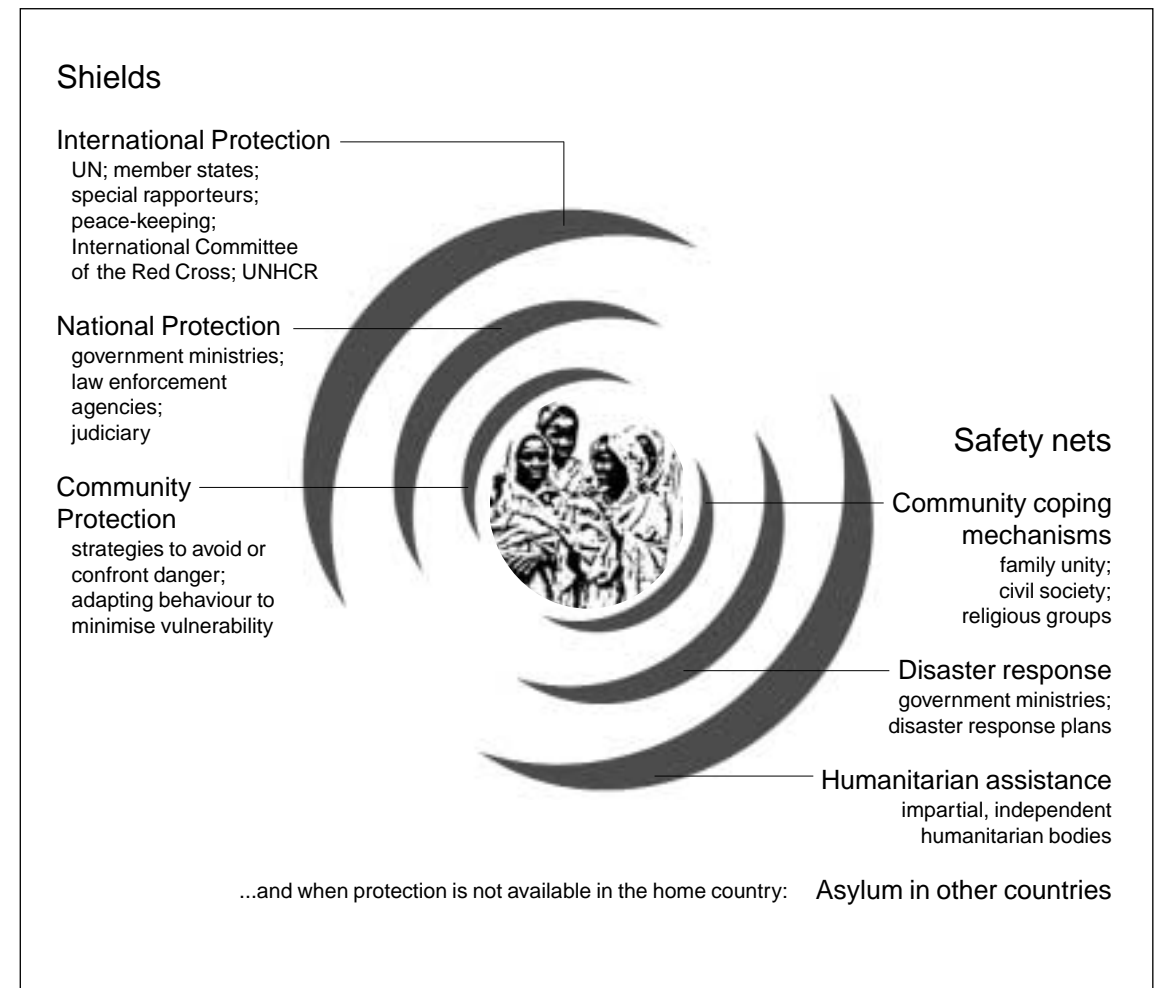
- Oxfam’s assessments analyse the risks of violence, coercion and deprivation faced by communities as well as public health risks and threats to livelihoods. They identify who needs to be protected from what.
- Programme design identifies how these risks can be reduced, by helping communities to reduce their vulnerability; by supporting those responsible for dealing with the threats when they are unable, and by persuading them to act when they are unwilling.
- Programmes combine short and longer-term strategies- from advocacy to assistance; from capacity building to campaigning- to reach these ends.

An intervention may thus combine the direct provision of assistance with capacity building of the national authorities so that they can take up their responsibilities; it may combine

international and national advocacy with civil society strengthening so that communities can negotiate for their own safety.

During a return process there may be a risk of forced return for certain groups of internally displaced people (IDP). Programme design may involve helping communities to identify the preconditions for safe and dignified return for their particular group. This may result in setting up community groups to strengthen their negotiations with local authorities; national advocacy work for the government to address land rights of returnees; coupled with long-term work for the government to adopt and implement a policy on internal displacement in line with the IDP Guiding Principles.

Shields and safety nets



The rights of individuals under international law have materialised into an intricate humanitarian system designed to protect people from coming to harm during disaster (shields), and to cope with its consequences (safety nets). Oxfam aims to use its institutional expertise in humanitarian assistance, capacity building, civil society mobilisation, advocacy, and campaigning to get all parts of this system functioning better together.

Limits of protection

“A programme ‘belongs’ under SCO 3.1 when it involves direct action in response to a crisis. It is about securing humanitarian protection, restoring vital services and livelihood systems during the crisis.” (SCO3.1 Framework document.)

What Oxfam does is more important than how we label our work. However, it is worth putting some boundaries on what we describe as protection. As problems of violence, coercion and deprivation are not limited to humanitarian crises, not all work to address them is protection. Protection programmes address or help people to recover from threats that are excessive – due to their prevalence and/or severity – and thus constitute a threat to life and security. A response may go well beyond the provisions of assistance, but will remain within Aim Three.

This distinction (in goal) between humanitarian work and development should not be confused with a distinction between long-term and short-term action. Many humanitarian crises are prolonged and chronic situations that require longer-term timeframes for response.

A programme with the goal of supporting communities in negotiating with local authorities in order to reduce the severe effects that a combination of widespread political violence and repression is having on their safety and livelihoods aims to improve protection and thus fits in SCO 3.1.

A programme in the same context, with the aim of ensuring that marginalised community groups are free to meet in order to have a say in the basic decisions which affect their lives, would fit under SCO4.

Protection and assistance

Some agencies refer to ‘protection activities’ as separate from ‘assistance activities’. Other agencies (such as the ICRC) argue that protection and assistance are inseparable, amounting to no more than two interpretations of the same action. They argue that trying to dissociate them is pointless.

For Oxfam, if the specific goal of the programme is to reduce the risks of violence, coercion or deprivation faced by a population then the programme is protective. This may result in various activities, from direct assistance and advocacy to capacity-building of institutions and community mobilisation, that contribute to the programme; but it is the goal (to improve protection), not the activity, that defines protection.

Providing relief to refugees in a camp in a border area may provide protection, as it allows the refugees to reduce their vulnerability by avoiding threats faced in their own country. It is likely that this would be a part of a broader strategy to address the wider needs of the community including, for example, new threats resulting from the camp being too close to the border.

Providing the same relief to villages in the conflict zone might not provide protection as it does not reduce vulnerability to the threats, and indeed may have a negative effect if the goods distributed attracted armed groups to loot the area.

Opposite: Israeli Defence Forces look on as an Israeli bulldozer digs up the main street in Al Ram to erect the latest phase of Israel's security barrier in north east Jerusalem.

Israel and the Occupied Territories: restricted movement in the West Bank

Oxfam was rehabilitating springs, increasing the water storage capacity, and supporting a women's ‘water user group’ to identify and address public health risks in Deir Sharaf, a Palestinian village near Nablus in the West Bank. The women identified a huge pile of rubbish dumped at the edge of their village as a major health hazard. The Israeli soldiers controlling the checkpoint, between the village and the designated landfill site near a neighbouring village, had repeatedly prevented the rubbish trucks from passing through, despite attempts by the village council to liaise with the Israeli co-ordination office (DCO).

In conjunction with the village council, Oxfam paid a contractor to remove the rubbish to the landfill site, sending the relevant identity, registration and insurance numbers of all the drivers to the DCO to obtain their permission to pass the checkpoint.

The truck drivers encountered problems day after day at the checkpoint. They would call the village council, who would call Oxfam staff to call the DCO. The DCO would then speak to the checkpoint soldiers and the trucks were granted access. Oxfam persuaded the village council, over

a long time period, to liaise directly with the DCO themselves. To enable clear identification and minimise risks of being shot at, Oxfam encouraged the driver to wear a fluorescent vest while at work, for the 20 or so trips across the checkpoint.

Oxfam believes that until there is a political solution to the conflict in the Palestinian Territories long-term sustainable development will not be possible. Ideally, there should be no checkpoint prohibiting the movement of Palestinians in disposing of their rubbish. Therefore, Oxfam has prioritised the protection of civilians' rights as enshrined in international humanitarian law as the most urgent need in the current humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Moreover, Oxfam believes that the protection of civilians is not only their right, but is essential to build peace and reverse the humanitarian situation. It has written an Oxfam International policy paper (No. 62) and is now advocating with Israeli and Palestinian civil society, as well as the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and European Union members to urge parties to the conflict to put protection first, even if it means using a third party.



Jos Koster/Oxfam

Putting protection into practice

For protective programmes to be effective, needs assessment and programme design should be protection-focused. Programme implementation must be properly resourced, in part through building the confidence and capacity of the implementing team; and adequate monitoring and programme-learning mechanisms should be in place.

Assessment

Protection programming starts at the needs assessment. This defines Oxfam’s humanitarian agenda – who needs to be protected from what?

- What are the threats (violence, coercion, deprivation)?
- Who do they affect (are specific groups more affected than others?) and in what manner?

However a protection assessment should go beyond this. It asks who is able to provide that protection:

- How are communities adapting their behaviour to avoid these threats, and how can these strategies be made more viable?



Tanzania/UK: a long-term threat to the international protection of refugees

In 2004, the UK government proposed setting up 'processing centres' or 'protection zones' in refugees' regions of origin or transit. This was part of an increasingly restrictive set of measures across the EU which eroded refugees' rights and access to asylum, and which sought to drive down numbers of asylum seekers. It emerged that the UK government was in talks with the Tanzanian government to negotiate such an agreement.

Oxfam developed a policy position on the UK plans, gave evidence to a House of Lords inquiry and lobbied UK, EU and UNHCR decision

makers. Combined with pressure from allied NGOs, this led to the withdrawal of the most worrying parts of the proposal and to a lack of EU backing for the UK plans. We also mobilised awareness amongst NGOs in Tanzania, creating links between them and UK refugee NGOs, and expressed our concerns in UK, African and international press. The Tanzanian government responded with a public rejection of UK offers. So far the UK proposals have not come to fruition and Oxfam and allies in the UK and Tanzania continue to monitor their development.

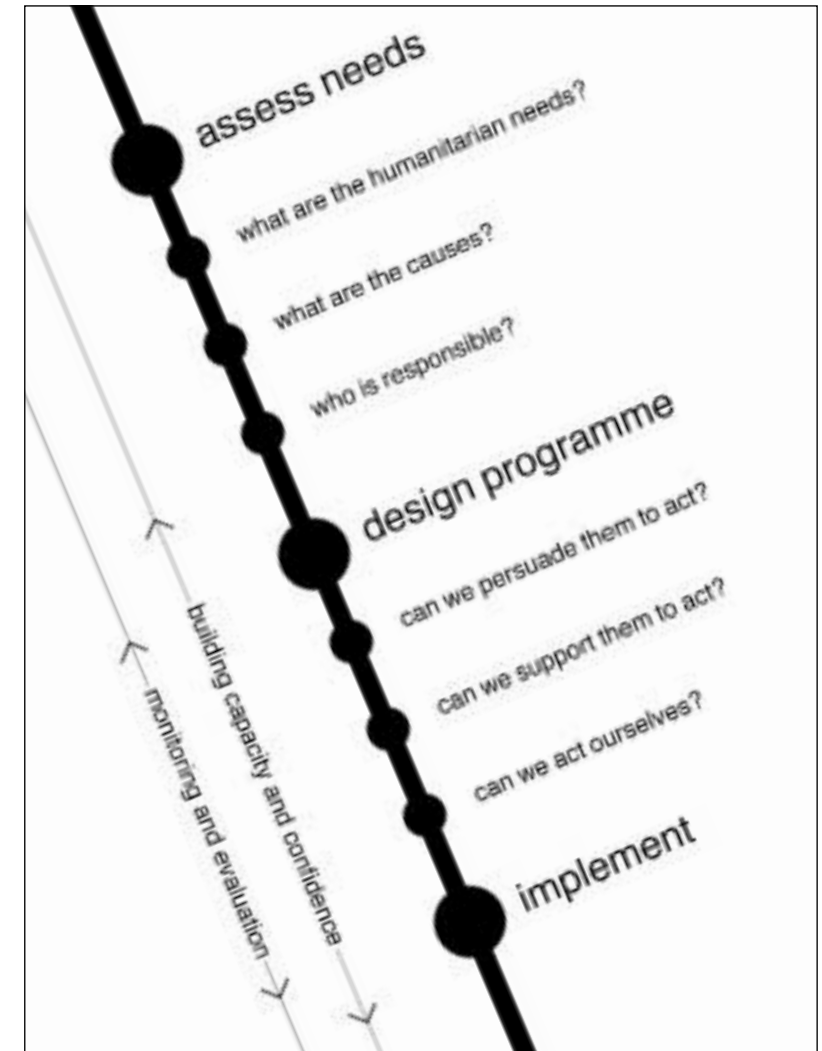
- Who is responsible, and then, critically, what needs to change and at what level (from local to international)?
- What are the short- and longer-term changes in policy, practice, ideas and beliefs, that can reduce the threats?
- Where does the capacity of responsible authorities need to be boosted so that they themselves can protect the people that they are responsible for?
- Where are Oxfam and its partners best positioned to provide services themselves?

The needs assessment should not be seen as a one-off event, but as a process that evolves and should be monitored over time. It may be a rapid appraisal of a situation, or a detailed analysis – in any case it should be tailored to inform the decision-making requirements of the moment.

An initial assessment mission may identify communities that are threatened with violence by armed groups operating in the surrounding areas. They are afraid of being accused of collaborating with the government and reduce their vulnerability to this threat by not leaving their village – even to access medical care.

At a national level, and in the long term, the behaviour of the armed group will need to change to ensure that they do not attack civilians. However, more locally, and in the shorter term it may be appropriate to negotiate with the armed group to guarantee safe passage in and out for those who require medical attention, or indeed for mobile clinics to access the area.

Putting protection into practice



For protective programmes to be effective, needs assessment and programme design should be protection focused. Programme implementation must be properly resourced, in part through building the confidence and capacity of the implementing team. A well-designed protection programme considers which combination of activities and approaches will have the greatest impact.

Programme design

A good protection assessment will have identified not only what the threats and vulnerabilities of a community are, but also (using international law as a guide and benchmark) who is responsible and what needs to change.

There are essentially three ways in which Oxfam, its partners, and the communities with which we work can intervene to reduce threats of violence, coercion or deprivation, or to limit the vulnerability of communities to these threats:

- by persuading those responsible to act;
- by supporting those responsible to act;
- by acting directly ourselves.

A well-designed programme should look at all three options, and consider which combination is likely to have the greatest impact. The new programme planning system, OPAL, should allow short-term interventions to be effectively combined with longer-term work in order to maximise impact.

Implementation

Broadly, activities can vary from direct assistance and capacity-building of communities and responsible authorities, to direct advocacy and community empowerment so that communities can themselves hold authorities to account.

A table showing examples of the types of activities that can and could be carried out to improve the protection of civilians is in the final section.

Monitoring and evaluation

The progress of protection programmes, as with all programmes, needs to be monitored against appropriate indicators. Best practice on this is poorly documented, often focusing on reduction in 'abuses' which can be hard to measure objectively, or on outputs (e.g. xx people trained in Human Rights) are not necessarily protective themselves.

As well as measuring the number of incidents (xx cases of sexual assault; xx people forced from their homes) protection indicators can fall into three categories:

- Behavioural indicators: e.g. xx communities planting their crops for next year;
- Programme-related indicators: e.g. xx people have access to legal aid;
- Environmental indicators: e.g. government policy on internal displacement in line with the IDP Guiding Principles.

A good indicator will be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

Capacity-building and confidence-building

Equally important in taking a protection approach is having a programme team who are able to carry out all the above tasks. This requires a degree of training, but training alone is inadequate – it can often be more effective to have expert staff accompany key staff through each step of the process.

Confidence can also be as much a block to staff taking on a more proactive role in protection. Coaching and mentoring can play an important role in building that confidence.

Democratic Republic of Congo: the UN Security Council takes action

Ethnic clashes in Ituri, north-eastern DRC, have killed at least 50,000 and displaced 500,000 others since 1999. A vast humanitarian crisis coupled with difficulty of access meant that Oxfam's public health assistance programme could only scratch the surface of needs, and of course could do nothing to address the principal issue: protection of civilians from indiscriminate violence. Aware that the needs were not limited to food, shelter or water, Oxfam invested substantial resources over three years to becoming an authoritative source of information and convincing advocate on the crisis.

In 2001 a timely intervention through a British Ambassador with whom Oxfam had built a trusting relationship resulted in troops bringing a massacre to an end the same day. In 2002 Oxfam worked with the French Ambassador to the United Nations and other diplomats to propose a resolution on DRC to the Security Council. UNSC 1445 was passed, including

much of the language that Oxfam proposed on Ituri, such as naming the parties to the conflict, the safety of humanitarian workers, access to those in need, and an increased presence in Ituri of MONUC (the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo). As the violence continued, in 2003, Oxfam supported the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations in lobbying for a peace-enforcement response. This resulted in the first deployment of the European Union's Rapid Reaction Force – Operation Artemis. This force brought limited stability to the area, allowing humanitarian workers to access the main town, Bunia, and laying political foundations for the installation of a two-year transitional national government.

Although the situation in DRC in general, and Ituri in particular, remains critical, Oxfam's intervention has had considerable, life-saving impact beyond its relief delivery in the fields of water and sanitation.



Camp Aero, Bunia, viewed through a razor-wire fence.

Jane Beesley/Oxfam

Resourcing protection

This section presents options for programme team staff members and examines some of the preconditions for protection to be effective.

Over the last two years, Oxfam has built up a small Protection Peer Group of people working on protection. This includes protection specialists (advisers or officers) as well as generalists (e.g. policy advisers; country managers or programme officers). There is thus no single model on how to bring protection into a programme. The key prerequisite is ensuring that all parts of the programme cycle are properly resourced.

Specialists or generalists?

Protection is a new approach to programming for Oxfam GB and for many other NGOs. Country programmes should thus consider importing expertise with a good understanding of protection to help develop and implement programmes. This may be bringing in a specialist simply to advise the programme (experience suggests that an adviser can support a maximum of three countries at one time), or a protection officer to work on programme design, and to implement specific parts of the programme. An adviser would need to work with a team over a period of time, at least through one complete project cycle.

However, some of the key skills are generic; strong participatory and analytical skills at the assessment stage; strategic planning skills during programme design; and a selection of community mobilisation, capacity-building, advocacy and direct assistance skills during programme delivery. Some programmes may only need a focal point to ensure protection is brought into the programme. In each case, it is recommended that at least 10 per cent of the person's time should be devoted to the Protection Peer Group – both to learn from and to inform Oxfam's developing work.

That said, a protection programme will be successful only if the majority of field staff are able at least to recognise and assess protection needs and key staff are able to participate in programme design. Managers must also be able to understand, manage and resource a protection programme. If these skills are not already present, a well-planned capacity and confidence-building programme will be required. This is likely to extend beyond occasional training events, and include significant coaching and mentoring.

Furthermore, although protection is becoming an increasingly common language outside mandated protection agencies (e.g. United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)), it is often poorly understood and is associated with a set of activities that may or may not have some protective effect. For example, monitoring and denouncing violations does not in itself increase the protection of civilians, although in some cases this may contribute to a wider protective goal. Oxfam is a leading player in developing a rounded approach to protection programming. The Protection Peer Group allows Oxfam to more effectively influence the protection work of other agencies – vital if protection is to be successful in the longer term. This organisation-wide need should be considered when resourcing protection.



Refugees waiting in a transit camp

Annie Bungeoth/PANOS

Indonesia: debunking assumptions about refugees' needs in West Timor

In 2002, in West Timor, Indonesia, refugees displaced from East Timor in 1999 were under increasing pressure (for example, through the suspension of food aid) to disband camps and either resettle elsewhere in Indonesia or repatriate.

At the same time, the assisted repatriation scheme was stopped as it was assumed that no more people would take it up, and a new scheme promoted to resettle refugees in other parts of Indonesia, away from West Timor. There was little knowledge of refugees' opinions and concerns, including whether they would accept an option to move off the island. There was also very little information available on the readiness of the resettlement sites to receive the refugees.

The fact that refugees did not move, despite mounting pressure, indicated the degree of uncertainty refugees associated with leaving the camps. Oxfam was increasingly concerned that as time passed more overt coercive measures would be used to disband the camps.

Oxfam and a group of local NGO partners initiated a survey that helped to 'debunk' some assumptions held by stakeholders. It provided information about refugees' real needs, their priorities when considering local settlement or repatriation, and how decisions were reached in communities on these matters. Amongst other issues, the survey results highlighted the fact that

most refugees said that they would never consider resettling away from Timor island.

Given the vast shortage of reliable information, this effort to systematically collect information on refugees' needs and concerns produced significant changes in the government and humanitarian agencies' beliefs, ideas and policies regarding the remaining refugees. In particular, the push to get refugees to move to other islands was all but dropped, assistance for repatriation continued, and local settlement in West Timor was finally acknowledged as an option that needed to be developed.

At a more local level, dissemination activities about successful examples of spontaneous integration have been shared through radio-dialogues, newsletters and project teams, both to motivate refugees to take initiatives and also to motivate the government to support these initiatives. This has been complemented through increased activities to engage with local officials, for example, through producing and distributing an information sheet about the project, carrying out more regular visits with village and sub-district leaders to share issues and update them on the situation faced by refugees. These approaches have had positive effects: for example, two village chiefs have offered land for local settlement in their villages.

Sudan: reducing women's exposure to violence at water points

More than 40,000 IDPs have fled to Kebkabiya town to seek safety from the violence engulfing the Darfur region of Sudan. There are some water points throughout town, however an Oxfam assessment found that the quantity and quality of water was insufficient. In addition, at most water points women and girls reported violence and harassment from the militia. The abuse includes beating and whipping, water containers being confiscated, and shooting into the air to scare and intimidate. Women and young girls in and around the town are regularly abducted and gang raped for days at a time. Levels of violence are highest in isolated locations on the town periphery where the nearest house is over 500m away, and near areas of high militia presence. Men will not leave the town boundary because of a very real threat of being shot.

As a result of this assessment, it was

determined that Oxfam would not refurbish any water source which IDPs considered insecure. During the assessment of each water points many potential sources were eliminated from consideration due to their isolation and/or proximity to areas of high militia presence.

Four viable water sources were ultimately identified which explicitly met the criteria of enabling safe access to water. In one case, Oxfam will run a pipeline from the town's outlying well into a residential area in order to ensure safe access to water by IDPs.

Aside from standard water point monitoring, the project will monitor the extent to which women feel safer and are less subject to harassment and violence at the new water points. This project will benefit more than 4,000 households (24,500 people), including significantly reducing exposure to violence for women and young girls.



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Preconditions for effective protection programming

Experience has shown that not all attempts to take a protection approach have been successful. Protection is more complex than only delivering assistance. There are at least four preconditions for effectively integrating protection into a programme:

- The basics are there: Broadly speaking, the programme is already able to manage its basics, e.g. finance, HR, admin, donor relations, reporting.
- Good programme planning processes: the programme has strategic and proactive processes in place (rather than reacting only to donor demands) to prioritise and plan work. This gives protection staff a system to engage with.
- Sufficient stability in the team to sustain a protection intervention over a period of time.
- A willingness to resource protection: Whether with staff time (i.e. in job descriptions) or money, protection programming is likely to require resources that go beyond those required for assistance programmes. The cost of material inputs is usually low; the cost in staff time can be significant. Many protection programmes will require a significant amount of advocacy and alliance-building in-country.

So what can Oxfam do?

The remainder of the booklet is a table of the types of protection activities that Oxfam can carry out in its programmes. Although it is based on several years of field experience, good protection programming inevitably requires creativity. The list is therefore illustrative rather than exhaustive. Every crisis is unique, and new circumstances will require new responses.

The table divides activities by their objectives: is the aim to reduce the threat of violence or coercion, or simply help the community to avoid it? Do we want to help communities make their own decisions about how to stay safe, or simply provide assistance so that more options are open to them?

A good humanitarian programme will look at the left-hand column (Good Programming) when designing its response, but all programmes should meet the minimum standards. For example, Oxfam could not, in good faith, analyse the crisis in DR Congo in terms of lack of basic services without being concerned with the widespread violence, including sexual violence, and displacement.

It is suggested that some of the more contentious activities should only be undertaken with the explicit approval of the Regional Management Centre. Others should not normally be considered by Oxfam because they are too risky; because other agencies are explicitly mandated to carry them out, or simply because Oxfam does not have the necessary organisational expertise.

Further advice can be found on the Protection Section of the Oxfam Intranet site, or by contacting the Protection Adviser in the Humanitarian Department, or a member of the Protection Peer Group, located in several country or regional offices.

Opposite: Women collecting water from an Oxfam-constructed tapstand at Kalma camp.

Protection Activities

Good programming

Country programmes should build their capacity to...

Measure humanitarian need

Use protection analysis (integrated with public health and food-security assessments) to frame assessments and inform programme design, approach and ensure all activities complement each other.

Establish ongoing monitoring of risks of violence, coercion and deprivation to inform the response of Oxfam and others.

Create an information database based on information gathered by field staff after each contact with communities to monitor issues and priorities and to lend authority to advocacy initiatives.

Build alliances in-country, including other NGOs, UN agencies, donor agencies and the diplomatic community to agree on priority threats and realistic policy and practice changes that will have the greatest impact on the protection of civilians.

Reducing threats of violence and coercion

Based on field knowledge, identify specific policy and practice changes (locally, nationally or internationally) that will improve the protection of civilians from key threats of personal violence.

Support impartial community initiatives to reduce exposure to armed violence.

Build alliances and nurture contacts in-country to increase impact of international advocacy when required through delivery of common messaging.

Deliver on advocacy strategy to secure priority policy and practice changes.**

Build capacity of communities and civil-society organisations to influence formal and informal authorities on the policies and practices affecting their lives.

Facilitate two-way information flow on threats so that communities receive information to inform their decisions and decision-makers are assisted to be more responsive to the concerns of communities e.g. on management of IDP return processes.

Directly, or through building the capacity of communities, influence priorities and behaviour of peacekeeping forces in order to maximise their impact on the protection of civilians.

***level of authority required will depend on nature of policy and practice changes, based on the risk to staff security and the stakeholder targeted, e.g. the location of an IDP camp should fall within the prerogative of the country programme manager, whereas the Regional Director should consider a strategy that demands effective control of militias.*

Minimum standards

Projects must generally...

Define humanitarian need in terms of violence and coercion as well as lack of access to basic services.

Use participatory methodologies to understand impact of threats on the lives of people experiencing them.

Ensure that any gross abuse seen by staff is reported to the Regional Director who will decide on course of action.

Higher impact/higher risk options

Regional Management Centres should consider...

Passing on sensitive information to other agencies.

Proactive research into threats and incidents of violence.

Proactive research into policies and practices that encourage or fail to prevent violence against civilians.

Direct intervention with civilian authorities on incidents or patterns of abuse.

Delivering advocacy strategy to secure priority policy and practice changes.**

Direct or indirect international advocacy (e.g. with the United Nations Security Council) to take specific international political or military action to improve the protection of civilians e.g. advocating for peacekeeping forces; observers; arms embargos; targeted sanctions.

Support to elements of demobilisation, disarmament; and reintegration programmes, e.g. material assistance in demobilisation camps; reintegration assistance for child soldiers; community information campaigns.

Briefings to peacekeeping forces on protection threats.

'No-go' areas

Oxfam should not normally consider...

Detailed documentation of individual cases of abuse (e.g. collection of witness statements).

Direct interventions with military authorities on specific incidents of abuse.

Disarmament and demobilisation of armed groups.

Good programming

Country programmes should build their capacity to...

Be able to identify not only deprivation in communities, but also risks of coercion and violence – including but not limited to sexual exploitation.

Take appropriate action to minimise such threats arising from Oxfam’s own programmes.

Locate and address the policies and practices of responsible authorities, humanitarian agencies, peacekeeping forces that increase the risk of assisted populations.

Build alliances with local and international stakeholders to address these concerns through increasing familiarity with accepted sectoral standards, capacity-building and joint advocacy.

Mobilise communities and civil society organisations to play an active role in the accountable management of humanitarian assistance.

Establish local mechanisms of accountability, including means to register grievances.

Minimise any negative consequences of assistance

Ensure that humanitarian assistance is provided in an impartial manner.

Ensure that compromises made to gain rapid access are not at the expense of impartial access and long-term humanitarian goals.

Identify specific policies and practices that are preventing affected populations from accessing humanitarian assistance.

Build alliances to change the above policies and practices, e.g. by direct engagement with formal authorities; lobbying or working with peacekeeping forces; lobbying the diplomatic community and donors.

Promote dissemination of “Humanitarian Principles” in order to increase the acceptability of humanitarian action.

Initiate inter-agency discussion and build up alliances in order to reach agreements on how humanitarian principles can be best adhered to in practice. Develop ground rules or terms of engagement.

Ensure Humanitarian access

Minimum standards

Projects must generally...

Ensure that staff feel comfortable communicating concerns that programmes may be contributing negatively to the protection of a population in a given situation, e.g. making people vulnerable to violence or exploitation, supporting a war-economy or creating a false sense of security.

Ensure that assistance is suspended or withdrawn if intervention causes more harm than good.

Higher impact/ higher risk options

Regional Management Centres should consider...

Formal monitoring and documenting individual cases of abuse and corruption associated with humanitarian aid.

International advocacy (e.g. with influential governments; UNSC; IASC. to build political pressure to secure humanitarian access.

Advocating for and participating in negotiations for ‘humanitarian corridors’ or other restrictive-access agreements

‘No-go’ areas

Oxfam should not normally consider...

Engaging with the judicial system on the investigation and punishment of individuals or groups.

Participating in negotiations for armed escorts or similar arrangements to secure humanitarian access.

Good programming

Country programmes should build their capacity to...

Reduce vulnerability of communities to threats: helping them to make informed decisions

Ensure that people who are fleeing or have fled areas where they are in danger are aware of the options open to them and that at least one of the options (e.g. continued displacement in camps or host community) is viable.

Increase people's access to neutral, relevant and accurate information, assist equitable community-based decision-making and increase people's capacity to take action on their decisions.

Ensure that refugees and displaced people are able to access services that fulfil their rights from those responsible, e.g. entitlements to assistance, securing legal identity.

Bring other stakeholders, including formal and informal authorities; on board to support and prioritise voluntary movements on the part of displaced populations.

Help communities avoid threats: ensuring assistance needs are met

Provide appropriate assistance (e.g. in displaced camps) to help people avoid dangerous places.

Persuade formal or informal authorities (e.g. Ministry of the Interior; Ministries of Health; Local Authorities; Disaster Management Offices) to take appropriate action to provide basic services to those affected by crisis on impartial basis and in a timely and accountable manner. Where necessary, provide resources (financial, material, expertise) required.

Assist those authorities in contingency planning to increase emergency response capacity,

Proactively address deliberate deprivation and discrimination in service provision; encourage inter-agency efforts to this end.

Safeguard asylum and refugee status

[In addition to activities to benefit all those affected by conflict]

Advocacy to prevent discrimination against refugees.

Advocacy to prevent refoulement (forced return) of refugees.

Minimum standards

Projects must generally...

Be aware of patterns and incidents of forced movements, and the constraints displaced people face in making decisions to stay where they are, seek return or seek resettlement.

Encourage complementarity with formally mandated bodies (such as UNHCR).

Higher impact/higher risk options

Regional Management Centres should consider...

National and international advocacy to prevent forced displacement or forced return.

National and international advocacy to allow displacement and to provide assistance to make that displacement viable.

'No-go' areas

Oxfam should not normally consider...

Understand who has formal responsibility (e.g. water board, department of health) for basic physical needs; engage these authorities if they have the capacity and will to act.

Be alert to patterns of deliberate deprivation or discrimination which may inhibit access to basic services and means of making a living.

International advocacy to pressurise middle-income or resource-rich authorities to use resources to meet the basic needs of people for whom they are responsible (rather than, for example, simply buying more guns).

Negotiating arrangements with peacekeeping or other non-belligerent forces to provide assistance.

Advocacy to prevent border closures and allow those seeking refuge to leave countries where they are in danger.

Refugee registration and status determination.

Good programming

Country programmes should build their capacity to...

Support durable solutions to displacement

Design interventions that can ensure the viability of longer-term solutions to displacement.

Ensure that the policies and programmes of the relevant governments and formally-mandated agencies meet accepted criteria for durable solutions and are in line with displaced people's needs, priorities and criteria.

Advocate for donor support to above strategies.

Assist refugee/IDP (re)integration in return/ resettlement areas, including bringing sites up to public health standards.

Ensure that the needs of existing/host populations are taken into account in return/ resettlement/ reintegration processes; anticipate and help to mitigate inequitable relationships and potential conflict between displaced and host communities.

Develop and implement effective exit strategies.

Compensate for loss of property and assets

Ensure that the voices and concerns of affected populations are heard and feed into the creation of policies and mechanisms to restore or provide compensation for lost property and assets.

Improve protection during peace processes

Conduct a protection analysis of the peace process and use its findings to increase its ability to address humanitarian protection concerns.

For example, priority concerns of affected populations are heard on how their rights and entitlements will be met through the peace process.

Assist affected populations to access information on the peace process in order to feed into informed decision-making.

Minimum standards

Projects must generally...

Recognise all options available to displaced communities (including staying put) and the risks associated with each.

Higher impact/ higher risk options

Regional Management Centres should consider...

The resource implications of longer-term commitments.

'No-go' areas

Oxfam should not normally consider...

Individual return or resettlement cases.

Be aware of the prevalence of this problem, people's views on it, and its contribution to people's long-term vulnerability.

Formal responsibility for the implementation of compensation mechanisms.

Keep up to date with developments in ceasefire agreements or peace processes, their provisions with regard to entitlements and treatment of affected populations, and their implementation.

Implications for organisational image and independence.
Provide briefings to representatives in the process on top humanitarian concerns; engaging in regular coordination and information-sharing with the relevant representatives/ committees.

Taking on a formal responsibility with regard to its substance and implementation.

Good programming

Country programmes should build their capacity to...

*Protect
prisoners*

Minimum standards

Projects must generally...

Higher impact/ higher risk options

Regional Management Centres should consider...

'No-go' areas

Oxfam should not normally consider...

Any type of programmes inside prisons or similar structures such as cantonment centres or demobilisation camps.

Programmes dealing with conditions of detention of prisoners, allegations of mistreatment etc.

*Reunite
separated
families*

Advocate on need for such a programme if it is a priority concern of affected communities but remains unaddressed.

Ensure that separated people met through Oxfam's programmes are able to access tracing services.

Running programmes to reunite separated families.

Particular vulnerability of separated people are taken into account in design of Oxfam interventions.

*Help people
understand
their rights*

Inform people of their specific rights and entitlements and how to exercise them (e.g. what options are available for return or resettlement; how to claim a 'return' package; how to claim compensation for loss).

Advocate for specific policies to be brought into line with international standards (rights).

Train local organisations in basic rights as part of a strategy to bring about specific changes in policy and practice.

Note that rights awareness does not in itself provide any protection. It can, however, play an important role in a broader strategy

Train peacekeeping forces on humanitarian principles and how to interact with humanitarian agencies.

Disseminate basic rights to civil authorities as part of a strategy to bring about specific changes in policy and practice.

Train armed groups and formal duty-bearers on their legal obligations (e.g. for the military to respect international humanitarian law).

This document was written by Andrew Bonwick with the Protection Peer Group for internal Oxfam use.

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Oxfam GB, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ

email oxfam@oxfam.org.uk

www.oxfam.org

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