

## Protection Overview

### Overview

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) endorsed the definition that states that protection is about advocating for, supporting or undertaking activities that aim to obtain full respect, protect and *fulfil the rights of all individuals in accordance with the letter and spirit of relevant bodies of law (i.e. International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, and International Refugee law)*. Protection in the humanitarian arena entails recognized system-wide standards that have been agreed upon and are supported by a well-structured coordination system in place.

In increasingly complex contexts and as more and more people resort to mobility as both a coping and protection mechanism, protection risks continue emerging as the combined result of factors that include exacerbated vulnerabilities, heightened exposure to multiple threats, as well as strained capacities to withstand them. In such challenging contexts IOM is often part of the front-line response, offering support and conducting activities that ultimately aim at enhancing the protection of migrants, displaced and affected persons. More particularly, IOM is committed to placing protection at the core of its actions, in line with IASC Protection Policy.

Protection encompasses a variety of specialized fields, but is also commonly declined in its other dimensions; mainstreaming of protection within other sectors of intervention, and ensuring that protection outcomes are integrated in other sectors. IOM mainstreams protection by ensuring that the principle of Do No Harm prevails throughout its actions, by prioritizing the safety and dignity of individuals, ensuring a meaningful access to its programs, as well as including participation and empowerment approaches at all times and ensuring the integration of accountability mechanisms. Overarching mechanisms, such as on the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and the accountability to affected populations (AAP), are also inscribed within the field of protection. IOM's specialized areas of protection are varied and include, for example: child protection; risk mitigation, response to and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV); counter-trafficking; housing, land and property (HLP); promoting and supporting alternatives to immigration detention; or the inclusion of persons with disabilities, to name a few.

The Organization plays an active role on Protection through its participation and contributions in the relevant workstreams, initiatives, and working groups of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) as well as in the [Global Protection Cluster](#) and in its Areas of Responsibility (AoRs) and other UN mechanisms and inter-agency networks and fora.

### Relevance to IOM's Emergency Operations

In its [Statement on the Centrality of Protection \(2013\)](#) and its [Protection Policy \(2016\)](#), the IASC affirms that the *"Protection to all affected and at-risk persons has to inform humanitarian decision making and response, and be central to preparedness efforts, as part of immediate and life-saving activities, and throughout the duration of humanitarian response and beyond. Thus, calling out humanitarian actors that their responses must be driven by the needs and perspectives of affected persons, with protection at its core."*

Given the Organization's global footprint and unique proximity to affected individuals and communities, IOM is committed to the safety, dignity and integrity of all, leaving no one behind and placing protection at the center of its action, in adherence to the IASC Statement on the Centrality of Protection and the IASC Protection Policy. Throughout its founding and policy documents, the Organization is engaged to acting towards the dignity, wellbeing and human rights of the population it serves. IOM's 2015 Humanitarian Policy further specifies that: *"In addressing the mobility dimensions of humanitarian crises in an integrated and comprehensive manner, IOM seeks to ensure that the right to protection of migrants, displaced persons and affected communities is upheld and their needs fulfilled regardless of inter alia, their age, sex, gender, physical condition, nationality, ethnic group or religious affiliation."*

### Coordination

IOM has significantly scaled up its global commitments and engagement and is an active contributor to inter-agency coordination and standard setting efforts such as for example with the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) and the AoR thereunder; Gender Based Violence (GBV), Housing, Land and Property (HLP), Mine Action (MA), and Child Protection (CP).

At the field level, IOM is an active member of protection working groups/sectors and sub-working groups activated in the different

contexts, where relevant. At the global level, the Organization maintains its contributions in groups or workstreams looking at protection considerations or protection-related thematics, such as in the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, or within the frame of the IASC on thematics such as Disabilities Inclusion, Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS), Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). IOM has also committed to several global engagements such as on the inclusion of persons with disabilities or on ending GBV.

## Operations

### The three dimensions of Protection

IOM operationalizes protection through three dimensions:

- First, it is committed to mainstreaming protection across all of its crisis and post-crisis activities. This entails prioritizing safety and dignity and avoiding any unintended harmful consequences of IOM's actions; securing meaningful access to IOM services and aid by all groups; ensuring accountability to affected individuals and communities as well as participation and empowerment through an inclusive approach to decision-making processes. For example, ensuring meaningful participation of women and girls in camp governance. **Protection mainstreaming is the responsibility of every IOM staff member involved in crisis response** and it is not just of protection specialists. IOM is continuously producing internal guidance and tools to support all colleagues in mainstreaming protection in their own sectors. The IASC and GPC also prioritize the mainstreaming of protection within cluster activities. To learn more about IOM's work in mainstreaming protection, see the Protection Mainstreaming entry.
- Secondly, IOM's value added consists in integrating protection outcomes within its other sectors of intervention. For example: by determining specific protection outcomes in Cash Based Initiatives (CBI) interventions that contribute to GBV, Child Protection, Disabilities Inclusion or Counter-Trafficking protection responses and outcomes. Integrating protection into IOM's work requires IOM's protection officers to work side-by-side with other IOM colleagues.
- Thirdly, and if trained and dedicated human resources are in place, IOM provides specialized protection support such as Child Protection, risk mitigation and response to GBV, Anti-Trafficking in Person activities, or Community-Based Psycho-Social Activities. As a specific protection activity, IOM is also entitled to advocate for the protection of individual, including advocating for placement in alternatives to immigration detention or for their humanitarian admission in a third country in cases where protection needs cannot be fulfilled in their origin or transit country. These protection activities require a specialized and trained workforce, such as protection officers and for some areas specific additional expertise is required (e.g. MHPSS specialists, land, property and reparations specialists, etc.).

*To learn more about IOM's standalone protection programming, see the following sections below.*

## IOM's Role

### Protection in Humanitarian Action (PiHA) Roadmap

IOM's Protection in Humanitarian Action (PiHA) roadmap aims to streamline these commitments for protection programming as reaffirmed in IOM's [Humanitarian Policy \(2015\)](#). Consistent implementation of PiHA is intended to reduce protection risks to migrants, displaced persons and affected populations reached by IOM. PiHA provides an overarching frame for Protection, addressing the programmatic level and complementing IOM's existing internal policies, frameworks, instructions and guidance notes as well as inter-agency commitments. It is meant to be a tool for a strategic, predictable, principled and professional performance.

The PiHA provides five Operational Pillars within which all protection activities can be inscribed, these are:

- **Thematic Guidance:** Guidance on specific protection related thematic issues both for staff and partners.

- **Provision of Assistance & Services:** Delivery of direct assistance and services to meet protection needs of migrants, displaced persons and affected populations, including through referrals.
- **Outreach & Communication:** Preparation, production and dissemination of protection focused messages, including jointly with partners, which contribute to highlighting protection needs of and promote respect for the rights of migrants, displaced persons and affected populations.
- **Training & Capacity Building:** Theoretical and practical protection focused face-to-face or online training, mentoring, coaching and on-the job training for staff and external actors.
- **Data & Research:** Collection analysis, dissemination and use of primary or secondary protection-related data, especially for programming purposes.

The PiHA roadmap also highlights Core Commitments:

- **Centrality of Protection:** The IASC formal commitment to placing protection at the center of humanitarian action. It emphasizes the individual and collective responsibility of all humanitarian actors to design and implement a humanitarian response that is driven by the needs and perspectives of the affected and at risk population.
- **Partnerships & Coordination:** Complementarity in the roles and responsibilities of individual and collective intervening stakeholders is equally highlighted in the Centrality of Protection, is essential to address and prevent protection issues in durable ways. Partnerships and coordination, from a complementarity viewpoint, is key to collectively contribute to protection outcomes aimed at achieving common protection goals and developing long term solutions for affected populations.
- **Accountability & Inclusion:** Identifying, understanding and supporting affected populations' own voices and protection measures through accessible, participatory and consultative engagement of all individuals and groups in all decisions and actions that have a direct impact on their lives.
- **Protection Mainstreaming:** Inclusion of protection principles into the humanitarian response by ensuring that any response is provided in a way that avoids any unintended harmful effect (do no harm), is delivered according to needs, prioritizes safety and dignity, is grounded on participation and empowerment of local capacities and ultimately holds humanitarian actors accountable.

IOM's efforts in the field of Protection - its mainstreaming, integration and specialized programming - is already at the core of a variety of workstreams under the lead of several internal units and divisions. *Find below an overview of key themes of expertise within which IOM's develops protection programming in crises settings:*

## 1. Disability Inclusion

Persons with disabilities (PwDs) are estimated to represent 15 per cent of the world's population. In humanitarian contexts, they may form a much higher percentage. They are among the most marginalized people in crisis-affected communities and are disproportionately affected by crisis situations. Consistent with its efforts to mainstream protection, IOM is also committed to strengthening the protection of PwDs by ensuring that its humanitarian response meaningfully includes PwDs and addresses the many barriers they face.

In 2018, IOM signed up to the Global Disability Summit Charter for Change, making important commitments to strengthen its organizational approach to disability inclusion. In 2019, the UN Secretary General launched the [UN Disability Strategy](#) (UNDIS) which establishes indicators on disability inclusion that IOM and all UN entities will now work towards meeting. Finally, IOM is committed to the dissemination and implementation of the [Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#).

To learn more about IOM's work on disability inclusion, see the [Disability Inclusion](#) entry.

## 2. Gender-based Violence (GBV)

Gender-based violence (GBV) is defined as, "any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threat of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty." It is a distinct protection risk which is exacerbated during crises and threatens crisis-affected persons everywhere that IOM operates.

In 2018, IOM launched its [Institutional Framework for Addressing GBV in Crises](#). The Framework's objective is to ensure that **the safety, dignity, well-being, and equitable access to services for all crisis-affected persons, especially women and girls, is prioritized, integrated, and 5 coordinated across all IOM crisis operations**. It articulates why and how IOM tackles GBV in crises and defines IOM's vision and scope through three institutional approaches:

- Mitigating risks: by taking action to address the risks of GBV and doing no harm;
- Supporting survivors: by facilitating access to survivor-centred, multisectoral services;
- Addressing the root causes: by contributing towards progressively transforming the conditions that perpetuate GBV

To learn more about IOM's work on addressing GBV in crises, see the [Gender-Based Violence in Crises](#) entry.

## 3. Child Protection

Children represent a significant proportion of the populations the Organization strives to protect and assist and should be provided with specific and adapted protection measures. Thus, IOM holds a key role and responsibility in protecting children from neglect, abuse, violence and exploitation.

Beyond mainstreaming child protection concerns and measures across its different sectors of intervention such as cash-based initiatives (CBI) or humanitarian evacuations and transportation, IOM has increasingly engaged in delivering standalone programs. These may include activities targeting vulnerable families and children at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children; family tracing and reunification; case management including best interests of the child procedures; community-based child protection; providing or supporting family-based alternative care or alternatives to detention; reintegration programming; or activities aiming at preventing or responding to cases of child trafficking and gender-based violence against boys and girls, amongst others.

IOM is an active contributor to the [Child Protection Minimum Standards](#) (CPMS) and other inter-agency guidance of the sector (e.g. [Field Manual and Handbook on Unaccompanied and Separated Children \(UASC\)](#), [Manual on Child Labour](#)), all of which frame IOM's interventions in the field of child protection. IOM is also an active member of the child protection community of practice ([CPAoR](#), [Alliance CPHA](#)). From 2017 to 2020, the Organization has served as Chair of the [Inter Agency Task Force on Unaccompanied and Separated Children \(UASC\)](#) of the Alliance CPHA.

## 4. Counter-Trafficking in Emergencies

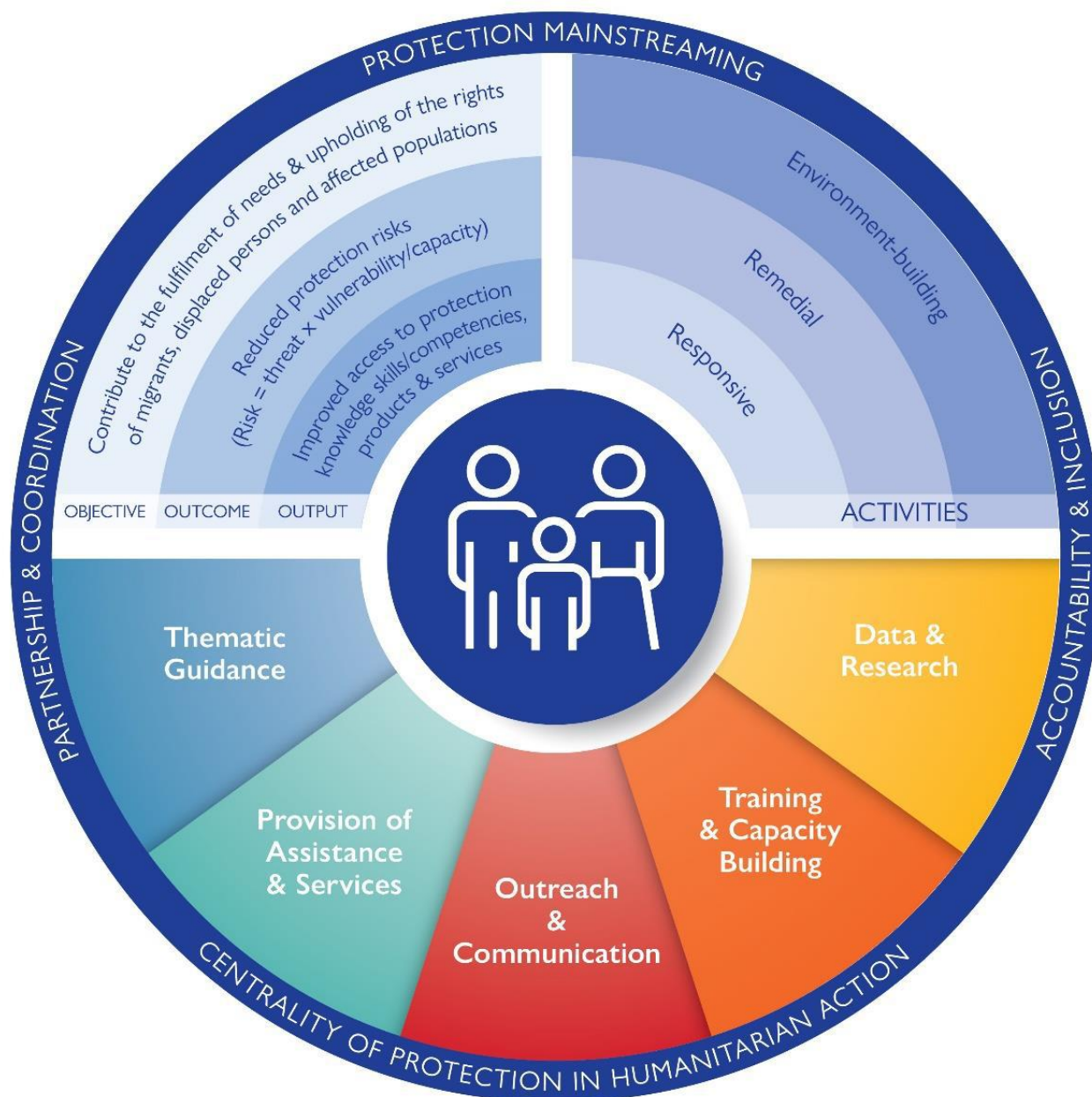
Human trafficking is a crime and a grave violation of human rights. As a human rights' violation, human trafficking is therefore a protection issue that can happen anywhere both in ordinary times and in emergencies as humanitarian crises may exacerbate pre-existing trafficking trends and give rise to new ones.

IOM covers a critical role in the area of counter trafficking (CT), acting as a firm advocate for the integration of CT activities in the broader humanitarian response, pursuing top-down approaches so that victims of trafficking (VoTs) receive assistance, and risks to potential victims are mitigated. IOM's activities on CT in Emergencies, include:

- Specialized guidance for the humanitarian community and IOM staff
- Data analysis and support to research on trafficking in emergency contexts
- Collaboration with partners to identify and assist victims of trafficking
- Advocating, training and raising awareness on counter-trafficking

At the global level, IOM acts as co-lead of the [Anti-Trafficking Task Team under the Global Protection Cluster](#) since 2017.

# PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION



## Links

- [Global Protection Cluster Protection Mainstreaming website](#)

## Media





[Protection is central to IOM's response to crises](#)



[Mainstream Protection](#)



[IOM's work on protection in crisis response](#)



[Protection Transversale](#)



[Incorporación de la perspectiva de protección](#)



[تعميم الحماية – الترجمة العربية](#)



[Le travail de protection de l'OIM dans la réponse aux situations de crise](#)



[La labor de protección de la OIM en su respuesta a crisis](#)

## References and Tools

- [Guidance Note on Protection Mainstreaming in IOM Crisis Response](#)
- [Protection in Humanitarian Action Roadmap](#)
- [Situation and Vulnerability Analysis Tool](#)
- [Project Development and Endorsement Checklist](#)
- [Protection Mainstreaming M&E](#)
- [At Risk Reference Groups](#)
- [Protection Mainstreaming Standards by MCOF Sector](#)
- [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#)
- [IOM Protection Portfolio](#)
- [Inter-Agency Field Handbook on Unaccompanied and Separated Children \(EN\)](#)
- [Inter-Agency Field Handbook on Unaccompanied and Separated Children \(AR\)](#)
- [Manual de Campo Sobre Niños No Acompañados y Separados](#)
- [Manuel de terrain sur les enfants non accompagnés ou séparés de leur famille](#)
- [Inter-Agency Toolkit on Unaccompanied and Separated Children \(UASC\)](#)
- [Child Protection Minimum Standards \(CPMS\)](#)

## Other Entries in this Topic

- [Protection Mainstreaming](#)
- [Disability Inclusion](#)
- [Gender-Based Violence in Crises](#)

## Contacts

For more information on protection mainstreaming, contact the HQ Protection team at: [DOEProtectionHQ@iom.int](mailto:DOEProtectionHQ@iom.int).

Document last updated: Dec 2022