

PROTECTION

POLICY





NIGER

Photo: Yves Jamoneau



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REFERENCE DOCUMENTS OF THE ORGANIZATION

Policies currently available:

- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Childhood
- Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction
- Food Security
- Gender

Other documents to refer to:

COOPI's Standard Operating Procedures on protection

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Introduction



COOPI - Cooperazione Internazionale is a secular and independent humanitarian foundation established in 1965. During 50 years of activity it has carried out more than 1,600 projects in 60 countries, involving thousands of local operators and providing a direct benefit to millions of people. Its mission consists of contributing, through the commitment, motivation, determination and professionalism of its human resources, to the process of poverty reduction and growth of the communities it cooperates with around the world. COOPI intervenes in emergency, reconstruction and development contexts in order to achieve a better balance between the North and South of the world, between developed and developing areas.

The Protection Policy¹ is part of a series of documents which COOPI is adopting in order to position itself with respect to issues that are central to the work of the organization². These documents outline the international theoretical framework that guides and underpins COOPI's approach and that expands topics

already developed within COOPI Gender Policy and Childhood Policy. In addition to this policy document, COOPI has developed a practical guidance document (COOPI's Standard Operating Procedures - SOP - on Protection) which translates the theoretical level into the practical programs level, providing COOPI with an operational toolbox.

As an international humanitarian organization, COOPI includes protection among its key values and places it at the center of its actions on the ground. In the light of the complexity of the theoretical discourse on protection and its multiple translations at field level it is necessary to develop a more transparent and coherent approach to define COOPI's specificity and its added value in this area. Its extensive experience in the field and its diversified expertise among different geographical areas have allowed COOPI to focus on these strengths and best practices to ensure the quality of its operations, the satisfaction of the people assisted, and the knowledge sharing.

¹ The Protection Policy was approved by COOPI's Board of Directors on the 17th of May, 2016.

² At the time of drafting, the organization has already adopted the policy papers on Childhood, Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction, Food Security, Corporate Social Responsibility and Gender. They are expected to be joined, by the end of 2016, by a policy document on nutrition security.

Theoretical Framework

Key definitions

Protection interventions are undertaken to ensure full respect of the rights of all persons in conditions of equality, regardless of their age, gender, religion, ethnic or social origin or other, also during periods of conflict, humanitarian crisis, displacement, war and/or natural disasters.

In particular, **protection** is defined as:

All activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law³ (i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law, refugee law).

• IASC 1999 •

PROTECTION CAN BE CONSIDERED AS:

Table 1:

Interrelation of different aspects of protection, adapted from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2008 – COOPI 2016

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AN OBJECTIVE

Protections is an objective

which requires full and equal respect for the right of all individuals, without discrimination, as provided for in national and international law. Protection is not limited to survival and physical security but covers the full range of rights, including civil and political rights, such as the right to freedom of movement, the right to political participation, and economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to education and health.

A LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY

Protections is a legal responsibility,

principally of the State and its agents. In situations of armed conflict, that responsibility extends to all parties to the conflict under international humanitarian law, including armed opposition groups. Humanitarian and human rights actors play an important role as well, in particular when States and other authorities are unable or unwilling to fulfil their protection obligations.

AN ACTIVITY

Protections is an activity

because action must be taken to ensure the enjoyment of rights. There are three types of protection activities that can be carried out concurrently:

Responsive - to prevent or stop violations of rights;

Remedial - to ensure a remedy to violations, including through access to justice and reparations; and

Environment - building to promote respect for rights and the rule of law.

³ Definition provided by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the main inter-agency coordination mechanism for humanitarian intervention (it includes representatives of the United Nations (UN), the Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and NGOs), 1999.

IN ORDER TO ENSURE QUALITY PROTECTION PROGRAMS IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ENGAGE ALL STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS, LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND NATIONAL AUTHORITIES TO:

- prevent human rights violations from occurring or re-occurring;
- put an end to ongoing violations;
- provide remedies through mechanisms of redress and/or rehabilitation for rights violations;
- promote an environment conducive to the respect of the rights of women, men, girls and boys, through information and awareness-raising activities, the provision of specific services and assistance;
- use advocacy to convince those in power to protect individuals;
- strengthen the capacity of national authorities and civil society of a country or region to protect their populations;
- provide direct services or assistance so that people can protect themselves from risks related to their vulnerable conditions.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Photo: Livio Senigalliesi

International rights law as a legal basis for protection

Protection consists of ensuring that all women, girls, men and boys can enjoy their rights on equal terms, in safety and dignity, including in times of internal displacement, wars, conflicts and/or natural disasters. National law is the main legal framework for protection activities. Protection activities must nonetheless be grounded in international law and be based on rights. States have the responsibility to ensure the full enjoyment, on equal terms, of rights of all individuals within their territory or under their jurisdiction⁴. When a State becomes party to a treaty, international law obliges it to respect, protect and implement human rights. Respecting human rights means that States must avoid hindering the exercise of human rights. Protecting means that States must protect individuals and groups against human rights violations. Imple-

menting means that States must take positive measures to facilitate the exercise of fundamental rights. However, the role of international actors is to enhance, not replace, national responsibility. The international community has an important role to play when national authorities lack the capacity or are unwilling to ensure effective response to humanitarian crises. This constitutes an ethical dilemma and has programmatic consequences for non-governmental organizations working in protection: in many countries the State itself does not respect its obligations and/or perpetuates human rights violations. For this reason, humanitarian actors must always balance the respect for the national legal framework with the imperative to provide assistance to populations who are vulnerable and/or affected by conflicts or natural disasters.

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⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the obligations of States under international human rights law, see General Comment No. 31 (1980) of the Human Rights Committee on the nature of the general legal obligation imposed on States parties to the Covenant, UN Doc. CCPR /C/21/Rev.1/Add.13.

Table 2:

Key international human rights instruments, adapted from Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2010 Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons.

INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND TOOLS FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTORS:	
NAME	DESCRIPTION
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR), 1948	Universal instrument setting out the fundamental rights of all individuals on the basis of equality and non-discrimination.
INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (ICESCR), 1966	Sets out the economic, social and cultural guarantees, including the rights to food, clothing and housing, to health care, to an adequate standard of living, and guarantees concerning work, social protection, education and participation in cultural life.
INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR), 1966	Sets forth a broad catalogue of civil and political rights, including the rights to life, to physical integrity, recognition before the law, political participation, freedom of movement and free choice of residence, and protection of the family.
CONVENTION AGAINST TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT (CAT), 1984	Defines and prohibits torture under all circumstances. Provides that States can not transfer a person to another State if there are reasons to believe that she will be tortured (non-refoulement).
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (ICERD), 1965	Prohibits racial discrimination: when a person or group is treated differently because of race, color, descent, national or ethnic origin.
CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION AND PUNISHMENT OF THE CRIME OF GENOCIDE, 1948	Defines genocide as acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, and declares it as a crime, whether committed during peacetime or war.
CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW), 1979	Sets a framework for national action for ensuring women enjoy, on an equal footing with men, their rights in all fields, including employment, education and administration of property, and for ensuring the protection of women, especially against threats to their physical safety and against rape and sexual exploitation.
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC), 1989 TOGETHER WITH: OPTIONAL PROTOCOL ON THE SALE OF CHILDREN, CHILD PROSTITUTION AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY, 2000 OPTIONAL PROTOCOL ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT, 2000	A comprehensive code to protect the rights and best interests of children (below 18 years of age). It obliges States to take measures to ensure protection, care, psychological recovery and social reintegration of children affected by armed conflict, including unaccompanied or separated children. The Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict prohibits compulsory recruitment and direct use in hostilities of persons under 18.
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (CPD), 2006	Reaffirms human rights and emphasizes their particular importance to persons living with disabilities. Also provides guidance to States on ways to ensure that those with disabilities, including survivors of landmines and explosive remnants of war, can exercise their rights on a full and equal basis with others.
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF ALL PERSONS AGAINST ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES (CED), 2006	Defines and prohibits enforced disappearance under any circumstances and obliges States to prevent such acts, to prosecute and punish or extradite those responsible, and provide reparations for victims and their families.
CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROHIBITION AND IMMEDIATE ACTION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR (ILO CONVENTION NO. 182), 1999	Obliges States to take all necessary measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, such as slavery, trafficking, prostitution or forced labour, including recruitment of children (under 18 years) for use in armed conflict.
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF ALL MIGRANT WORKERS (CMW), 1990	Provides a framework for the protection of the human rights of migrant workers during all stages of the migration process; before departure, during transit and in the country of employment.
CONVENTION CONCERNING INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL PEOPLES (ILO CONVENTION NO. 169), 1989	Sets a framework for ensuring indigenous and tribal peoples enjoy their rights on an equal footing with other persons. Specifically addresses the issue of the relocation of peoples, establishing conditions and guarantees to be fulfilled for this to be lawful ⁵ .

⁵ For further details, please refer to: www2.ohchr.org/english/law/index.htm#core

Approaches and main conclusions on the implementation of a protection program

Table 3:
Operationalizing protection, adapted by IASC 2010 – COOPI 2016

THE MOST EFFECTIVE PROTECTION STRATEGIES ARE BUILT AROUND THREE COMMON AND INTERRELATED APPROACHES:		
APPROACH	KEY CONCEPTS	IN OUR WORK IT IS NECESSARY TO:
<p>PROTECTION IS ABOUT SECURING HUMAN RIGHTS</p> <p>(A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH)</p>	<p>Because protection is about respect for rights, it requires an approach grounded upon and geared towards the full and equal enjoyment of rights.</p> <p>This way of working requires that we recognize individuals as rights-holders with legal entitlements to protection and assistance. Unlike “needs”, rights generate responsibilities to ensure the protection and well-being of individuals. The State and other authorities are duty-bearers with responsibilities to respect and protect individuals’ rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be familiar with international legal standards; use rights as the basis for our activities including situation analysis and participatory needs assessments, protection activities and programme planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; analyse why individuals or groups cannot enjoy their rights; ensure that our policies, programmes and activities aim to support internally displaced women, men, girls and boys in enjoying their rights; strengthen the capacity and accountability of national and local authorities to meet their protection responsibilities.
<p>INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES ARE EQUAL PARTNERS IN PROTECTION</p> <p>(A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH)</p>	<p>Experience has shown that for protection efforts to be effective and sustainable, they must be designed to recognize, support and strengthen the protection capacities of individuals and communities themselves. This is realized by ensuring that women, men, girls and boys of all ages and diverse backgrounds are regarded and engaged as active partners in all aspects of our work; recognizing their resilience, capacities and resources and mobilizing and building on the capacities of communities to enhance their own protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand gender roles, power relations and community dynamics; recognize the ways in which people enhance their own and work to reinforce these efforts; build an equal and active partnership with internally displaced women, men, girls and boys by ensuring that they participate in identifying and addressing protection risks and priorities.
<p>PROTECTION PROMOTES FULL AND EQUAL RESPECT FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL INDIVIDUALS, WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION OF ANY KIND</p> <p>(AGE, GENDER AND DIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING)</p>	<p>Conflict and displacement can affect individuals in different ways depending on factors such as age, gender, and ethnic, social, religious and other backgrounds. Certain groups of persons, including women, children, older persons and minorities, are often marginalized within communities and less represented in formal decision-making structures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand how the crisis affects individuals of different ages, gender and backgrounds differently; incorporate age, gender and diversity analysis into assessments, analysis, strategy development, design, implementation and monitoring of protection programmes and activities; work in partnership with women, men, girls and boys to identify protection risks faced by different members of the community, and to prevent and address such risks through targeted action to empower disadvantaged groups to enjoy their rights; work towards the elimination of violence in all forms, including gender-based violence, in close collaboration with local communities, civil society and the national government; ensure that our strategies, programmes and activities do not inadvertently lead to, or reinforce, discrimination or the exclusion of different groups.



COOPI ensures that its actions target the most vulnerable, enhance safety, dignity, and promote and protect the human rights of the crisis-affected populations.

ETIOPIA

Photo: Lorenzo Dell'Uva

COOPI'S approach on protection: key concepts and good practices

THREATS TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

1. Forced displacement
2. Threat to life, safety and security
3. Landmines and explosive remnants of war
4. Gender based violence
5. Children associated with armed forces or armed groups
6. Threat to liberty and to freedom of movement
7. Family separation
8. Human trafficking
9. Loss of civil status and nationality

10. Accommodation
11. Food aid and nutrition
12. Water and sanitation
13. Health
14. Prevention and treatment of HIV
15. Education
16. Livelihoods
17. Land and property
18. Justice
19. Political participation and right to vote
20. Disaster risk reduction

LIMITED ENJOYMENT OF OTHER BASIC RIGHTS AND SERVICES

Table 4:
Rivelli, COOPI - 2015

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This section describes COOPI's approach in the field of protection, delineating its added value and originality of action. Indeed, COOPI carries out its interventions in the field following two main approaches. Firstly, COOPI implements **protection-focused programs** with specific *responsive* activities (to prevent or stop violations of rights); *remedial* activities (to ensure a remedy to violations and reparation); and *transformative* activities (to promote respect for rights and rule of law). Secondly, COOPI **mainstreams protection** activities through all its interventions in emergency and development contexts to ensure sustainable and participative effectiveness of its programs.

i) Implementing protection-focused programs

Table 5 gives a representation of the various actions that might be globally carried out by COOPI in a pro-

tection-focused program according to the different settings. COOPI considers protection from a human rights perspective (top down arrow in Table 4), and as such promotes in the field remedial and responsive measures to prevent further harm, limit damages, and eventually redress human rights violations. These programs can focus on providing international protection to refugees and internally displaced people, and on reestablishing the rights of indigenous and ethnic minorities. On the other side, protection for COOPI goes hand in hand with the provision of humanitarian assistance directed to the affected population to increase/improve its access to basic services, helping them meeting their needs, enhancing their resilience⁶ mechanisms to limit their vulnerability to violations and abuses. For instance, COOPI provides access to food assistance and livelihood oppor-

⁶ Resilience refers to the capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure (UN/ISDR 2004).

tunities for the population in need; provides nutrition programs for children, and supports health facilities in providing care for people affected by conflict or natural disasters.

Depending on the context, protection programs always take into consideration specific needs of the target groups. In fact, during situations of conflict and/or disasters, COOPI specifically deals with certain people/groups that are usually more affected by specific risks or protection issues, and hence need more specific assistance. For instance, COOPI implements dedicated programs with survivors of gender-based violence (also referred as GBV programming), children associated with armed groups or armed forces or separated and unaccompanied children (also referred as child protection). COOPI also takes into account the specific needs of elders and people with specific disabilities without family and community support. By way of example, consider the following interventions: monitoring international humanitarian law and human rights violations; registration and humanitarian assistance to refugees/returnees; IDP profiling, medical care, psychosocial support for GBV survivors; rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with armed groups and forces; protection through presence and access to the rights.

ii) Protection mainstreaming

Moreover, COOPI focuses on protection mainstreaming within all its actions by incorporating the principles of protection and promoting meaningful access to the rights, safety and dignity in humanitarian assistance. For COOPI mainstreaming protection ensures that the protective impact of programming is maximized. Through the incorporation of protection principles into all its interventions, COOPI ensures that its activities target the most vulnerable, enhance safety, dignity, and promote and protect the human rights of the populations without contributing to or perpetuating discrimination, abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation.

Examples: ensure the inclusion of women, boys, men and girls in a humanitarian assistance program; ensure significative access to health care for women and girls in a conflict zone; implement measures to enhance the participation of young children in a humanitarian program, ensuring that people with specific needs are included in food distribution and other activities.



Table 5:
Rivelli, COOPI - 2015

A more detailed description of good practices will help us translate COOPI's approach at the field level and better understand the history/specific expertise of the organization.

In particular, aware of the importance of keeping protection at the centre of its actions, COOPI intervenes in different ways to ensure the respect of human rights and promoting quality access to services to all.

1 Put the individual at the center of humanitarian response in order to develop his/her own coping mechanisms

With this vision COOPI implements international guidelines regarding mental health and psychosocial support program, by following the steps recommended by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), that is to say: integrate psychosocial services in other services and assistance activities; ensure a multisectoral response through referral mechanisms and case management; provide a non-specialized psychosocial support to families and communities through cultural and recreational activities; develop a network of social workers and community volunteers trained in providing emotional and psychological support, and

refer more serious disorders cases to specialized medical services⁷.

In this sense, COOPI has developed a methodology based on the provision of mental health and psychosocial services that identify individual action plans according to the needs and resources of each person, in order to increase their wellbeing and re-activate the coping mechanisms of each individual. COOPI targets in particular specific groups such as children associated with armed forces and groups and survivors of gender based violence. COOPI believes that every action must address the needs but also the capacity and the individual's resources so that at the end of the pathways, he/she can recover and re-take charge of his/her life.

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BOLIVIA

Photo: Daniele Tamagni

⁷ IASC, 2007, *IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings*.

Good practices

The centrality of the individual and his/her needs is clearly visible in many of COOPI interventions in support to women exposed to or who have experienced violence, and children vulnerable and/or affected by armed conflicts in different countries, such as Colombia, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, Peru, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sierra Leone, Chad.

PSYCO-SOCIAL SUPPORT IN NIGER AND DRC

Since 2014, COOPI has developed psychosocial support mobile units in Niger, in response to mental health and psychosocial problems caused by the population movements triggered by Boko Haram's atrocities in the north of Nigeria. The units provide psychosocial assistance and mental health-related issues referral; it has also been preventing cases of family separation by transitionally taking care of unaccompanied and separated children through a process of psychosocial rehabilitation, which involved 22,739 children (comprising 11,470 girls) associated with armed forces and armed groups. Furthermore, COOPI has developed an assistance model focused on the needs of survivors of gender based violence (GBV). Similarly, from 2010 to 2012, COOPI had supported the survivors of GBV - inflicted during the civil war and afterwards - in the Ituri district and the Maniema province in the DRC, through a specific care and psycho-social support and referrals to holistic health services for appropriate medical care.

The approach used with both women and girls, and with children, was to holistically support the individual

targeting specific needs in health and psychosocial well-being. The program ensured the rehabilitation of 60 health centers and access to medical assistance for more than 10,000 survivors, including men and women. At the same time more than 25,000 GBV survivors received psychosocial assistance and more than 12,000 people were given support in the creation of income generating activities.

Each individual participated in the development of an individual action plan and received a counseling process, emotional support or psychosocial activities necessary for his/her psychosocial recovery by identifying his/her own specific needs and resources.

The success of this program demonstrates the importance of developing action plans and specific actions for each boy, girl, woman and man, taking into account their vulnerability context and family and/or community coping mechanisms. The aspect of community involvement in prevention and response to human rights violations and abuses proved to be a key element for the sustainability of the action.



Photo: Eduardo Soteras Jalil

2 Promote community mobilization and engagement for the promotion of local support networks and awareness raising of the population to support local resilience

COOPI places the community at the heart of all interventions. The community is regarded as the recipient of the action but also as a driver of change to improve living conditions and increase local resilience. For this reason COOPI organizes in a structured way awareness raising campaigns, and promotes local partnerships and capacity building activities to ensure ownership of the program by the community itself. COOPI considers that mobilization and community engagement are essential

to ensure that wherever possible, the population is encouraged to take charge and to be the key element for promoting sustainability. Furthermore, COOPI sets up from the start of the programs a clear strategy for mobilization to enable communities to respond appropriately to their own protection needs, to strengthen their coping mechanisms and to manage positively conflicts, especially in the future. COOPI's main approach consists of facilitating the re-establishment of community structures and mechanisms, especially governance and representation structures, or organizations of women and young people so as to reconstruct, to the extent possible, previous community groups.

Good practices

This key concept is visible in several countries where COOPI operates, especially Ecuador, Guatemala, Kenya, Niger, DRC, CAR, Peru, Somalia and Chad. In particular, in the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) sector COOPI had developed an expertise in community mobilization and engagement which from a programmatic perspective sees local actors as an engine of a program in which COOPI has developed in a structured and participatory way the engagement of the local community and its mobilization in disasters risk reduction, in which local actors are regarded in a programmatic perspective as the engine of the program itself.

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ENHANCING SOCIAL AUDITING PROCESSES IN GUATEMALA

Since 2012, within the framework of a DIPECHO⁸ project, COOPI has developed a social audit model in Guatemala that identifies the key actions for community mobilization through the establishment of a participatory process, in which actors of the civil society, local authorities and government officials were engaged in achieving the objectives of the program. Through this process of engagement and mobilization COOPI has shown that the success of its actions is related to the structured capacity building of local stakeholders aimed at making them independent and autonomous at the end of the program, recognizing the transformative roles of community in ensuring a human rights agenda, in protecting themselves and in being more resilient. The Guatemala experience has also created practical tools to develop community engagement as an oppor-

tunity to exercise its own rights and civic duties of political participation and to affirm its own abilities and opinions in the public sphere. Community mobilization has thus become an exercise of democracy, in which the community identifies needs, develops the tools to address them in collaboration with other actors, and finally puts in place a public and transparent process of monitoring and validation to ensure participatory and democratic accountability.



⁸ Disaster Preparedness programme of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department.

3 Support with specific measures the participation and empowerment of the most vulnerable groups for a more equal society

Protection is not only made up of humanitarian assistance but it also aims at supporting the active participation, empowerment and self-management of the target population in the life of a country to ensure that all citizens have equal access to services and have their rights fulfilled. The empowerment of certain groups excluded or discriminated against is particularly well seen as a factor of democratic development to reduce

violations of human rights and support the enjoyment thereof by all layers of the population.

COOPI's approach aims to enhance the awareness and skills of the most vulnerable and discriminated groups, that are usually excluded by the political participation, so to be able to address the socio-political problems they have to face in their own country. The community consciousness raising approach is intended to strengthen the political economic and social tools of the above mentioned groups, in order to improve their own living conditions and be recognized as part of the population and democratic life of a country.

Good practices

COOPI has developed a participatory approach in support of indigenous groups in different countries with different implementation modalities but always coherent with this approach, especially in Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru, Ecuador and CAR.



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Photo: COOPI Archive

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10 YEARS TOGETHER WITH THE AKA PYGMIES IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

From 2005 to 2015, COOPI has worked closely with minority populations of CAR and more specifically with the Aka Pygmies, in the Lobaye, Sangha-Mbaéré and Mambéré-Kadéï prefectures. It is possible to identify five macro-themes of success in this program in CAR:

i) the monitoring of violations and discrimination of human rights experienced by indigenous groups; ii) the promotion of the cultural and traditional, linguistic and religious identity of indigenous groups - for instance through the rehabilitation of the Pygmy Hall and of the Documentation Room within the Boganda National Museum and the creation of the Cultural Center for the Promotion of the Rights of the Aka in the city of Mbaïki; iii) the grant of the act of birth

for thousands of unregistered children; iv) the improvement of access to basic services, especially education and health, for women and children from indigenous groups; v) the advocacy activity that led to the ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

The interrelationship between these dynamics has been well received by the pygmies, who began to exercise their civic rights and to recognize the importance of their community. This approach has fostered awareness, higher skills and knowledge and finally contributed to the advancement of the Aka Pygmies in the participation in the country's public life.

4 Mainstream protection into humanitarian assistance programs

Protection mainstreaming ensures that human rights and their promotion are central to each intervention, laying the foundations for reconstruction and a more equitable and sustainable development.

In line with the international developments within the theoretical framework, COOPI also ensures the full participation and involvement of women, men and children so to mainstream protection in all humanitarian assistance or development programs. The process of mainstreaming protection principles to promote a meaningful, safe and dignified access of people affected by humanitarian crises, or disasters caused

by natural phenomena, to humanitarian activities is a key approach in the implementation of COOPI's programs; this applies especially to those that are not directly focused on protection. Indeed, equal access to services, attention and analysis of the specific needs and adapting activities to the specific needs of the target population groups, for example, are visible elements in COOPI's activities and in the design of its programs. Protection mainstreaming is a key aspect for the promotion of individual and community resilience of the populations affected by conflict and/or natural disaster in order to contribute to its participation in the process of recovery and development of the country.



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Photo: Andoni Lubaki

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Photo: Trinidad Bronte

*Good practices*

Ensuring the mainstreaming of the main principles of protection in each humanitarian program is an essential aspect of each of COOPI's interventions, articulated in its operations in various countries such as DRC, Niger, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Chad.

MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE TO CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC CRISIS

Since the outbreak of the humanitarian crisis in CAR in 2012, COOPI has supported a multisectoral response focused on providing basic services to the population affected by the armed conflict. A search and identification system for direct and indirect victims was set up at the beginning of the intervention, allowing to identify 409 direct victims, who were granted a psychological support through a socio-economic reintegration track. At the same time, about 5,000 people (out of which 45% were refugees or displaced people) took part into food security activities, while about 17,000 people participated to community awareness building activities. The protection principles have been successfully integrated in all phases of the humanitarian program led by COOPI. Moreover, the needs assessment required

for the program design was based on the analysis of specific needs of the vulnerable groups, with particular emphasis on children and youth. Food security activities were implemented applying the principles of dignity and equal access to food distributions taking into account the presence and characteristics of vulnerable groups so that anyone could benefit from the activities without discrimination. The program monitoring also took into account the data by sex and age to assess the impact of an action on distinct layers of the population. Finally, the success of such multisectoral program in an emergency phase was assured by an immediate integration of protection elements and the respect of its principles throughout the course of the design, implementation and evaluation of the program.

GLOSSARY

ABUSE:

the misuse of power through which the perpetrator gains control or advantage of the abused, using and causing physical or psychological harm or inciting fear of that harm. Abuse prevents persons from making free decisions and forces them to behave against their will.

(UNHCR, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines for Prevention and Response, 2003)

ACCOUNTABILITY:

the means through which power is used responsibly. It is a process of taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, and primarily those who are affected by the exercise of power. Along with the process of writing reports or giving an account of decisions and actions, accountability comprises considering the needs, concerns, capacities and abilities of the affected parties, and explaining the meaning and the implications of actions and decisions, and their reasons. Accountability is therefore a measure of the quality of the relationship between an agent (an organ that provides a service or product) and a principal (the person or group the service or product is intended for).

(Humanitarian Accountability Partnership)

CAPACITY BUILDING:

the process by which individuals, institutions and societies develop and strengthen, individually and collectively, their ability to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives.

CHILD:

every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

(UN, Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 1, 1989)

CHILD ASSOCIATED WITH AN ARMED FORCE OR ARMED GROUP:

any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities. Child soldiers are also called combatant children.

(UNICEF, The Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups, February 2007)

COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH:

way of working that is based on an inclusive partnership with communities of persons of concern that recognizes their resilience, capacities and resources. It mobilizes and builds on these to deliver protection, assistance and solutions while supporting community processes and goals.

(UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls, 2008)

EMPOWERMENT:

process or phenomenon that allows people to take greater control over the decisions, activities, policies, processes and institutions that affect their lives.

(UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls, 2008)

DEMOBILIZATION:

the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion.

(UN Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Resource Centre)

DISARMAMENT:

the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.

(UN Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Resource Centre)

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:

a generic term describing any harmful act perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females.

(IASC, Guidelines for gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian emergencies: focusing on prevention and response to sexual violence, 2005, Geneva)

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE:

aid that seeks to save lives and alleviate suffering of a crisis-affected population. Humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the basic humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality, as stated in General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (19 December 1991). In addition, the UN seeks to provide humanitarian assistance with full respect for the sovereignty of States.

(Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs OCHA, Glossary of Humanitarian Terms in relation to the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2003)

HUMAN RIGHTS:

concerted international norms that recognize and protect the inherent dignity of all people and their inalienable rights without distinction of any kind such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, wealth, birth or other status. These standards can be part of customary international law and/or set out in several legal instruments at national, regional and international level.

(Adapted from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art.2)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:

indigenous peoples generally have a historical continuity with pre invasion and pre colonial societies that developed on their territories. This continuity may be in the form of occupation of ancestral lands (at least in part), ancestry, language and/or cultural manifestations. These historical links are sometimes reflected in the term "first peoples". As with minorities, indigenous communities tend to be non dominant compared with majorities. Indigenous peoples enjoy particular rights, including the right to practice customary law and the right to protect traditional knowledge, intellectual property and cultural heritage.

(UNHCR, Working with National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Forced Displacement, 2011)

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT:

the composite expression describes any type of internal or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial

well-being and/or prevent or treat mental disorder. Although the terms mental health and psychosocial support are closely related and overlap, for many aid workers they reflect different, yet complementary, approaches.

Aid agencies outside the health sector tend to speak of supporting psychosocial well-being. Health sector agencies tend to speak of mental health, yet historically have also used the terms psychosocial rehabilitation and psychosocial treatment to describe non-biological interventions for people with mental disorders.

(IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, 2007)

MINORITY:

an ethnic, religious or linguistic group, fewer in number than the rest of the population, whose members share a common identity. Minorities are usually non dominant in comparison with majorities in the economic and political spheres of their countries. Members of minorities also share ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural characteristics that differentiate them from majorities, and they generally seek to maintain these distinguishing identities. At the same time, the characteristics defining minorities may vary from one context to another, for example; as regards whether a group's minority identity is primarily ethnic, religious or both.

(UNHCR, Working with National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Forced Displacement, 2011)

MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH:

framework for developing and implementing a plan to respond to the causes and consequences of a particular problem by comprehensively involving all sectors who have influence over that problem.

(UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls, 2008)

PROTECTION:

the concept of protection encompasses all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, Refugee Law). Protection encompasses creating an environment conducive to full respect for the rights of individuals, preventing and/or alleviating the immediate effects of an established pattern of abuse and restoring dignified living conditions through rehabilitation, restitution, and reparation.

(IASC, Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, 1999)

SEPARATED CHILDREN:

children separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.

(International Committee of the Red Cross - ICRC -, Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, 2004)

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN:

children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

(International Committee of the Red Cross - ICRC -, Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, 2004)

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