



## Protection Policy

Version 1.0

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### 1. Policy Statement

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- 1.1 Protection is concerned with the safety, dignity, and rights of people affected by disaster or conflict. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's definition of Protection is the most commonly accepted by humanitarian actors: *"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. international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law)"*.
- 1.2 A commitment to Protection underlies all humanitarian action and is an essential element of ShelterBox's work. As a humanitarian organisation, ShelterBox adheres to the four humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We deliver humanitarian assistance in an impartial and non-discriminatory manner, strictly on the basis of, and in proportion to, the needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of displaced persons.
- 1.3 ShelterBox is committed to ensuring that Protection is mainstreamed throughout our work and we take a 'Do No Harm' approach to our responses. By including Protection as a golden thread that runs throughout a response, this will help create a safer, more inclusive environment for communities. This approach ensures that our activities target the most vulnerable, enhance safety and dignity, and promote and protect shelter as a human right. A Do No Harm approach ensures that discrimination, abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation are not perpetuated by our action.
- 1.4 We are committed to the inclusion and representation of those who are vulnerable and those who are affected by the intersecting drivers of marginalisation including but not restricted to race, religion / belief, ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, age, displacement, caste, gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, poverty, class and socio-economic status.
- 1.5 ShelterBox recognises that people affected by conflict or disaster can become more vulnerable to violence, coercion and abuse from others. All humanitarian actors have a part to play in helping keep people safe during times of crisis. This means ShelterBox should avoid causing harm by understanding how our actions can affect people's safety. If we do not consider Protection from the start, not only will we miss opportunities to reduce risk for the people affected, but we could also prolong a situation that puts them in danger.
- 1.6 ShelterBox recognises that our model of providing shelter and household items and technical support does not address the root causes of conflict and displacement or resolve the inequalities that catalyse vulnerability. However, the provision of shelter



and household items and technical assistance can result in Protection risks being significantly reduced. ShelterBox recognises that the availability of adequate, safe shelter is a Protection intervention.

## 2. Purpose and Scope

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- 2.1 The Policy lays out the commitments made by ShelterBox to ensure the embedding/incorporation of Protection Principles and Protection Mainstreaming throughout our work.
- 2.2 The Policy informs staff, volunteers and associated personnel of their responsibilities in relation to Protection.
- 2.3 The Policy is aligned with our commitment to addressing safeguarding throughout our work, through the three pillars of prevention, reporting and response.

## 3. Protection Principles and Protection Mainstreaming

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- 3.1 The Sphere **Protection Principles** underpin all humanitarian action and encompass the basic elements of Protection in the context of humanitarian response:
  - 1) **Enhance the safety, dignity and rights of people, and avoid exposing them to harm:** Humanitarian actors take steps to reduce overall risks and vulnerability of people, including to the potentially negative effects of humanitarian programmes.
  - 2) **Ensure people's access to assistance according to need and without discrimination:** Humanitarian actors identify obstacles to accessing assistance and take steps to ensure it is provided in proportion to need and without discrimination.



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3) **Assist people to recover from the physical and psychological effects of threatened or actual violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation:**

Humanitarian actors provide immediate and sustained support to those harmed by violations, including referral to additional services as appropriate.

4) **Help people to claim their rights:** Humanitarian actors help affected communities claim their rights through information and documentation, and support efforts to strengthen respect for rights.

3.2 The **Protection Principles** articulate the role that all humanitarian actors can play in helping protect people. The roles and responsibilities of humanitarian actors are, however, secondary to those of the state. The state or other authorities hold legal responsibility for the welfare of people within their territory or control and for the safety of civilians in armed conflict. Ultimately, these authorities have the duty to ensure people's security and safety through action or restraint.

3.3 Anyone applying the Sphere Minimum Standards should be guided by the **Protection Principles**, even if they do not have a distinct Protection mandate or specialised capacity in Protection.

3.4 The Global Protection Cluster defines **Protection Mainstreaming** as a process of incorporating **Protection Principles** and promoting meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid. The following elements must be taken into account in all humanitarian activities:

1) **Prioritise safety & dignity, and avoid causing harm:** Prevent and minimise as much as possible any unintended negative effects of your intervention, which can increase people's vulnerability to both physical and psychosocial risks.

2) **Meaningful Access:** Arrange for people's access to assistance and services – in proportion to need and without any barriers (e.g. discrimination).



Pay special attention to individuals and groups who may be particularly vulnerable or have difficulty accessing assistance and services.

3) **Accountability:** Set-up appropriate mechanisms through which affected populations can measure the adequacy of interventions, and address concerns and complaints.

4) **Participation and empowerment:** Support the development of self-protection capacities and assist people to claim their rights, including – not exclusively – the rights to shelter, food, water and sanitation, health, and education.

3.5 We are committed to being guided in our work by the **Protection Principles** outlined above, by **Protection Mainstreaming** and applying the **Do No Harm Principle** in our work. We are aware that attempts to provide humanitarian assistance can have unintended adverse effects. In collaboration with affected communities and authorities, we aim to minimise any negative effects of humanitarian action on the local community or on the environment. With respect to armed conflict, we recognise that the way in which humanitarian assistance is provided may potentially render civilians more vulnerable to attack, or may on occasion bring unintended advantage to one or more of the parties to the conflict. We are committed to minimising any such adverse effects, in so far as this is consistent with the principles outlined above.

## 4. Application of Policy

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4.1 We are currently developing processes and procedures that enable the effective application of the Policy. These can be grouped within the three pillars or thematic areas of Prevention, Reporting and Response:

- i. **Prevention:** Preventing threats to safety, dignity or rights from occurring, or reducing exposure or vulnerability to these threats.
  - i. Comprehensive context analysis - identifying the risks that the affected population face in relation to discrimination, violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect. ShelterBox considers contextual factors that



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- might make it more difficult for particular groups to access assistance and Protection.
- ii. Adapting projects and programmes and initiating activities in response to Protection threats by taking all reasonable steps to mitigate these risks to prevent, halt, or minimise the effects of abuse suffered by displaced persons, within the scope of our intervention. If negative consequences are unavoidable, the decision not to engage, or to disengage must always be an option.
  - iii. The integration of a gender, age, and diversity perspective into all our work - ShelterBox seeks to ensure that the different needs, risks, and vulnerabilities faced by different groups are recognised.
  - iv. Communication - all information collected and published by ShelterBox is managed in a way that does not jeopardise the security, confidentiality or dignity of informants or others who might be identifiable from the information.
  - v. Participation – ShelterBox endeavours to ensure the participation of the affected population in all aspects of our work, including the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of our activities. We aim to carry out activities in a transparent and consultative manner, with accountability to the affected population.
  - vi. Coordination – we aim to engage with the Protection Cluster (if activated), the local authorities and other humanitarian actors.
  - vii. Training – all staff, volunteers and associated personnel receive Safeguarding and Protection training commensurate with their roles and responsibilities to ensure a working understanding of the ShelterBox Protection Policy.
- ii. **Reporting:** Ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible reporting mechanisms are made available to all those who come into contact with our work (including staff, volunteers, associated personnel and the communities we work with) through which Protection concerns can be reported.



- i. Communities - ensuring safe, appropriate and accessible community-based complaints and feedback mechanisms are in place for all responses.
  - ii. Staff, volunteers and associated personnel – ensuring that safe, appropriate and accessible mechanisms are in place through which Protection concerns can be reported.
  - iii. It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with Protection concerns. Information relating to the concern should be shared on a need to know basis only and should be kept secure at all times.
- iii. **Response:** Ensuring that all reported Protection concerns or allegations are responded to in a timely and appropriate manner.
- i. Referral pathways - ensure that referral pathways (to external parties) for specialised Protection needs and survivor support are defined and clearly communicated to all staff, volunteers and associated personnel.

Survivor support - ensuring the immediate welfare and safety of the survivor utilising a survivor centred approach.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

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### **ShelterBox:**

- Commits to addressing Protection throughout its work, through the three pillars of Prevention, Reporting and Response as laid out in this policy

### **The Head of Accountability and Learning:**

- Is responsible for the implementation of this Policy.

### **The Executive Team and the Board of Trustees:**



- Are accountable for implementing, reviewing and updating this Policy annually, and in line with legislative and organisational developments.

### **All Staff, Volunteers, Affiliates, Trustees and Associated Personnel:**

- Are responsible for the following:
  - Prevention
    - Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents Protection violations and promote the implementation of the Protection Policy.
    - Ensure our actions do not harm or expose affected populations to abuse or exploitation.
    - Contribute to a culture where Protection forms a central role in all of ShelterBox's work, where interventions are designed to mitigate identified Protection risks and communities affected by disaster (whether in receipt of aid or not) are considered in response design.
    - Integrate the core Protection Principles, objectives, and approaches of this Policy in all stages of our work.
    - Seek to recognise and realise the safety, dignity, and rights of affected communities in our work.
  - Reporting
    - Internal reporting: ensure that all Protection concerns, or allegations are reported to the ShelterBox Protection Working Group ([protection@shelterbox.org](mailto:protection@shelterbox.org))
    - External reporting: if safe, appropriate and required, ensure that referral pathways are utilised for reporting (the Protection Working Group can support).
  - Response
    - In the event of disclosure or identification of a Protection incident, ensure immediate support for the survivor(s) using a survivor centred approach. Refer to Safeguarding and Protection FAQ's for guidance.





## 6. Associated Policies and Procedures

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Code of Conduct

Complaints Policy

Dealing with Safeguarding Reports Policy

Distribution Guidance

PSEA (Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding Children Policy

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Serious Incident Policy

*Other policies as appropriate*

## 7. Glossary of Terms

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**Associated Personnel:** include volunteers, trustees, contractors (including freelance photographers, drivers, fixers etc.), casual labourers, donors, Rotarians, affiliates, partner organisation staff and anyone else who is representing ShelterBox.

**Child:** Is defined as any person under the age of 18 years. This age defines adulthood as per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and applies to our work even if local laws and customs differ.

**Dignity:** It describes the fact that people have a right to be valued, respected and receive ethical treatment. The emotional experience of a person is as important as their physical safety, and often human rights violations can be humiliating for a person, affecting their sense of self-esteem and of human dignity

**Do No Harm Principle:** there is no well-established definition of "Do No Harm" but accepted definitions include (1) "Do no harm" is to avoid exposing people to additional risks through our action (2) "Do no harm" means taking a step back from an intervention to look at the



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broader context and mitigate potential negative effects on the social fabric, the economy and the environment.

**Gender:** Refers to the social differences among persons of various gender identities throughout their life cycles. Although deeply rooted in every culture, these social differences are changeable over time and are different both within and between cultures. Gender determines the roles, power and resources for females, males and other identities in any culture.

**Survivor:** The person who has been abused or exploited. The term 'survivor' is often used in preference to 'victim' as it implies strength, resilience, and the capacity to survive, however it is the individual's choice how they wish to identify themselves.