

What is Protection and How Do We Do It?

Connecting CWS's Work to Global Concepts of Protection

CWS Technical Unit

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United States 2023.

About CWS

Church World Service (CWS) is a faith-based organization transforming communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. Our vision is a world where all have food, voice, and a safe place to call home.

A Vision and Mission Based in Human Rights

Within the context of our work, CWS defines “protection” according to the Sphere standards¹ as: encompassing all efforts pursued by humanitarian and human rights actors to ensure that the rights of affected persons and obligations under international and national law are understood, respected, protected, and fulfilled without discrimination.

CWS recognizes that affected people, especially those in more vulnerable situations, such as children, refugees, migrants, and traditionally marginalized groups, may need special attention, support, and protection.

¹Sphere Association. The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, Fourth Edition (Geneva: 2018), www.spherestandards.org/handbook.

Governments have the primary duty and legal responsibility to respect, promote, protect, and fulfill human rights through their actions, laws, policies, and services. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like CWS can work with governments, individuals, groups, and communities by providing or facilitating services; strengthening capacities that empower people to pursue their human rights; and advocating and informing policies.

CWS promotes the rights to life, liberty, and the security of the person; protection from persecution; including outside a person's country of origin, dignity; a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of the person and their family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services; and education.

CWS Addresses Protection Issues and Integrates Protection Mainstreaming Principles in All of Our Work

CWS utilizes a protection lens throughout its work. Humanitarian protection mainstreaming principles include prioritizing safety and dignity and avoiding causing harm; supporting meaningful access to care and services without discrimination for all who need them, especially the most vulnerable, ensuring accountability to people served and their participation and empowerment.² For CWS, these principles and the global humanitarian concept of protection generally³ are important in all contexts in which we work. They also align with the values of justice and sustainability reflected in our mission. From supporting refugees resettling in the United States⁴ to helping children in highly vulnerable situations access support and services that strengthens their health, well-being, agency, and development, to delivering food assistance, to helping communities prepare for or respond to disasters. CWS also adheres to all guidelines for humanitarian assistance mandated by the International Committee of the Red Cross.⁵

Global Protection Landscape

According to the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) Update (March 2023):

Conflicts, combined with climate shocks, political crises, and rising food and energy prices, will make a 2023 a year of vast humanitarian needs. Violence continues to grow with no signs of deceleration...

Regarding protection risks, the report highlights the following: Trafficking in persons, forced labor or slavery-like practices; child and forced family separation; and discrimination and stigmatization, denial of resources, opportunities, services and/or humanitarian access.

Source: https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/gpc_protection_update_elections_march2023.pdf

²Global Protection Cluster, "Protection Mainstreaming," https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/themes/protection_mainstreaming.

³Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Policy: Protection in Humanitarian Action, (2016), <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-11/IASC%20Policy%20on%20Protection%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action%2C%202016.pdf>.

⁴Katherine Rehberg, The Future of Refugee Resettlement & Complementary Pathways: Strengthening Sustainable and Strategic Humanitarian Solutions for Refugees (New York: Church World Service, 2020), <https://cwsglobal.org/reports/the-future-of-resettlement-and-complementary-pathways/>.

⁵International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2015) <https://shop.icrc.org/the-fundamental-principles-of-the-international-red-cross-and-red-crescent-movement-pdf-en.html>.



Belgrade, Serbia 2023

Our Work with Populations in Highly Vulnerable Situations

The people with whom CWS works are diverse in age, gender, ethnicity, and situational factors (such as poverty, political discrimination, and climate change). Each person faces unique vulnerability to threats to basic human rights based on these and other factors. In general, populations who may need special attention, support, and protection include:

- Women
- Children
- Elderly people
- People with disabilities (PwDs)
- LGBTQI+ people
- Racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural minorities

- Indigenous people
- Refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons
- Migrants and migrant workers
- People living in extreme poverty

People in these situations face threats such as conflict and community violence, deliberate deprivation, loss of land and property, sexual and gender-based violence, child and other forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, harmful social norms and practices, and the deleterious effects of natural disasters and climate change.

Our Work Protecting Refugees, Asylum-Seekers, and Other People on the Move

Over the last two decades, prolonged conflicts, disasters, and economic crises have led to increasing levels of displacement around the world. In mid-2022 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that forced displacement exceeded 100 million people globally, with children accounting for 41 percent of the total.⁶ Additionally, large numbers of these migrants are escaping to or through countries where their rights are not guaranteed or violated. Many children are on their own without the care and protection of their parents or other caregivers.⁷

⁶United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2021* (Copenhagen: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022), <https://www.unhcr.org/62a9d1494/global-trends-report-2021>.

⁷Susanna Corona Maioli and Kol Wikramage, "Unaccompanied or separated children face increased health risks during migration," *Migration Data Portal*, July 2022, <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/blog/unaccompanied-or-separated-children-face-increased-health-risks-during-migration-0>.

Areas of work	CWS work to support protection
Protect people in vulnerable situations from violence, exploitation, and other harms and their effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CWS-managed Regional Support Center for Africa supports refugee departures from sub-Saharan Africa focusing on assisting expedited processing of children and adults in vulnerable situations. In the United States, Indonesia, and Bosnia, CWS works with unaccompanied children, using a case management approach to ensure guardianship, safe care, and access to services.
Connect people in vulnerable situations with support and services that help them access their rights to dignity, adequate standard of living, and opportunities for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the United States, CWS's Reception and Placement program helps refugee newcomers integrate into communities, connecting them with social assistance, English-language learning, health and education services, and information. Its Preferred Communities program for refugees provides case management, group-based support, and access to specialized services for especially vulnerable refugees. In Egypt, CWS supports STARS, a refugee-led organization providing essential services to refugees from multiple countries.
Strengthen capacity of individuals to protect themselves and of institutions to support groups disproportionately impacted by threats to their human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Mexico, CWS supports and strengthens the capacity of shelters and services that assist migrants and those who have been deported from the United States. In Indonesia, CWS strengthens refugee-led organizations to provide inclusive education services.
Conduct monitoring, research, and policy advocacy to strengthen protection of highly vulnerable people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CWS commissioned and disseminated qualitative research on the engagement of faith-based actors in Latin American countries that are aiding Venezuelan people on the move to other countries.⁸ CWS collaborated with UNHCR to monitor and collect data from more than 1,300 people from 28 countries entering the United States along its southern border. Information about their experiences, asylum procedures, and protection threats can be used to mitigate risks, improve policies, and advocate for migrant safety.⁹



Honduras 2023

Our Work with Populations in Other Highly Vulnerable Situations

CWS works in several countries to promote rights and meet the needs of highly vulnerable communities and groups. This focus guides CWS's work in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH); Food Security and Livelihoods; Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Preparedness; and Emergency Response and Recovery. We also undertake focused work in Child Protection, Gender and Racial Justice, Climate Change Adaptation, and Community Development. We leverage existing and new relationships to investigate, address, convene, and advocate on challenges faced by highly

⁸Church World Service. "Latin American Local Faith Community Responses to Venezuelan Migration", 2020. https://cwsglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CWS_LA_Responses_Venezuelan_Mig.pdf

⁹<https://cwsglobal.org/reports/the-future-of-resettlement-and-complementary-pathways/>

vulnerable groups and seek solutions for unaddressed protection issues.

Current examples of this work include:

Areas of work	CWS work to support protection
Protect people from violence, exploitation, and other harm and their consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Vietnam, CWS works with local community actors in a remote, underserved area with high labor outmigration to educate young people about risks and strategies for safe migration and to strengthen positive caregiving practices of caregivers who remain to raise the community's children. In Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico, CWS participates in a consortium of 14 faith-based actors to protect children from violence by, and recruitment into, gangs and criminal groups. In several countries CWS works with local religious leaders and organizations to strengthen social cohesion and make church communities inclusive and welcoming to all people.
Connect people in vulnerable situations with support and services that help them access their rights to dignity, adequate standard of living, and opportunities for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Serbia, CWS collaborates with a local organization to strengthen protective factors for Roma children through drop-in shelters and health, nutrition, and education services. In Kenya, CWS works with schools and local communities to create dormitories and sanitary infrastructure to reduce conditions that inhibit girls' participation and retention in school.
Strengthen capacity of individuals to protect themselves and of institutions to support groups disproportionately impacted by threats to their human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Tanzania, CWS helps to strengthen the capacity of long-term refugees whose durable solution to displacement is to remain where they are. In Thailand, CWS assists a large Christian school system to develop and implement child safeguarding practices, policies, and response capacity.
Conduct monitoring, research, and policy advocacy to strengthen protection of highly vulnerable people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Latin America, CWS supports the rights, protection, and opportunities of children with a parent in prison through research, convening, policy advocacy, and collaboration with a platform of local organizations in ten countries that has led to better support for these children, training for policymakers, and regulatory and legislative action. CWS conducted research about LGBTQI+ people in the Gran Chaco regions of Argentina and Bolivia that shows how the discrimination and violence experienced by the LGBTQI+ community requires specific support, protection actions, and policies to ensure their rights.¹⁰

Our work on Strengthening a Risk-Informed and Resilience-Building Orientation in Protection Programming

In a rapidly changing global protection landscape, CWS continues to increase the quality and reach of our protection-related programming by consolidating and disseminating learning throughout CWS programs. This includes strengthening our

understanding of, and response to, the challenges faced by the people we work with.

CWS's focus is on bolstering the resilience of the populations with which we work. Reducing risk and threats and increasing

¹⁰Church World Service. "Exploratory Study on LGBTI+ People and their rights in municipalities of South America's Gran Chaco", 2021. <https://cwslac.org/estudios-e-informes/>

capacity to reduce vulnerabilities is a conceptual and analytical approach used in domains as diverse as disaster management, internet security, and child welfare. The risk or likelihood of a negative outcome is increased by people's vulnerability and exposure to human threats and natural hazards and reduced by capacities that increase their resilience to those threats (Figure 1). "Capacities" refers to people's resources and capabilities and their ability to acquire them, while "resilience" is people's ability to adapt to shocks/bad experiences in ways that enable growth and forward movement.¹¹

Figure 1

A simple Risk Equation: Reduce Threats and Vulnerability and Increase Capacities to Reduce Risk of Negative Outcomes

$$\text{Risk} = \frac{\text{Threat} + \text{Vulnerability}}{\text{Capacity}}$$

In our work, we seek to increase knowledge of threats, vulnerabilities, and capacities, by consulting the people with whom we work, to research, design, implement, facilitate, support, and communicate about programs and interventions that protect people from harm, increase resilience by addressing vulnerabilities and capacities, and reduce their risk of negative outcomes.

Our work Adding Value Through Collaboration and Local, Regional, and Global Networks

CWS's roots are in collaboration, doing things together that cannot be done, or cannot be done as well, alone. CWS's donor community provides financial resources, volunteering, and other support for our work to protect and empower people in highly vulnerable situations.

CWS also contributes to and participates

in national and international technical and advocacy networks that play a role in promotion and learning to increase capacity around protection.

CWS is an organization that can address urgent human needs at the country and regional levels, working with its partners and with people in the most vulnerable situations.

¹¹While resilience has often been described as the ability to "bounce back" to a previous state, evolving definitions in disaster management and in mental health emphasize coming back stronger from shocks and negative events.

Resources:

For more information, the following documents and pages can be useful:

<https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/>

https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/gpc_protection_update_elections_march2023.pdf

<https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/documents/Protection-in-Humanitarian-Action-EN.pdf>

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc_policy_on_protection_in_humanitarian_action.pdf

http://www.alliancecpha.org/en/CPMS_home

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