



U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)

Protection Policy

The core of PRM's mission is to support and promote the protection of the world's refugees and asylum seekers, conflict victims, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, and vulnerable migrants.

PRM views protection as a fundamental goal in nearly all its programming and policy engagement, whether the threat is forced return of refugees or improper denial of asylum, gender-based violence or sexual exploitation, blockages of humanitarian access or restrictions on freedom of movement, or other abuses that endanger populations of concern to the Bureau.

PRM takes seriously its responsibility to be a strong protection advocate inside the U.S. government as well as in U.S. government interactions with foreign governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The Bureau is well-equipped to promote the protection of vulnerable populations through strategic use of the Bureau's financial resources, through the Bureau's partnership with protection-mandated agencies, and through the extensive experience of Bureau personnel including the overseas field presence of its Refugee Coordinators. PRM's position within the State Department enables the Bureau to promote U.S. Government diplomacy on protection issues and engage in robust humanitarian diplomacy on protection problems at the highest diplomatic levels.

PRM's Definition of Protection

PRM defines protection as:

“Measures to safeguard the rights of PRM populations of concern by seeking to prevent or end patterns of violence or abuse; alleviate the trauma and related effects of violence or abuse; identify and promote durable solutions; foster respect for refugee, humanitarian, and human rights law; and ensure that humanitarian actions uphold human dignity, benefit the most vulnerable, and do not harm affected populations.”

This definition reflects the scope of the Bureau's overall mission. It draws on protection principles articulated by international and non-governmental humanitarian organizations in their own definitions of protection. PRM partners are not obliged to adopt this definition as their own.

PRM's Protection Goals

PRM pursues four broad protection goals:

- 1) Address or prevent violations of human rights and humanitarian principles. Protection at its best seeks to prevent violations before they occur or identify and stop abuses that already are taking place. Among the most egregious violations affecting populations of concern to PRM are *refoulement* and forced return, armed attacks, denial of humanitarian access, gender-based violence, and denial of due process, among other abuses. PRM is committed to promoting a strong international architecture for protection, ensuring that assistance and resettlement programs integrate protection principles, and engaging in robust humanitarian diplomacy.
- 2) Fill protection gaps. U.S. government engagement on protection issues provides some comparative advantages that can complement the work of international partners. PRM plays an important role in supporting and promoting adherence to international refugee law, fair refugee status determination procedures, family reunification, registration/documentation for populations of concern, access to due process for migrants, and pursuit of durable solutions, including refugee resettlement in the United States. PRM continues to support these basic protection tools through assistance and diplomatic channels.
- 3) Strengthen and monitor standards, indicators, and institutional capacities for protection. PRM provides reliable funding and promotes effective management of key international humanitarian organizations mandated to protect vulnerable populations. PRM encourages strong interagency protection coordination through the cluster system, improved protection capacities of international peacekeeping operations, and stronger methods to measure the impact of protection efforts.
- 4) Address protection challenges posed by diverse populations of concern. The composition of the populations of concern to PRM has changed dramatically during the past decade. In addition to refugees, a majority of PRM's populations of concern now include internally displaced persons, stateless persons, and vulnerable migrants. This diversification has made PRM's protection efforts more challenging and requires a nuanced, diversified approach that addresses the distinct protection needs and solutions of each population. Moreover, PRM must remain committed to groups and individuals with particular protection needs, such as women, children, the elderly, disabled persons, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender refugees and asylum seekers, urban refugees, refugees in need of expedited resettlement processing, and refugees resettled in the United States.

Strategic Global Approach

PRM will seek to make its promotion of protection more consistent, comprehensive, and based on shared learning across offices within the U.S. Government and the broader international community. PRM will strengthen internal mechanisms to help identify good protection practices, better assess the performance of the Bureau and our government in achieving its protection objectives, and leverage opportunities for more effective engagement on protection issues by PRM principals with other key officials in the State Department and other U.S. Government agencies.