



NATIONAL
COALITION OF
HUMAN
RIGHTS
DEFENDERS
UGANDA



PROTECTION MANUAL FOR THE NATIONAL COALITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (NCHRD-U)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ED	Executive Director
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESR	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NCHRD-U	National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PC	Protection Committee
PWDs	People with Disabilities
PF	Protection Fund
TTWG	Technical Thematic Working Group
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDHRD	Universal Declaration on Human Rights Defenders
UN	United Nations

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The creation of the Protection Manual represents a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to safeguarding the rights and security of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in Uganda. This vital document, designed for internal use, embodies a collective effort fueled by a deep sense of purpose and dedication to our mission.

We are immensely grateful to all those who have played a role in the development of this manual. The contributions of the Protection Committee members and the tireless efforts of the secretariat staff have been instrumental in shaping the comprehensive framework laid out within these pages. Their invaluable insights, expertise, and unwavering commitment to service have ensured that this manual serves as a robust guide for the protection of HRDs at risk.

Special recognition is extended to Robert Kirenga, whose visionary leadership and overarching direction have provided the guiding light throughout this endeavor. Additionally, we acknowledge the indispensable contributions of Dorothy Esther Kiyai, the Protection and Emergency Officer, whose experiential input and practical perspectives have enriched the content of the manual, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness in real-world scenarios.

We would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed development partner, the Ford Foundation, under the Weaving Resilience program, for their generous financial support. Their steadfast commitment to promoting human rights has been instrumental in bringing this project to fruition and advancing our shared goals of justice, equality, and dignity for all.

As we embark on the journey ahead, we recognize the importance of collaboration, innovation, and continuous learning in our collective efforts to protect HRDs and uphold human rights. The completion of this manual is a testament to our collective resolve and serves as a beacon of hope for HRDs across Uganda and beyond.

Together, we remain steadfast in our commitment to defending the defenders and creating a safer, more just world for all.

FOREWORD

In the relentless pursuit of justice and the protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) across Uganda, the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U) has remained steadfast in its commitment to safeguarding those who courageously advocate for human rights in the face of adversity.

Over the past decade, our protection and emergency response programs have played a pivotal role in providing vital support to HRDs confronting immediate risks and threats. From unlawful arrests to surveillance and assault, HRDs navigate perilous terrains daily, confronting oppressive power structures in their quest for justice and equality.

Through our protection desk, we have extended a lifeline to HRDs, offering a myriad of services, including psychosocial and medical support, relocation assistance, legal aid, and secure transportation. These interventions enable HRDs to continue their invaluable work within their communities, undeterred by the many challenges they encounter.

Yet, the absence of dedicated legislation protecting HRDs in Uganda exacerbates the risks they face, particularly for marginalized groups such as women and journalists. Despite these challenges, the principles enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders serve as a beacon of hope, guiding our efforts to safeguard HRDs' rights and freedoms.

In response to the evolving landscape of human rights protection, NCHRD-U has developed this Protection Manual, a comprehensive guide aimed at streamlining our protection and emergency response systems. This manual serves as a cornerstone of our commitment to HRDs, providing clear guidance and support to our dedicated staff and regional referral teams across the country.

As we continue to navigate the complex terrain of HRD protection, this manual stands as a testament to our unwavering dedication to defending the defenders. We pledge to stand by those who tirelessly champion human rights, offering unwavering support and guidance in their noble pursuit.

Sincerely,



Robert Kirenga,
Executive Director.

ABOUT NCHRD-U

The National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U) is a registered membership organization of organizations and individual Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) formed in 2013. NCHRD-U's mandate is to protect and promote the work of HRDs in a safe and secure environment. It seeks to strengthen the work of HRDs throughout the country through synergy and collaboration at the national and international level to enhance the protection mechanisms for HRDs and their capacity to defend human rights effectively. NCHRD-U focuses its work on all regions in Uganda.

The Coalition Secretariat has partnered with various protection service providers to support HRDs' protection in Uganda. NCHRD-U is a membership organization that operates under three programs: protection and emergency response, capacity building, and advocacy and networking. Additionally, the Coalition works to reinforce preventive and responsive protection mechanisms for HRDs at the national and grassroots levels in Uganda.



The NCHRD-U mandate

The NCHRD-U is primarily tasked with the protection of human rights, advocating at national, regional, and international levels, and building the capacity of human rights defenders in safety and security management.

The Board of Directors of NCHRD-U plays a pivotal role in overseeing the organization's operations and ensuring effective utilization of its resources to fulfill its mandate. This stewardship involves meticulous management of NCHRD-U's mission and resources. Meanwhile, the Secretariat handles the day-to-day functions of the Coalition.

An essential aspect of NCHRD-U's operations is the National Secretariat Protection Committee. This committee is entrusted with ensuring the seamless and efficient functioning of NCHRD-U's protection mechanisms. Their mandate includes monitoring threats, responding rapidly to incidents, and providing timely redress to those affected.

PURPOSE OF THE PROTECTION MANUAL

The Protection Manual serves as an indispensable resource for the NCHRD-U Protection Committee, providing essential tools and guidelines to safeguard Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). Its primary objective is to equip the committee members with the requisite skills, knowledge, strategies, protocols, and specific guidelines necessary to ensure the protection of individuals dedicated to advancing human rights causes.

The Protection Manual operates as an internal document within the NCHRD-U framework, supporting internal mechanisms for protection and security. While the NCHRD-U engages externally, this manual reinforces internal systems aimed at bolstering protection measures for HRDs.

1. Guiding HRD Protection: The manual furnishes the Protection Committee with clear and detailed guidance, facilitating effective case management and the disbursement of emergency funds. By adhering to the outlined protection procedures, standards, and principles, the Protection Committee can ensure timely and efficient support and management for HRDs at risk.

2. Setting the Compass: At its core, the manual acts as our unwavering “*true north*,” illuminating the NCHRD-U path toward comprehensive HRD protection. It ensures that the Protection Committee members and key Secretariat staff mandated with the coordination, management, and administration of the case management are equipped with the information, procedures, and strategies required for seamless management and coordination of human rights protection mechanisms. This, in turn, guarantees that we remain vigilant, responsive, and swift in delivering the necessary redress in the face of threats and incidents.

3. Acknowledging the Current Landscape: The manual acknowledges the dynamic nature of human rights defense protection and the concerning increase in reported HRD incidents, along with the persistent human rights violations and abuses against defenders in Uganda. It underscores the need for a nuanced approach to address the spectrum of protection incidents faced by HRDs, ranging from minor intimidation to severe abuses such as physical attacks and threats. This recognition is crucial in navigating the complexities of safeguarding human rights defenders and ensuring their safety in diverse contexts.

4. Ensuring Inclusivity: The manual emphasizes the recognition and profiling of the heightened risks faced by HRDs, with a particular focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and key populations. It underscores the importance of implementing case management tailored to address their peculiar protection needs and priorities. While acknowledging that the primary responsibility for safeguarding these individuals rests with States, the manual affirms the Coalition’s broader commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of all HRDs in the country, irrespective of their affiliation. This commitment reaffirms the manual’s dedication to protecting HRDs without discrimination, reflecting international standards of inclusivity and human rights advocacy.

5. Empowering HRDs: Recognizing the gravity of the daily risks faced by HRDs, the manual emphasizes the proactive measures aimed at fortifying all HRD protection to minimize the need for external protection support. It outlines the mandate of the Protection Committee in HRD protection case management. Additionally, it highlights the pivotal role of the Protection Desk in managing and disbursing the Protection Fund, which serves as a lifeline for HRDs. This fund grants access to essential support such as psychosocial and medical assistance, relocation support, legal, safe transport, and secure housing.

The Structure of the Protection Manual

The structure of the NCHRD-U's protection manual is organized in a logical manner to facilitate easy access to information and guidance for the Protection Committee and key Coalition secretariat staff. The following topics are contained therein: the comprehension and coverage of various topics have, accordingly, been framed to ensure an optimized use of the modules described in the book so that the recent trends and happenings in the HR space are immense.

Section 1: Understanding the Protection of HRDs at risk. Provides some key definitions of HRDs, protection, security, common violations and protection issues in Uganda, organization mandates, values, and departmental objectives.

Section 2: Legal Frameworks. Highlights of what frameworks give NCHRD-U impetus for its work in line with protection. This is useful to remind Protection Committee members and other users of the key principles that should always be used in response to the protection of HRDs, no matter the level of risk they face.

Section 3: The existing internal protection systems. The Protection Fund is critical in protection response, and this section describes what it is, the criteria, and the selection of beneficiaries. Procedures and steps, as well as scales of support, will be highlighted. Approval authorities for disbursement will be described. The section also briefly describes other existing systems in use.

Section 4: Protection Fund Management will discuss the processes and management of the Protection Fund, which is one of the critical protection mechanisms.

Section 5: Protection Committee Roles and Responsibilities. Discusses the different roles played by the PC members and other relevant players. This will include meeting frequency and procedures.

Section 6: HRD reintegration criteria, monitoring, and continued support assessment. This focuses on the specifications for the preparation of the monitoring and evaluation of service delivery. The monitoring and evaluation plan identifies the needs of the HRDs and their progress.

Section 7: FAQs. This list lists frequently asked questions when undertaking protection activities and addresses the gray areas.

DISCLAIMER

The information presented in this manual reflects the views of the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U) and should be interpreted within the framework of the Coalition's overarching mandate, policies, and guidelines.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the content herein, neither the authors nor the publisher assume responsibility for any errors or omissions. It is important to note that the manual does not serve as a definitive guide or guarantee of outcomes. Instead, it offers guidance that should be contextualized and adapted based on specific circumstances and needs.

As circumstances evolve, updates and revisions to this manual may be necessary. The Protection Committee member is encouraged to always verify information and seek clarification from the NCHRD-U Executive Director in case of any uncertainties or discrepancies.

SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING PROTECTION OF HRDS AT RISK

For the past decade, the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U) has steadfastly upheld the principles enshrined in Article 38(1&2) of the 1995 Uganda Constitution (as amended). Our commitment is unwavering: to defend civil liberties and advocate for peaceful engagement in shaping government policies, all while safeguarding the rights and dignity of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). Our mission is clear: to provide a secure environment for HRDs to carry out their crucial work, fostering partnerships with like-minded organizations at local, regional, and global levels. We understand that despite the protections afforded by international law, the path to realizing human rights and standing up for those whose rights are violated or abused is fraught with peril, not only within Uganda but across the globe.

Defining Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

Following the principle set forth in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders that *“everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels,”* the Coalition defines Human Rights Defenders as individuals, working alone or in groups, who, through peaceful means, advocate for the promotion and protection of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.

UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders Article 2: Each State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure, or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.

This United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders recognizes the essential role that individuals and groups play in the promotion, protection, and realization of human rights and calls upon states to protect and support the work of human rights defenders. It also outlines principles and standards for the protection of HRDs and their rights to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals or violence.

In Uganda, the work of HRDs is incredibly challenging, involving speaking out against violations, abuses, injustices and holding states accountable. As such, this courageous stance often makes them targets of threats, intimidation, arrests, freezing of organizational funds, suspension, harassment, violence, restrictions, and reprisals. Despite these challenges, they persist in their mission, making their protection a crucial imperative.

Therefore, HRD's work is riddled with obstacles, including intimidation, harassment, detention, torture, defamation, suspension from employment, denial of freedom, and difficulties obtaining legal recognition. In extreme cases, they face violence and disappearances. Suffice to indicate that the Coalition's strategic plan 2022-2026, the third since the inception of NCHRDU has an ambitious overall goal that aims to ensure that by 2026, Human Rights Defenders are recognized and are productively promoting, and protecting human rights within an enabling environment.

Human Rights Defenders at risk

In recent years, awareness of the significant risks HRDs face has grown, particularly in hostile environments where the law restricts and penalizes human rights work. The abuse of HRDs happens even in countries

ostensibly supporting human rights, threats often go unpunished. In order to address these challenges, HRDs must implement comprehensive, adaptable safety, security, and protection mechanisms. Well-intentioned advice to “take care” falls short; effective protection management is paramount. HRDs are at risk of executions, torture, beatings, arbitrary arrest and detention, death, defamation, as well as restrictions on their freedoms of movement, expression, and assembly. Women human rights defenders might confront in addition, risks that are gender specific and require particular attention.

Common perpetrators of HRD violations and abuses

Over the years, NCHRD-U and allied organizations have consistently conducted comprehensive assessments and published index reports on human rights violations in Uganda. These reports reveal a troubling pattern: state institutions, entrusted with ensuring security, dispensing justice, and providing safe environments for human rights activities, often emerge as the primary perpetrators of human rights abuses. These violations are not limited to state actors alone; non-state entities also frequently engage in violence against Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). Such findings underscore the pervasive nature of human rights violations in Uganda and highlight the urgent need for concerted action to address these systemic issues. Reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) corroborate these assessments, further emphasizing the gravity of the situation.

A Guideline for Protecting HRDs

This manual does not offer universal solutions but provides guidelines, protocols, and principles to enhance the protection of HRDs. The most valuable insights come from HRDs themselves, drawing from their experiences and the tactics and strategies they develop over time to protect themselves and their working environments. Thus, this manual is a dynamic protection tool, subject to updates as more input is gathered and analyzed from HRDs working on the front lines. The content of the manual seeks to promote the universality and totality of HRDs.

NCHRD-U's Holistic Approach to Protection

The Protection Manual aims to improve the availability, access, timeliness, and utilization of emergency response and protection services for HRDs. Recognizing diverse protection needs beyond reactive measures, we invest in preventive measures, fostering a holistic protection model. The NCHRD-U protection mechanism spans grassroots, national, regional, and international structures, with community and sub-regional referral networks and regional committees being vital components. The various networks and regional structures coordinate protection responses, provide rural-based support during attacks, and bring services closer to grassroots HRDs.

Empowering HRD Protection within the Coalition

This manual empowers the Coalition, working through the Protection Committee and in particular the Protection Desk, to lead the process of case management and disbursing emergency protection funds in a timely and efficient manner for HRD protection across the country. The standardized protocols herein significantly contribute to the consolidation of a comprehensive HRD defense and protection mechanism that is accessible to all HRDs irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious denomination, disability status, or age.

HRD protection extends to HRDs at risk from any social class or background. This includes HRDs working on land and environmental issues, as well as the rights of women and girls, key populations, gender diverse persons, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people and women who are especially vulnerable to attacks.

NCHRD-U Theory of Change support for the protection of HRDs

At NCHRD-U we believe that change will happen in Uganda, among human rights defenders and around the issues they pursue, when defenders themselves are resilient to stress, shocks, exercise knowledge, and competence-based engagement within an enabling environment. The desired enabling environment includes HRDs' own systematized, inclusive, and vibrant platforms, along with their established collaborative facilities and mechanisms, which are optimized and promoted. Additionally, HRDs should act as brand advocates, attracting wide national and transnational recognition, influencing decision-making at various levels, and benefiting from a comprehensive protection system, including an appropriate protection fund to support them in crisis. Within this changing situation, HRDs of different walks of life will promote and protect their rights and those of others collectively as well as individually. They will seek and realize, redress and respect, as they hold duty bearers accountable. NCHRD-U will support these desired changes by building HRD capacity based on their differentiated circumstances, needs, and priorities. It will backstop and steer collective advocacy, facilitate HRD support structures, build and maintain strategic partnerships, and create opportunities for the desired change to be attained.

The NCHRD-U Theory of Change supports and speaks to the protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRD) through the following:

- 1. Resilience and Well-Being:** NCHRD-U believes that change in Uganda can occur when HRDs themselves are resilient to stress and shocks. A focus on their well-being ensures that they can effectively pursue their missions without compromising their safety.
- 2. Knowledge and Competence:** NCHRD-U emphasizes knowledge and competence-based engagement among HRDs. Strengthening their skills and understanding of human rights issues equips them to be more effective advocates.
- 3. Enabling Environment:** An enabling environment for HRDs is essential. NCHRD-U works to create an atmosphere where HRDs can operate without fear, leveraging their own platforms and support systems.
- 4. Collaboration and Networking:** The organization promotes collaborative facilities and mechanisms among HRDs. Networking and cooperation enhance their collective strength and effectiveness.
- 5. Brand Advocacy:** NCHRD-U encourages HRDs to become brand advocates, raising their national and transnational recognition. A more prominent profile allows them to influence decision-making at various levels.
- 6. Broad-Spectrum Protection:** A comprehensive protection system, including an appropriate protection fund, is crucial. NCHRD-U ensures that HRDs have access to support during crises.

7. Collective and Individual Action: NCHRD-U's approach empowers HRDs from diverse backgrounds to collectively promote and protect human rights. It also supports individual efforts to seek redress and hold duty-bearers accountable.

8. Capacity Building: NCHRD-U focuses on building HRD capacity based on their unique circumstances, needs, and priorities. This tailored support enhances their ability to address human rights issues effectively.

9. Issue-Based Advocacy: The organization backs collective, issue-based advocacy efforts, ensuring that HRDs can address critical human rights concerns as a united front.

10. Support Structures: NCHRD-U facilitates the creation of support structures for HRDs, ensuring they have access to resources and assistance when needed.

11. Strategic Partnerships: The organization builds and maintains strategic partnerships with like-minded entities, amplifying HRDs' impact and reach.

12. Opportunities for Change: NCHRD-U actively creates opportunities for the desired change to be realized. By addressing systemic issues and working collaboratively, we aim to protect HRDs and uphold human rights in Uganda.

Principles in HRDs protection

HRD protection is done in observance of international standards and principles. The key principles are:

Table 1: Principles that guide the protection program.

Principle	Description of the Principle.
Political Neutrality	NCHRD-U is an apolitical organization and is not involved in partisan politics. The support given to HRDs is EXCLUSIVELY directed towards securing the safety and security of HRDs, including their immediate family, while they engage in lawful activities. Under NO circumstances should support be extended to an HRD to be diverted to support illicit or personal political agendas.
Universality and Inclusivity:	Advocate for the rights of all individuals without discrimination based on race, gender, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic.
Empowerment	Empower individuals and communities to understand, assert, and defend their rights effectively.
Collaboration:	Collaborate with the government, civil society, international organizations, and local communities to enhance human rights protection and foster a culture of respect for human rights.

Accountability:	Promote transparency, accountability, and responsible governance, holding individuals and institutions accountable for human rights violations.
Sustainability:	Build sustainable systems and mechanisms to ensure the ongoing protection and promotion of human rights in Uganda.
Best Interest	We will strive to the extent possible to consider and respect the interests of HRDs in the process of delivering protection interventions to HRDs.
Timeliness	We shall always endeavor to respond and deliver protection and emergency protection in a timely manner.
Socio, Cultural and including Gender Sensitivity	We shall always act with sensitivity and respect for these established socio-cultural norms, including gender sensitivity, in order to ensure that our protection and security support are extended in a manner that does not abuse or disregard them.
Individualized Response	We shall always endeavor to tailor the protection and security support to the unique and individual differences of the HRDs. A one-size-fits-all approach is not feasible under this principle.
Flexibility	The nature of risks and threats encountered by HRDs in pursuit of their work is varied and changes from time to time. We shall ensure that, at all times, reasonable flexibility is exercised in order to remain relevant to the needs of HRDs in a rapidly changing work environment.
Wellbeing of HRDs	The safety and wellbeing of HRDs is central and takes precedence in all decisions and interventions under protection and security management.
Security consciousness	For every protection activity to be implemented, a clear security assessment shall be executed beforehand to appreciate the level of security risks involved and the mitigation mechanism.
Do-No-Harm	Our interventions/response should not place the HRD at further risk or harm. This partly entails ensuring that HRDs under imminent risk are quickly and swiftly removed from the point of danger to safety in order to save their lives.
Integrity	We are dedicated to the highest standards of honesty, transparency, and diligence.

Solidarity	We passionately stand with, and promote the capacities, safety, and wellbeing of HRDs.
Excellence	We commit to the highest degree of professionalism and ethical conduct in all we do.
Confidentiality	We handle confidential information with the utmost care and discretion, applying the 'do no harm' principle in all circumstances.
wwwRespect	We fervently champion respect for fundamental human rights and diversity in humanity.

In addition to the above principles, NCHRD-U subscribes to the following principles in its mandate and provides universal protection to HRDs:

- **Feminism:** This calls for an end to gender inequality. Feminism is important because it champions those who are oppressed or underprivileged due to their gender.
- **Anti-ageism:** This arises when age is used to categorize and divide people in ways that lead to harm, disadvantage, and injustice. Ageism can take many forms, including prejudicial attitudes, discriminatory acts, and institutional policies and practices that perpetuate stereotypical beliefs.
- **Anti-racism:** This aims to challenge racism and actively change the policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.
- **Anti-colonial/ neo colonialism:** This is a broad concept that includes every kind of opposition—from political thought to popular violence—against imperialism and colonialism.
- **Anti-ableism:** This is a form of systemic oppression that affects people who identify as disabled, as well as anyone who others perceive to be disabled.

SECTION 2: LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

The NCHRD-U's mandate is closely intertwined with a range of legal frameworks, both domestic and international. These linkages emphasize the organization's unwavering dedication to safeguarding the rights and security of HRDs within Uganda while also aligning with broader international and African efforts to protect those who courageously defend human rights.

The relevant legal framework underscores its commitment to safeguarding the rights and security of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). Here's how the organization's mandate is intricately connected to key legal frameworks:

Legislation that supports HRD protection	Relevance to HRD protection
National	
<p>Republic of Uganda Constitution 1995, as amended:</p> <p>Other Uganda laws, policies, and provisions that collectively support the protection of Human Rights Defenders in Uganda and are essential to NCHRD-U's mission.</p>	<p>The mandate of the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U) aligns seamlessly with the principles enshrined in the 1995 Ugandan Constitution as amended, specifically in Article 38(1&2), which underscores the importance of civic rights and peaceful activities aimed at influencing government policies for the protection of the dignity and rights of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). Article 38(1&2) of the Ugandan Constitution states:</p> <p>"Every citizen has the right to participate in peaceful activities to influence the policies of the government and express their views on matters of national interest."</p> <p>This constitutional provision not only recognizes the fundamental rights of citizens to engage in peaceful advocacy and activism but also serves as a foundational pillar for NCHRD-U's mission to support and protect HRDs in their pursuit of human rights and social justice in Uganda. It underscores the democratic principles upon which the organization's advocacy efforts are built, emphasizing the right of HRDs to engage in legitimate and peaceful activities that advance the protection of human rights and dignity.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Non-Governmental Organizations Act, 2016 provides a legal framework for the registration and operation of NGOs, including those working on human rights and protection. 2. The Witness Protection Act, 2006 offers provisions for the protection of witnesses, including HRDs who may testify in sensitive cases. 3. The Uganda Human Rights Commission Act, 1997 establishes the Uganda Human Rights Commission, which plays a vital role in monitoring and promoting human rights, including the protection of HRDs. 4. The National NGO Policy, 2010 outlines the government's approach to NGOs, including their role in advancing human rights. 5. The Human Rights Enforcement Act 2019. 6. The Uganda Human Rights Commission Act 1997. 7. The Penal Code Act, Cap 120 contains provisions related to offenses against the person, which can be relevant in cases involving threats or attacks on HRDs.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. The Public Order Management Act of 2013 regulates public gatherings and assemblies, impacting the ability of HRDs to organize and advocate peacefully. 9. The Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act, 2012 prohibits and criminalizes torture, which is a risk faced by some HRDs. 10. The National Security Council Act, 2015 establishes the National Security Council, which can impact HRDs' work if national security concerns are invoked. 11. The Uganda Communications Act, 2013 contains provisions related to communications and media that can affect HRDs' access to information and freedom of expression.
Regional	
African Human Rights Defenders Protection Mechanism:	In Africa, the organization's mandate aligns with the African Human Rights Defenders Protection Mechanism, which includes the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) resolution on Human Rights Defenders in Africa. This regional framework reinforces NCHRD-U's commitment to promoting the safety and security of HRDs across the continent. The African Human Rights Defenders Protection Mechanism, as endorsed by the ACHPR, underscores the importance of safeguarding the work and well-being of HRDs in Africa. It recognizes the vital role played by HRDs in advancing human rights, democracy, and the rule of law on the continent, and emphasizes the duty of states to protect them from threats, harassment, and violence. NCHRD-U remains dedicated to upholding these principles and working in collaboration with African partners to ensure the effective implementation of this framework for the benefit of HRDs in Africa."
International	
UNHRD Declaration 1998 and various other international human rights instruments and conventions, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).	NCHRD-U's mandate finds strong support in various international human rights instruments and conventions, prominently among them the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders of 1998. Additionally, it draws resonance from key foundational texts like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These international treaties collectively emphasize the fundamental rights and protections accorded to Human Rights Defenders, reinforcing the core principles that underlie NCHRD-U's mission to safeguard and advance the vital work of these defenders in promoting and protecting human rights.
United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders 1998:	The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998) provides a comprehensive framework for the protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) worldwide and underpins NCHRD-U's unwavering commitment to upholding HRDs' rights and ensuring their safety. Specifically, Article 1 of the declaration recognizes the legitimacy of the work of HRDs in promoting and protecting human rights, while Article 12 emphasizes the right of HRDs to access resources to support their activities—a fundamental aspect of NCHRD-U's support for HRDs in Uganda. Additionally, Article 9 reinforces the duty of the state to protect HRDs from harassment and violence, aligning with NCHRD-U's mission to advocate for the safety and security of HRDs who often face threats and intimidation due to their essential work in advancing human rights and social justice. Thus, the UN Declaration serves as a guiding beacon for NCHRD-U's endeavors, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding HRDs' rights and well-being.

In Uganda, the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders - Uganda (NCHRD-U) collaborates and liaises with several Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in its efforts to protect Human Rights Defenders. Here's a list of relevant MDAs and how they collaborate with NCHRD-U:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and The Inter-ministerial Committee on Human Rights (IMCHR):

- NCHRD-U is the coordination entity of the regional mechanisms (African Union/ACHPR) and UN treaty and charter-based mechanisms where we compile shadow reports in consultation with the IMC.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs:

- NCHRD-U collaborates with the Ministry of Justice in advocating for legal reforms that protect the rights of Human Rights Defenders.
- It liaises with the Ministry to ensure that HRDs have access to legal support and protection.

Ministry of Internal Affairs:

- NCHRD-U works closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to address issues related to the registration and operations of HRD organizations.
- It collaborates with the Ministry to ensure that HRDs can carry out their activities without undue restrictions.
- Participates in the quarterly meetings between the ministry, CSOs, and development partners to raise concerns by HRDs.

NGO Bureau:

- The NGO Bureau regulates the activities of NGOs and CSOs in Uganda, including HRD organizations. NCHRD-U liaises with the NGO Bureau to facilitate the registration and operation of HRD organizations.
- It collaborates with the NGO Bureau to ensure that HRDs can access resources and support for their work.

Uganda Human Rights Commission:

- NCHRD-U maintains a strong working relationship with the Uganda Human Rights Commission-HRD Desk. The Commission plays a critical role in investigating and addressing human rights violations.
- NCHRD-U collaborates with the Commission to report and document cases of HRD rights violations.

Uganda Police Force (UPF):

- NCHRD-U liaises with the Uganda Police Force's Directorate of Legal and Human Rights to ensure the safety and protection of HRDs.
- They work together to address security concerns and investigate threats to HRDs.

Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF):

- NCHRD-U collaborates with the UPDF-Directorate of Human Rights to promote awareness of HRD rights among military personnel.
- They work together to ensure the protection and respect of HRDs' rights.

Uganda Prisons Service (UPS):

- NCHRD-U liaises with the Uganda Prisons Service to monitor the conditions of imprisoned HRDs.
- They collaborate to address any human rights violations within the prison system.

The Judiciary:

- NCHRD-U collaborates with the Judiciary on legal matters related to HRDs.
- They work together to advocate for fair and just legal processes for HRDs.

Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP):

- The DPP plays a critical role in prosecuting individuals responsible for human rights violations against HRDs.
- They work to ensure that those who threaten or harm HRDs are held accountable under the law.

Judicial Service Commission (JSC):

- The JSC is responsible for the administration of justice in Uganda, including the protection of HRDs.
- They oversee the conduct and ethical behavior of judicial officers to ensure that HRDs receive a fair and just legal process.

Ministry of Local Government (Local Council Courts):

- Local Council courts are often the first point of contact for resolving local disputes and conflicts.
- The Ministry of Local Government may promote HRD safety by ensuring that local council courts operate fairly and impartially, thereby protecting HRDs involved in local issues.

Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (Probation and Juvenile Justice):

- This ministry deals with issues related to vulnerable groups, including juveniles.
- HRDs working on child rights may collaborate with this ministry to ensure the safety and protection of children and HRDs advocating for their rights. Directorate of Human Rights (UPDF), Child and Family Protection Unit (Uganda Police)

These MDAs and other entities, both local and international, have roles to play in promoting HRD safety and protection within their respective domains. They contribute to the overall environment in which HRDs operate, ensuring that HRDs can carry out their important work without undue harassment, threats, or violence.

Development partners such as Frontline Defenders, Claim Your Spaces, Protection International, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch among others, are key to the protection of HRDs.

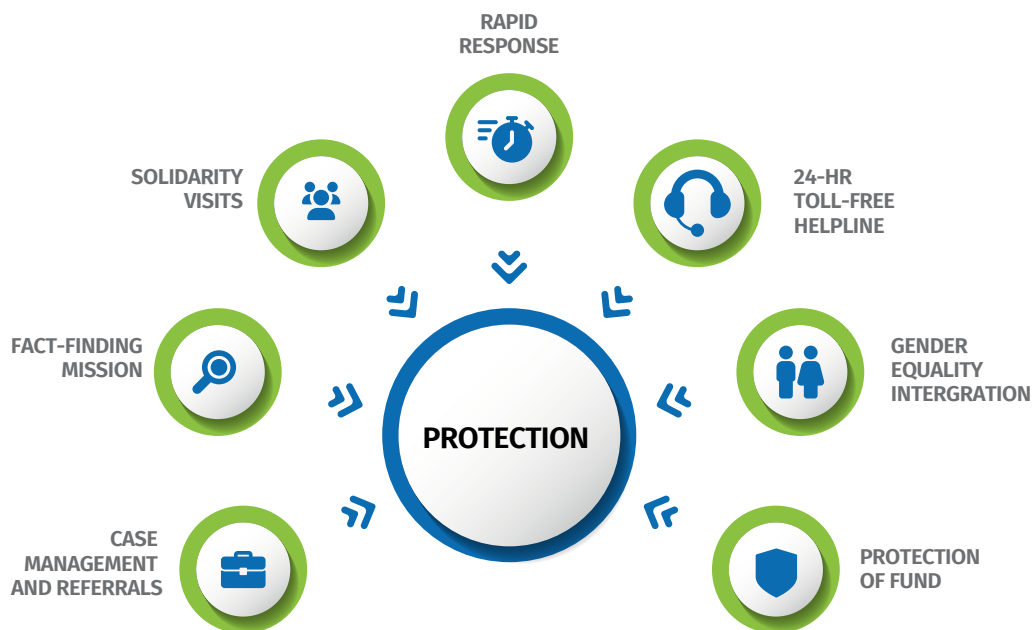
It is recommended that staff involved with protection matters be familiar with the laws governing the protection of human rights defenders and their work.

SECTION 3: EXISTING INTERNAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

NCHRD-U is steadfast in its commitment to ensuring the safety, security, and well-being of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) across Uganda. Under the broader umbrella, the NCHRD-U Regional Protection Committee runs a Protection and Emergency Response Mechanism that contributes significantly to several sub-components of the organization's protection mechanism for Human Rights Defenders. These include, but are not limited to, effective case handling and management, a 24-hour toll-free helpline dedicated to HRDs seeking assistance or reporting threats, and the Protection Fund, which offers vital financial resources to support mechanisms that provide safety and security to some of the HRDs. The Protection Fund and other NCHRD-U's mechanisms collectively reflect NCHRD-U's unwavering commitment to standing with and supporting HRDs in their courageous pursuit of human rights and justice.

Central to the implementation of the protection mechanism is the Protection Committee, which, under the leadership of the Executive Director (ED), coordinates and manages the Coalition's elaborate protection mechanism and intricate procedures.

The Diagram below: fig. 1; shows the components of Protection.



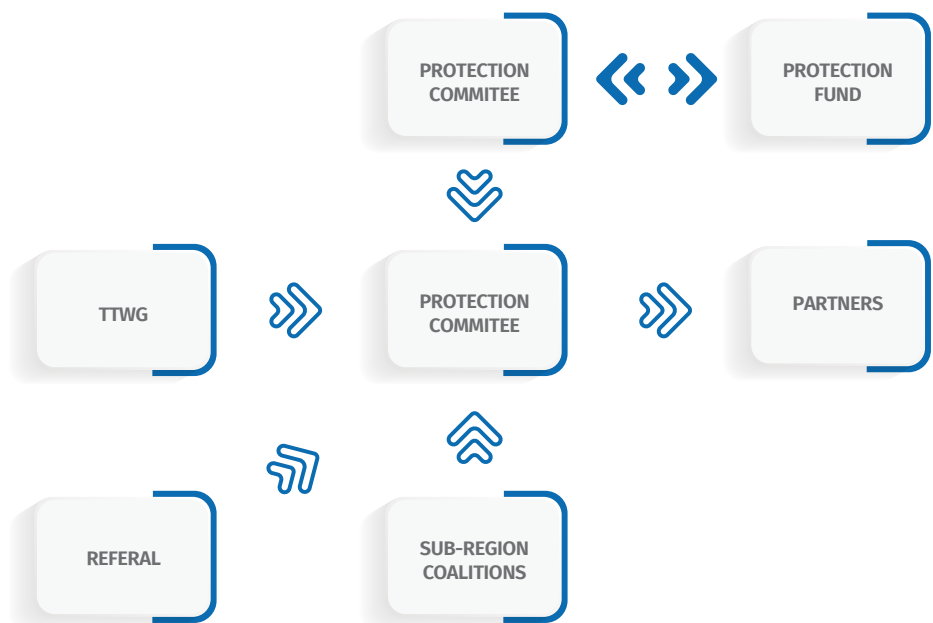
The National Human Rights Defender Referral Network: on December 9, 2019¹. The National Human Rights Defenders Referral Network in Uganda was launched by the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U). It is a collaborative initiative involving 35 civil society organizations aimed at collectively responding to threats against Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in Uganda. HRDs in Uganda face numerous challenges, including threats, harassment, torture, detention, and restrictions on their

1 <https://africandefenders.org/national-human-rights-defenders-referral-network-in-uganda-launched/>

freedoms. The Referral Network provides a platform for sharing best practices for responding to HRDs in need, strengthening members’ capacity to ensure HRD safety and offender accountability. It also seeks to create a conducive environment for HRDs to carry out their work while complying with national laws.

1. Case Management and Referral Network: These committees serve as the focal points for HRD case management and referral, ensuring that HRDs facing threats or hardships receive timely and appropriate assistance. They establish and maintain a network of resources, both digital and physical, to facilitate the efficient referral of HRD cases to relevant support services.

Fig. 2: Diagram of the National Referral Network



Case Management Support.

The National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders - Uganda (NCHRD-U) recognizes the importance of a robust and comprehensive approach to handling protection cases for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). These cases may arise from various sources, including Sub-Regional Coalitions Protection Committees, Technical Thematic Working Groups, other Human Rights Partners within the NCHRD-U referral network, and external entities such as International Human Rights Organizations and individual HRDs. To ensure effective case handling, NCHRD-U proposes the following approaches:

1) Multi-Entry Points:

- Acknowledge that protection cases can originate from multiple sources, including grassroots networks, thematic working groups, and external partners.
- Establish a streamlined intake process that accommodates cases from diverse channels, making it accessible and responsive to the needs of HRDs.

2) Standardized Case Assessment:

- Develop standardized criteria for assessing the severity, urgency, and validity of each protection case.
- Implement a case prioritization mechanism to ensure that cases are addressed based on their level of risk and potential impact.

3) Collaborative Case Management:

- Foster collaboration among Sub-Regional Coalition Protection Committees, Technical Thematic Working Groups, and external partners.
- Establish regular case review meetings that bring together relevant stakeholders to discuss strategies, share information, and collectively address protection challenges.

4) Individualized Protection Plans:

- Tailor protection plans to the unique circumstances and needs of each HRD, taking into account their specific risks, vulnerabilities, and preferences.
- Involve HRDs in the development of protection plans, ensuring their active participation and consent.

5) Holistic Support Services:

- Provide comprehensive support services, including legal assistance, psychosocial support, relocation if necessary, and advocacy on behalf of HRDs.
- Collaborate with local organizations and international HR entities to access specialized resources and expertise.

6) Information Management and Data Security:

- Implement a secure and confidential information management system to safeguard sensitive case data.
- Ensure compliance with data protection regulations and ethical standards in handling HRDs' information.

7) Capacity Building:

- Offer capacity-building programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of HRDs on personal safety, security, and protection measures.
- Extend training to partners involved in the case management process to improve their effectiveness in supporting HRDs.

8) Advocacy and Public Awareness:

- Engage in public advocacy to raise awareness of the challenges faced by HRDs and the importance of their work.
- Mobilize local and international support to apply pressure for the protection of HRDs and the promotion of human rights.
- Linkages give input to advocacy and resource mobilization.

9) Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the progress of protection cases.
- Continuously assess the effectiveness of protection measures and adjust strategies as needed.

10) Networking and Alliances:

- Strengthen existing partnerships and foster new alliances with local, regional, and international organizations working on human rights and protection.
- Leverage these networks to mobilize resources and support for HRDs in need.

NB: By adopting these proposed approaches, NCHRD-U aims to ensure a comprehensive and effective system for handling protection cases. This system will be flexible and adaptive, capable of responding to the diverse needs and challenges faced by HRDs in Uganda, while fostering collaboration and support within the human rights community.

The Referral Network Subcommittee serves as the critical focal point for HRD case management and referral. Their primary objective is to ensure that HRDs confronting threats or hardships receive timely and appropriate assistance. To achieve this, a robust network of resources, both digital and physical, is linked from the subregional coalition to the Protection Committee. This network facilitates the efficient referral of HRD cases to relevant support services, streamlining the process for those in need.

2. Strengthening Referral Systems: In partnership with other key stakeholders, these committees focus on strengthening referral systems in the country. This collaborative effort aims to improve service provision and response to HRD cases, ensuring that HRDs receive the necessary support and protection when they need it most.

Under the broader framework of the Protection and Emergency Response Mechanism, the NCHRD-U Regional Protection Committees contribute to several sub-components, including:

Case Handling and Management: Ensuring that HRD cases are handled effectively and efficiently, from

assessment to resolution.

3. 24-hour Toll-Free Help Line: Providing a dedicated helpline for HRDs to seek assistance and report threats or incidents.

24-hour hotlines are an important tool for human rights defenders who are at risk of persecution, harassment, or violence. These hotlines provide a way for defenders to quickly get in touch with organizations that can provide support and assistance.

4. Solidarity visits: Solidarity visits are a form of support for human rights defenders who are at risk of persecution, harassment, or violence. These visits are usually conducted by other human rights defenders, activists, or organizations to show support and solidarity with the defenders.

The visits can take different forms, such as meetings, public demonstrations, or other events that raise awareness about the situation of the defenders and the issues they are working on. They can also involve providing practical support, such as legal assistance, medical care, or financial aid.

In some cases, solidarity visits can be a powerful tool to protect human rights defenders from further harm. By showing that they are not alone and that their work is valued and supported by others, these visits can help to deter potential attackers and send a message that human rights defenders will not be silenced.

5. Fact-Finding Missions: With the guidance of the National Secretariat ED, they will conduct investigations and fact-finding missions to gather crucial information related to HRD cases.

6. Trial Monitoring and Observation: This is done to show support and togetherness for HRDs who are facing trials. The role of protection is to conduct research on the cases, attend court sessions, and document legal opinions with a view to putting the cases in the public domain.

Related laws were tested on due processes.

7. Gender Equality Integration: Recognizing the distinct risks and challenges faced by women HRDs, these committees prioritize the integration of gender equality considerations into all emergency and response mechanisms. This inclusive approach guarantees that the protection and support provided are sensitive to the specific needs of women HRDs, making certain that no one is left behind.

8. Protection Fund: Supporting HRDs in accessing financial resources to enhance their safety and security. This is one of the main mechanisms for protection and is detailed in Section 4.

SECTION 4: THE PROTECTION FUND MANAGEMENT

The Protection Fund (PF) is one of the most effective mechanisms for protecting HRDs at risk. NCHRD-U established a fund for emergency situations affecting HRDs in Uganda. The objective of the Protection Fund is to re-instate the HRDs to be more resilient and continue with their work. The support enables HRDs at risk to continue undertaking the noble cause of human rights and not to give up as a result of the threats and attacks that they face. The fund is a pool of resources drawn from different funders and is, by nature, immediate and flexible to enable unrestricted support for HRDs at risk. This section highlights the modalities of the protection fund at NCHRD-U with regards to the parameters, criteria, and levels of funds.

NCHRD-U PF is tangible and short-term support provided to *human rights defenders facing difficulties or at risk as a result of their activities in their area of operation*.

The Protection Fund covers these various types of support:

The table shows and includes the types of support covered by the Protection Fund for HRDs at risk or facing difficulties.

Types of support	Description
1. Medical	This is extended to HRDs and their families who succumb to medical conditions as a result of their related HRD work. The medical support will enable the HRDs in need to access medical services and health care. This covers medical fees and, in some cases psychosocial support costs paid to a professional counselor, psychologist, etc.
2. Psychosocial support	This is extended to HRDs who find themselves in need of psychosocial support. The support involves providing emotional, psychological, and social assistance to individuals who are at risk due to their work in defending human rights. Psychosocial support costs paid to a professional counselor, psychologist, etc.
3. Legal	This is extended to HRDs who find themselves in need of urgent legal support. NCHRD-U understands the need for HRDs to avoid being taken to prison, as their treatment and justice are not guaranteed. Support in this case is given to HRDs for legal fees covering lawyers, facilitation of bond or bail fees, and other related costs.
4. Relocation	This is extended to HRDs and their families who are facing grave danger in their area of residence and necessitate moving to a safer location. The relocation support can support permanent or temporary relocation for safety.
5. Family support	This is given to HRDs and their families in the form of hard cash or via mobile money facilities to cater for their urgent financial needs. The funds in cash are not prescriptive. This is carried out on a need's basis; assessed on an individual basis to respond to emerging issues that require financial support.

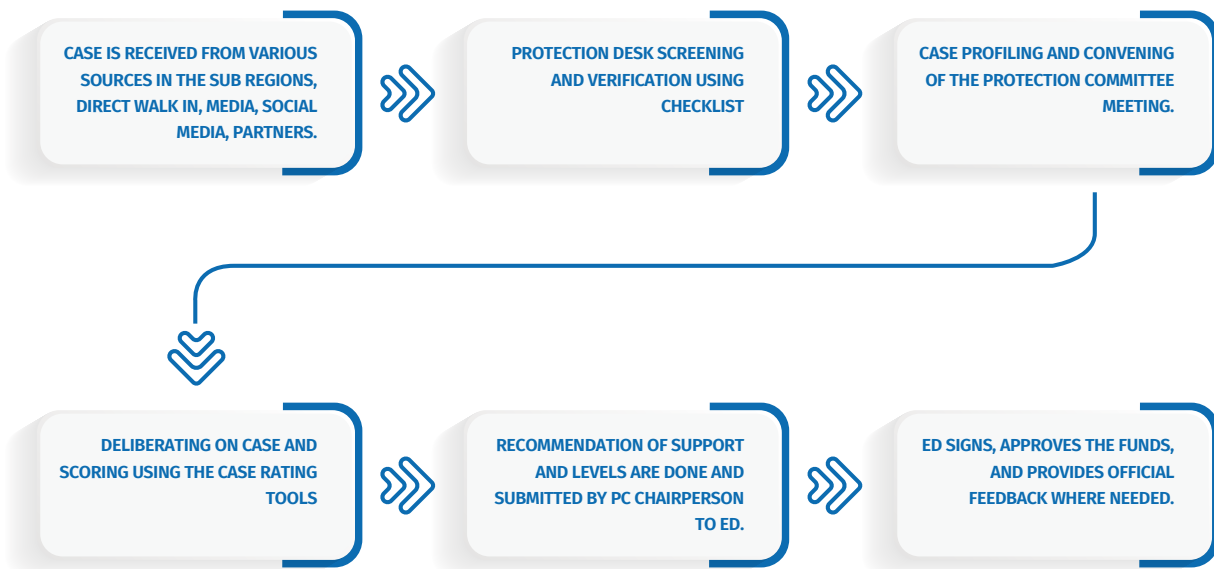
6. Return

This shall be extended to HRDs who are returning to their places or countries of origin after the situation has been deemed to have returned to normal. This package shall cover the costs of transportation and any support relevant to enabling the HRD to reintegrate in their community or country of origin.

It is important to note that in some cases, a combination of types of support might be necessary to comprehensively support an HRD or HRD's family at risk. Psychosocial support, trial observation, fact-finding missions, and solidarity visits are imbedded in the types of support as they are complimentary to providing support to the HRD in need. Advocacy and strategic engagements with relevant stakeholders are done to ensure comprehensive support for the HRDs at risk.

Protection Fund administration flow chart:

The diagram below shows the flow of the Protection Fund sequence of activities. The determination of the case for support for the PF is processed in 6 step process:



Step 1: The first step entails case receipts from various sources. The cases are typically received from the regions through the sub-regional coordinators, member organizations, TTWG members, HRDs, direct walk-ins, media, and sometimes referrals from partners, including donors.

Step 2: The Protection Desk records the cases and conducts the screening process using a set checklist: The following criteria is used for the screening, referred to as the Threshold criteria.

The threat reported by the HRD must be a result of their human rights work, purely without political or partisan shades.

The threat reported by the HRD for protection must be **existing or/and continuous**. The NCHRD-U considers the nexus between the timeframe of the threat and the request for intervention.

The requested intervention must be within the **ability** of the NCHRD-U to provide the legal and operational capabilities of the NCHRD-U. In situations where the intervention is outside that scope, a referral to another organization or institution will be made.

HRD Biodata/Intake Form

1. Name
2. Age
3. Organization
4. Area of Work
5. Geographical location
6. Next of kin
7. Nature of work
8. Nature of the threat
9. Frequency of threats

Any support received.

Verification with the focal persons.

Step 3: Case profiling includes the verification process and categorizing of the cases as preliminary preparation for the cases before presentation to the PC.

Step 4: The PC convenes a meeting to deliberate on the cases brought forward by the Protection Desk. Each case is presented, and an extensive criterion is used to further determine the case need. The NCHRD-U adopted the quadrant (Funnel model) to evaluate the severity of the cases, as shown below.

The Quadrant (Funnel Model)

Priority Level	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important (High)	QUADRANT 1: Meeting the critical risk criteria and needing urgent attention. Crisis level.	QUADRANT 2: Medium-level risk and HRD can continue with life given minimal support.
Not Important (Low)	QUADRANT 3: Low level risk and can continue with life.	QUADRANT 4: Very low level of risk or not meeting criteria and therefore not deserving support.

Justification of the HRD case: Here the HRD case is subjected to a quadrant to assess the significance and urgency of the intervention (justification of the case).

Analysis of existing support

Refer or Retain: When the HRD case is subjected to the funnel model, a decision is made whether to refer the case or whether it demands urgency and is, as such, retained and handled by the NCHRD-U. The NCHRD-U through its referral network, is able to circulate the HRD case in search of existing facilities that ordinarily would handle the matter. If the facility exists, NCHRD-U refers to it if it doesn't retain support.

- 1. Affordability of NCHRD-U or its partners:** NCHRD-U assesses the sufficiency of support. The key guiding principle is whether the nature of the support available is sufficient to cover the case. The NCHRD-U is guided by the referral directory, which puts the organizations providing available services for HRDs at risk. Cases can be referred to international partners where the local partners cannot provide the support to the HRD at risk.
- 2. Complementary and completeness principle:** In handling the HRD case, it would be sufficient to gauge whether the support available is going to make a difference in supporting the case to completion or whether it is worthwhile to support the HRD at risk.

The guiding principle in this case is that it is important to commit to supporting an HRD case where the support rendered is impactful. Complementary support is where willing partners jointly venture to support the HRD at risk. **The principle of Save Life first is applied all the time.**

The risks can further be classified as follows after rating:

HRD situation risk rating (each sitting member uses a score of 1 out of 10). 1 being least and 10 highest risk score.	Description
Green (0-20%)	Negligible risk and normal operations.
Yellow (20%-40%)	Low risk and precaution.
Orange (40%-60%)	Medium risk and restriction of movement.
Red (60%-80%)	High risk and temporary relocation.

Step 5: Recommendations of the PC are compiled per case, and the PC Chairperson submits the recommendations to the Executive Director for review. The PC Chairperson deliberates with the ED about the findings of the PC and recommends support.

Step 6: The ED signs off on the protection funds, and where it is not clear, clarification will be provided by the PC Chairperson. In cases of disapproval, the ED communicates officially his or her position and reasons for disapproval; this will help in the future determination of similar cases.

Exceptional cases: Sometimes cases that do not meet the set criteria are presented for support. These could be;

- Referral from a donor partner.
- International HRD refugee.
- Emergency case with associated HRD activity.

In these cases, the ED uses his or her discretion to justify support. Some considerations will include the principle of saving lives.

Costing determinants

The PC is tasked with evaluating the cases needing PF support and the levels of support. Having evaluated the presented cases, the PC can determine the appropriate costs and level of support. The costs are determined by the prevailing rates of services and service providers, e.g. lawyer fees from prequalified law firms or health care providers. Other factors for cost include the level of family or social support, the number of beneficiaries, and distances, among other considerations.

Table of Packages for the Protection Fund

Package	Description	Cost elements and estimates
The maximum package	This is a total package given to the HRDs at risk or facing grave danger. The maximum package entails a combination of urgent support such as lifesaving medication, relocation, evacuation, and/or legal support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter • Transport fees • Medical • Legal Support • Psychosocial Support • Comprehensive Healthcare • Family support • Financial support • Advocacy and campaign support • Food
Medium	Medium packages for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) at risk should be designed to provide essential support and protection to individuals or groups facing potential threats or danger. These medium packages aim to address a range of needs without reaching the extent of the maximum package. The following components are recommended for medium packages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport fees. • Advisory • Networking and peer support • Psychosocial Support • Basic Healthcare • Food • Legal support
Minimum package	This package is given to HRDs rated as significantly at risk but not in grave danger. The package will support costs to reduce the escalation of the threat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs can cover one-way bus fares to another location for a temporary period. • Medical examination. • Legal fees. • Safety and security training.

NB: The packages are not prescriptive and will be discretionary based on the needs of the HRD at risk and available resources, as this is HRD-driven rather than institutional driven.

The Protection Committee and the Finance Officers have the task of monitoring the available budget and providing advice to the Executive Director and the Protection Committee Chairperson regularly and as part of the PC meeting briefs.

The costs of related protection activities, such as per-diems for solidarity visits, advocacy and support, and fact-finding missions, while related to protection actions, can be allocated from other programming budget line items of the organization and in line with expenditure allowable with the approval of the ED.

The cost elements are reviewed regularly in line with available budgets and prevailing cost services. This could be different per geographical region of the country.

Important to Note: Although the NCHRD-U Secretariat staff might be at risk while performing their duty in HRD protection, they do not qualify to access the HRD Protection Funds. Other protection and welfare mechanisms, as well as referrals, are used to protect the staff.

SECTION 5: PROTECTION COMMITTEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Protection Committee within NCHRD-U plays a pivotal role in the organization's comprehensive protection framework. Their dedication, expertise, and up-to-date knowledge of HRD situations ensure the rigorous implementation of the Protection Manual's guidelines, ultimately safeguarding the safety and security of HRDs. This committee's proactive approach empowers HRDs to continue their vital work with confidence, knowing that a dedicated team is tirelessly working to protect their rights and well-being.

The main functions of the National Secretariat Protection Committee include:

Implementation of Protocols: The committee is tasked with the execution of the protocols and guidelines outlined in the Protection Manual. Their commitment to these procedures ensures that HRDs receive the protection and support they urgently require.

Adherence to Standards: The committee operates with a firm dedication to upholding internationally recognized protection standards and principles. This commitment ensures that the protection offered is of the highest quality and aligns with global best practices.

Decisive Action: Decisions made by the Protection Committee are not confined to meetings and discussions; they are translated into tangible actions. These actions are assigned for implementation by the Protection Officer in accordance with the overarching principles set by the NCHRD-U, ensuring a consistent and effective response to protection needs in a swift manner.

Protection Committee Composition and Selection

The National Secretariat Protection Committee comprises five key members, including the Programs Manager, Protection Officer, Program Assistants, Capacity Building Officer, and Advocacy and Networking Officer, as the standing Committee, and can, with the approval of the Executive Director, invite any other key persons into themed meetings.

The Protection Committee comprises four (4) members, including the Protection Officer, Assistant Protection Officer, Programs Assistant, Capacity Building Officer, and Advocacy and Networking Officer.

The Protection Committee is established by the Executive Director to ensure collective decision-making regarding support from the Protection Fund. The selection of committee members is carried out in a manner consistent with the NCHRD-U Protection Manual's criteria. Consideration is given to diverse representation, including gender considerations.

Appointment

The Executive Director has the authority to appoint members to the Protection Committee. The Protection Officer maintains an updated list of committee members and informs the Executive Director of any necessary actions related to membership.

Responsibilities and Roles of the Protection Committee

The Protection Committee holds several key responsibilities, including but not limited to:

- Screening HRD cases at risk presented before them for support.
- Reviewing the Protection Fund budget to track progress and provide advisory input.
- Approving decisions to support or decline HRD applications for support.
- Serving as a source of information on best practices related to managing the Protection Fund and HRD protection.
- Reviewing and approving periodic reports from the Assistant Protection Officer regarding HRDs in the NCHRD-U database.
- Providing oversight roles in managing the Emergency and Protection Department.
- Holding regular and ad hoc meetings to address HRDs at risk and any protection-related issues arising in the protection department.
- Making the final decision to accept or decline support for HRDs at risk.

Responsibilities and Duties of the Chairperson of the Protection Committee

- Chair meetings of the Protection Committee.
- Collaborate with the Assistant Protection Officer to create meeting agendas.
- Schedule committee meetings.
- Ensure that the committee fulfills all relevant duties and responsibilities.
- Hold consultative meetings with ED.
- Gives feedback to PC on cases discussed with ED.

Responsibilities and Duties of a Protection Officer:

Within the National Secretariat Protection Committee, the Protection Officer assumes a pivotal and dynamic role in the implementation of the Protection Manual. They are responsible for the day-to-day functionality of the protection mechanism, ensuring that the manual's protocols and guidelines are meticulously followed.

The responsibilities of the Protection Officer encompass:

- **Protocol Adherence:** The Protection Officer diligently oversees the application of the manual's protocols and guidelines. They are the custodians of HRD protection standards, ensuring that internationally recognized principles are adhered to in every facet of the coalition's work.
- **Case Management:** The Protection Officer plays a critical role in the management of HRD protection cases. They are at the forefront of assessing threats, coordinating protective measures, and overseeing case progress. This includes liaising with HRDs under threat or attack and implementing timely interventions.
- **Rapid Response:** In emergencies, the Protection Officer spearheads rapid response efforts. They are responsible for swiftly mobilizing resources and coordinating actions to address immediate threats to HRDs. This includes accessing the Urgent Protection Fund and deploying fact-finding

missions when necessary.

- **Communication:** Effective communication is key to HRD protection. The Protection Officer is responsible for maintaining open lines of communication with HRDs, partner organizations, and relevant stakeholders. They ensure that all parties are informed, updated, and engaged in the protection process.
- **Documentation:** Accurate and comprehensive documentation is vital for HRD protection. The Protection Officer keeps meticulous records of cases, protection measures, and responses. This data is instrumental in assessing trends, evaluating the effectiveness of protection mechanisms, and informing strategic decisions.
- **Coordination:** The Protection Officer collaborates closely with the sub-regional coalition networks as well as the Technical Thematic Working Groups. Their coordination efforts are essential for seamless protection mechanisms, efficient case management, and the rapid deployment of support.
- **Reporting:** Regular reporting is a crucial aspect of HRD protection. The Protection Officer prepares reports on protection activities, trends, and challenges. These reports inform decision-making and serve as a basis for advocacy efforts. Reports are produced on a quarterly and annual basis and highlight trends and recommendations for areas needing attention.
- **Capacity Building:** To enhance the overall capacity for HRD protection, the Protection Officer is involved in capacity-building initiatives that are directly related to protection, safety, security, risk management, protection, and emergencies. This includes training sessions, workshops, and guidance to HRDs and partner organizations on security and protection measures.
- **Produces Annual, Quarterly and Monthly reports.**
- **Conducts trend analysis** of protection issues and keeps the PC and Coalition abreast.

Protection Committee Members roles and responsibilities

- Attends and contributes to PC deliberations.
- Advice on cases.
- Review and evaluate protection cases.
- Rank or rate cases.
- Recommends levels of support for HRD cases.
- Monitor the HRD situation.
- Provides insights into current protection issues.
- Research on protection matters.

Working Principles for the Protection Committee

Language: English is the working language for both written and oral communication within the committee.

The Protection Committee members adhere to a Code of Conduct.

The National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U) is an advocate for the protection and empowerment of human rights defenders (HRDs) in Uganda. We operate with an enduring commitment to preserving and strengthening civil society, especially for those HRDs who are most vulnerable. The NCHRD approach is built on a foundation of networking and coalition capabilities, active fieldwork understanding, and close collaboration with local partners and HRDs.

Integrity: NCHRD-U is an independent, non-governmental organization unafraid to tackle the most pressing human rights issues. We operate in regions where authorities may not uphold basic human rights standards, demonstrating our unyielding commitment to human rights. We do not accept grants from donors who seek to influence our operations or do not share our objectives.

Skills: NCHRD-U is distinguished by its wealth of expertise in our field. Our analyses are rooted in thorough research and international human rights standards. We are dedicated to providing high-quality work and nurturing the skills and expertise of our staff and local partners.

Efficiency: We are a nimble and result-oriented organization, upholding rigorous financial controls and management. Our results-based management system reinforces our commitment to learning, accountability, and transparency in planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Our ability to swiftly adapt to evolving and volatile situations, coupled with a high degree of flexibility, is central to our protection mechanism.

The NCHRD-U Code of Conduct underscores our steadfast commitment to the protection of HRDs. This framework guides our actions and decisions, promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct in all our operations. It ensures that HRDs receive the support and protection they need while upholding the highest ethical standards.

Here is a full list of the brief explanations of why each aspect of the code of conduct is important:

1. Confidentiality: Protects the privacy and safety of HRDs by ensuring their sensitive information remains secure.

2. Impartiality: Ensures that protection services are provided based on need rather than personal bias, fostering trust.

3. Non-Discrimination: Guarantees that all HRDs receive equal support, regardless of their background or beliefs.

4. Professionalism: Maintains high standards of competence, ethics, and behavior within the committee.

5. Transparency: This enables HRDs to understand the decision-making processes and promotes trust.

6. Accountability: Ensures committee members are accountable for their actions and decisions.

7. Conflict of Interest: Prevents personal interests from interfering with the committee's primary mission of HRD protection.

8. Data Protection: Safeguards sensitive HRD information, minimizing the risks of exposure or misuse.

9. Continual Learning: Encourages committee members to stay updated on protection techniques and human rights issues.

10. Respect: Demonstrates regard for HRDs' autonomy, dignity, and choices in their protection.

11. Collaboration: Strengthens the committee's effectiveness by working together and with external stakeholders.

12. Ethical Behavior: Upholds moral principles, ensuring the committee's actions align with human rights values.

The above Code of Conduct is supported by several other Coalition's policies, which include, among many others, the Human Rights Policy, Code of Conduct, Financial Policy, Data Management, etc. These provide the foundation for ethical and effective protection services, reinforcing the committee's commitment to supporting HRDs while maintaining the highest standards of conduct.

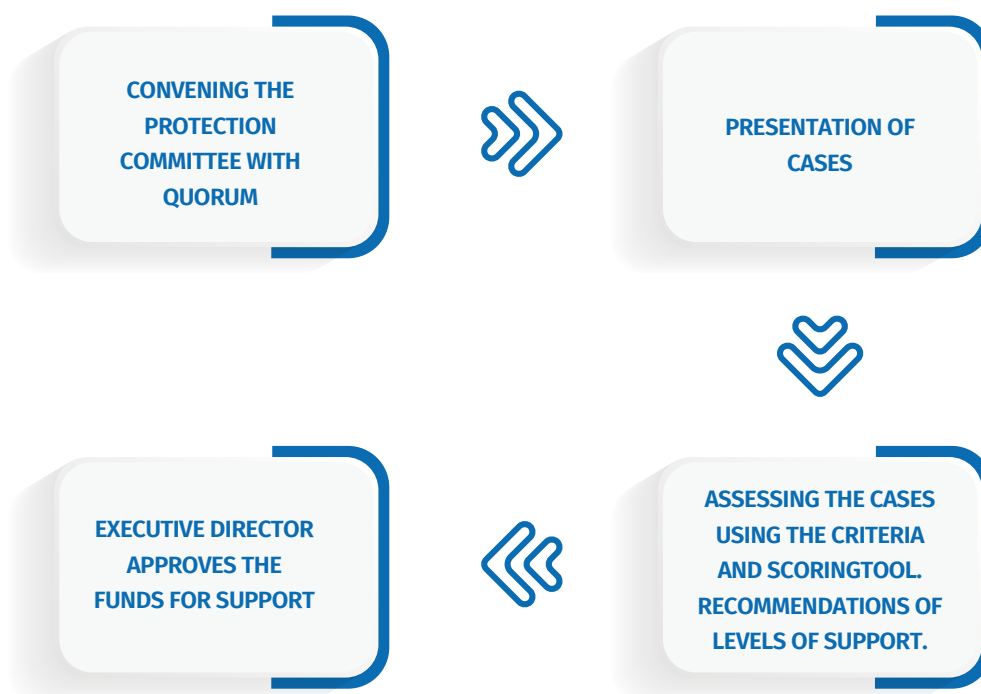
Meetings and Decision-making

The Protection Committee generally convenes at least once a week or more frequently as required. The Protection Officer, in consultation with the Program Manager (PC Chairperson), organizes and prepares all meeting materials. Formal minutes of meetings are recorded, circulated to committee members, and subject to approval by the chairperson. These meeting processes and evaluation protocols serve to facilitate the effective management of protection cases, ensuring a systematic and coordinated response to HRD protection requests while upholding the highest levels of confidentiality and security.

Meeting Processes and HRD Protection Request Evaluation Protocols

- The Protection Committee conducts fortnightly meetings to review protection cases and assess progress on ongoing cases.
- The meeting process is initiated by the Protection Officer, who sends an email to committee members containing the meeting date, time, and agenda.
- To ensure effective communication, the Protection Officer follows up with a phone call to confirm attendance and address any immediate concerns.
- Urgent meetings with donors or government agency heads are convened as necessary to address pressing issues.
- The Executive Director holds the responsibility for updating the Board of Directors (BoD) on protection matters in accordance with the meeting calendar or when priority and urgent issues arise.
- A quorum for committee meetings is established as at least three out of the five members.
- While physical attendance at meetings in secure locations is preferable, absent committee members, such as those in the field or on leave, may participate virtually when physical attendance is not feasible.

Fig. 3: Decision making processes.



1. The Protection Committee (PC) convenes meetings and ensures at least there is a quorum. The Protection Officer initiates the meetings based on the cases received.
2. The PC does the screening of cases received and writes up a profile of the cases ready for presentation at the PC meeting.
3. The PC reviews the cases and uses the evaluation tools available to assess the levels of needs for each case. The PC can reject cases based on criteria set for this process.
4. After deliberations, the PC Chairperson (the Protection Officer can also attend and note the deliberations) sits with the ED and deliberates on the recommendations of the cases presented. The ED has the right to approve or disapprove of support for cases presented based on a number of reasons and his discretion as the final decision maker. The ED will approve the funds.

Communication channels and levels of confidentiality

The Protection Officer is authorized by the Chairperson of the Protection Committee to announce the decisions to the HRDs. The Protection Officer only communicates the official position made by the organization.

Information Security and Documentation

All documents related to the committee's work are treated as confidential, intended for internal circulation

unless specified otherwise. In the event of requests for information about the committee's work, individualized official responses are prepared by the committee. The Protection Officer is responsible for document control, particularly intake forms and reports on HRD incidents. Electronic records are maintained, with regular backups to ensure data security and preservation.

NCHRD-U provides employees with e-mail and Internet access to meet organizational objectives. All communication through NCHRD-U electronic networks will carry an electronic "footprint," which identifies NCHRD-U. This could imply that NCHRD-U endorses the nature of the electronic communication, whether transmitted or accessed through NCHRD-U information systems.

Inappropriate use of information systems includes, but is not limited to:

- Accessing adult Internet sites.
- Viewing or transmitting obscene material.
- Sending abusive or discriminatory messages.
- Computer hacking.
- Trying to circumvent information technology security.
- Any use that could harm NCHRD-U's reputation and contravene the Computer Misuse Act 2022.
- Making excessive use of NCHRD-U's resources without consideration of cost (i.e., bandwidth, disk space, ink/paper for printers, etc.)

The Protection Committee is accountable to the Executive Director, who in turn is accountable to the BOD. The Protection Committee works with other structures of the Coalition, such as the Sub-Regional Committees, focal persons, referral network members, thematic cluster members, and TTWG.

SECTION 6: HRD REINTERGRATION CRITERIA AND MONITORING AND CONTINUED SUPPORT

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for the Protection Manual of the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda(NCHRD-U) aims to ensure the effective implementation of HRD protection mechanisms and the continuous improvement of these mechanisms over time. The M&E framework encompasses various components, including tracking, reporting, and feedback mechanisms, involving multiple stakeholders within and outside of NCHRD-U.

a) Tracking Protection Recipients

Protection Manager Tracking: The Protection Officer/Manager is responsible for tracking and following up with recipients under protection. This includes monitoring their well-being, assessing evolving threats, and evaluating the continued need for protection.

Regional Coordinators: Regional Coordinators play a vital role in tracking protection recipients within their respective regions. They serve as the point of contact for HRDs and regularly report on the status and challenges faced by those under protection.

Sub-Regional Mechanism: The Sub-Regional Protection Mechanism works closely with Regional Coordinators to ensure consistent tracking and reporting on HRD protection cases at the sub-regional level.

Technical Thematic Working Leads: These leads, representing different thematic areas, contribute to the tracking process by providing insights into specific threats and challenges faced by HRDs within their domains.

NCHRD-U Local and International Partners: Partnerships with local and international organizations involve collaborative tracking efforts to support and protect HRDs effectively.

Recipients' Self-Reporting

Recipients of protection mechanisms are encouraged and, where possible, requested to keep the Protection Manager or Committee updated about their status. This self-reporting mechanism ensures that any emerging threats or changes in circumstances are promptly addressed.

Opening and Tracking Protection Cases

The Protection Committee, in coordination with the Protection Manager, opens a protection case for each HRD under protection. This case is tracked throughout its lifecycle, from the initial assessment to the adjustment of offered protection measures and eventual case closure.

Case tracking is particularly crucial during the mandatory 90-day protection support period, ensuring that HRDs receive continuous monitoring and support.

Reporting by Mandated Organs

NCHRD-U organs are mandated to promote safety, security, and protection. The Regional Coordinators, Sub-Regional Protection Mechanisms, and Technical Thematic Working Groups, are responsible for reporting on ongoing protection cases as part of their scheduled interactions with the Secretariat.

Secure Data Management

A secure and confidential log sheet of protection cases is maintained, ensuring that sensitive information is protected. This log sheet should be encrypted for security reasons, and access should be restricted to authorized personnel only.

b) Feedback and Improvement Mechanisms

Regular Review and Analysis

The M&E framework includes regular reviews and analyses of protection cases to identify trends, challenges, and areas for improvement. These reviews help adapt protection mechanisms to evolving threats.

Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder feedback, including HRDs, local and international partners, and regional bodies, is actively sought and considered in the M&E process. This feedback informs adjustments and refinements to protection measures.

Continuous Learning

NCHRD-U fosters a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Lessons learned from protection cases and M&E activities are shared within the organization and integrated into training and capacity-building initiatives.

Reporting and Documentation

M&E reports are generated periodically to document the status of protection cases, challenges encountered, and actions taken. These reports contribute to transparency and accountability in HRD protection efforts.

Capacity Building

Capacity-building activities are conducted for personnel involved in the M&E process to enhance their skills in data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Conclusion

The M&E framework for the Protection Manual of NCHRD-U is a dynamic and comprehensive system designed to ensure the effective protection of HRDs. By tracking, reporting, and continuously improving protection mechanisms, NCHRD-U aims to create a safer and more secure environment for HRDs in Uganda.

SECTION 7: FAQs

This section presents a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that shed light on the roles, processes, and considerations associated with HRD protection.

Q1: What is the role of the Protection Committee?

A1: The Protection Committee plays a central role in the comprehensive protection framework established by NCHRD-U. It ensures that the Protection Manual's guidelines are rigorously followed to safeguard the safety and security of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). This committee takes a proactive approach to enable HRDs to continue their crucial work with confidence, knowing they have a dedicated team working tirelessly to protect their rights and well-being.

Q2: How are members of the Protection Committee selected?

A2: Members of the Protection Committee are appointed by the Executive Director, include the Executive Director, Protection Officers, Protection Manager, Assistant Protection Officer, Capacity Building Officer, and Advocacy and Networking Officer. The Executive Director decides on committee appointments.

Q3: What is the primary role of the Protection Committee?

A3: The Protection Committee is responsible for screening HRDs' cases at risk, reviewing the protection fund budget, and advising on support decisions. Additionally, it serves as a source of information regarding best practices in managing the protection fund and HRD protection. The committee offers oversight in managing the emergency and protection department, holds meetings to support HRDs at risk, and makes the final decision to support or decline requests.

Q4: How often does the Protection Committee meet?

A4: The Protection Committee generally meets at least once a week, or more frequently as needed. Meetings are organized and prepared by the Protection and Emergency Officers. Formal meeting minutes are recorded, circulated to committee members, and approved by the chairperson, who is appointed by the Executive Director.

Q5: How is confidentiality maintained within the Protection Committee?

A5: Confidentiality is a top priority and guiding principle. All information and documents gathered during committee involvement are considered confidential. Committee members sign a confidentiality agreement, acknowledging NCHRD-U as the rightful owner of all confidential information. Breaches of confidentiality result in actions determined by the Executive Director.

Q6: What is the working language within the Protection Committee?

A6: The working language is English for both written and oral communication. However, depending on the case, communication to the HRD may require translation into their local language, and this is usually done with the assistance of the focal person.

Q7: How are HRD protection requests evaluated?

A7: HRD protection requests are evaluated following established case management and referral network processes. These protocols provide a structured and efficient approach to assessing the protection needs of HRDs.

Q8: What happens during the Protection Committee meetings?

A8: Committee meetings are convened to review protection cases and assess progress on ongoing cases. They also serve as a platform to discuss HRD protection matters, convene urgent meetings with donors or government agency heads as needed, and update the Board of Directors on protection matters.

Q9: What is the role of the Technical Thematic Working Groups (TTWG) in meetings?

A9: Quarterly meetings are held with the Technical Thematic Working Groups (TTWG) to discuss HRD protection matters, providing a forum for collaboration and strategic planning.

Q10: How can absent committee members participate in meetings?

A10: While physical attendance at meetings is preferred, committee members who are absent, such as those in the field or on leave, may participate virtually when physical attendance is not feasible.

Q11: Why do Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) need protection?

A11: HRDs often face significant risks and threats due to their advocacy and human rights work. They may challenge authorities, advocate for marginalized communities, or expose human rights abuses, making them vulnerable to harassment, violence, and legal persecution. Protection mechanisms are essential to ensure HRDs can continue their vital work safely. Failure to provide protection support may lead to abandoning the cause and discourage other would-be defenders from joining the movement due to the risks.

Q12: How long does NCHRD-U protection support last for HRDs?

A12: NCHRD-U's protection support typically covers a period of 90 days. It is usually demand-driven by the HRD, who best knows what kind of support they need. The case is closed as soon as the HRD at risk receives the requested support to allow them to settle in their new environment. After this initial period, the case may be re-evaluated, and if HRD still requires further support, they can be referred to an appropriate Human Rights Organization for ongoing assistance.

Q13: Can a local or international partner dictate the support provided to a specific HRD?

A13: It is possible for local or international partner entities to contribute to the support of a specific HRD as long as the case meets the protection criteria, is legally sound, and is urgently needed. However, it is generally advisable for such assistance to be coordinated through the Protection Committee to ensure a systematic and organized approach to HRD protection.

Q14: What gender and vulnerable considerations are taken into account in HRD protection?

A14: Gender considerations in HRD protection encompass understanding and addressing the unique needs of each gender and the degree of vulnerability. Women HRDs and minority groups, such as key populations, individuals working on SOGI, PWDs, and the youth, often require more attention due to historical discrimination and the specific risks they face. Specialized approaches and support mechanisms may be necessary to ensure comprehensive protection.

Q15: How is an HRD protection case channeled to NCHRD-U?

A15: HRD protection cases can be channeled to NCHRD-U through various means, including walk-ins at an HRD office, a dedicated helpline and toll-free, email requests, phone calls, media, social media, referrals

from other organizations, or recommendations from individuals familiar with the HRD's situation. These channels ensure that HRDs can seek assistance and report threats or incidents through accessible and confidential avenues.

Q16: What circumstances may disqualify an HRD request for protection?

A16: An HRD protection request may be disqualified under various circumstances, including if the request is made under false pretenses, if the HRD is engaged in work unrelated to human rights defense, and if they have a political affiliation that clearly portrays them as political actors belonging to any different political affiliation. This is also guided by the NCHRD-U Code of Conduct 2024.

Glossary of terms

Human Rights abuse: The denial, infringement, attack or abuse of the basic fundamental rights of a citizen by non-state actors.

Case: This refers to an instance or situation of a human rights defender at risk or attack.

Case Handlers: A person who undertakes to understand the needs of an HRD at risk and assist them in accessing protection services.

Human Rights Defenders: This is a term used to describe people who, individually or in association with others, act to promote or protect human rights in a non-violent manner.

Referral Network: This is a group of individuals or organizations that provide services and support HRDs at risk to access services from other providers with related interests.

Informed consent: This is permission granted in full knowledge of the possible consequences, typically that which is given by a HRD to a case handler or service provider with knowledge of the possible risks and benefits.

Technical Thematic Working Group: This is a structure or the Coalition which comprises regional representatives and different thematic areas.

Threat: This is a statement of an intention to inflict pain, injury, damage, or other hostile action on someone in retribution for something done or not done.

Human Rights: These are entitlements that are inherent to all human beings by virtue of their being human. They are not absolute and can be restricted at times.

Risk: The likelihood or possibility of danger or something unpleasant happening.

Perpetrator: Refers a person who carries out a harmful, illegal, or violent act.

Protection Committee: This is a structure that was set up to support internal case management and resolution on the support to be provided.

Protection Services: This is a set of support services provided to HRDs at risk when faced with danger.

Protection officers: These include the managers, officers, and assistants.

Safety: The state of being free from danger.

Security: This is a state of being free from intentional harm or danger.

Selection Criteria: This is a procedure of establishing whether one qualifies to benefit as a HRD at risk.

State responsibility for human rights: The obligation to protect, promote, and ensure the enjoyment of human rights is the prime responsibility of States, thereby conferring on them responsibility for the human rights of *individuals*.

Human rights violation: Violations occur when the state fails to fulfill its obligation to protect human rights. This can be committed by the people who work for the state, and their behavior is considered to be that of the state. Abuse refers to any infringement upon human rights and freedoms of the basic rights of people by mostly non state actors.

Vulnerability: It is the state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.

Resources

1. NCHRD-U Case Management Handbook (2019).
2. Strategic Plan for 2022-2026.
3. Protection Committee terms of reference.
4. NCHRD-U National Civic Space Index 2022 and 2023.
5. The UN Declaration for Human Rights Defenders 1998.
6. NCHRD-U Code of Conduct 2024.

Annex 1: PC Meeting Format

Protection Committee Meeting

Date

Members present or absent with apologies.

Agenda

Chairperson remarks.

Protection Desk presentation of cases.

PC voting and recommendations.

Updates on Finances and Related Updates.

A.O.B

Annex 2: PC Meeting Minutes Format

Date of Meeting

Venue

Attendants

Agenda

No	Discussion	Action and timing


Annex 3: ED Case Feedback Form

No	Case Description/Brief	Recommendations by PC	ED Decision and Reason

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