

## Suggested Actions for cluster coordination groups to strengthen Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle

### Background

This document provides suggested actions for cluster coordination groups in field operations to fulfil commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and to ensure that Protection is central to humanitarian response. While there is a consensus on the importance of Accountability to Affected Population and Protection in humanitarian response, country teams often raise the question “how do we actually do this?”

This list of suggested actions therefore aims to help lead clusters/sectors ensure that Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) commitments are fulfilled and that protection is made central to the humanitarian response in all stages of the Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC).

The list of suggested actions is based on the principle that AAP and Protection are complementary and mutually reinforcing. On the one hand strengthening AAP plays a key role in improving protection outcomes, as it promotes inclusive, equitable and meaningful access to decision-making, programming and services. On the other, protection outcomes are enhanced by direct and sustained engagement with communities to identify who is at risk, how and why. This community and rights-based approach lays a solid foundation for effective programming that improves protection outcomes.

### Where do the suggested actions come from ?

The content of the List of suggested actions is drawn from and reflects the following guidance:

- the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Statement on the Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action (2013)
- the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS),
- the IASC five Core commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (Leadership; Transparency; Feedback and Complaints; Design, Monitoring and Evaluation; Participation)
- the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Emergency Directors Group (EDG) Preliminary Guidance Note, Protection and Accountability To Affected Populations In The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (2015)
- Guidance on protection mainstreaming developed by the Global Protection Cluster (GPC)
- Lessons learned from various contexts.



### Who is responsible ?

While each humanitarian agency has a responsibility to engage communities and be accountable to the population it serves, this document specifically focuses on “collective accountability and protection outcomes” achieved through the cluster.

The role of the cluster coordinator is to provide space for accountability and protection issues to be discussed in cluster meetings, and to ensure that the cluster is engaged in operationalising accountability and protection throughout the HPC. A list of suggested actions for the Inter Cluster Coordination Group complements this document. Both are accompanied by suggested indicators which helps cluster members measure their progress on strengthening accountability and protection in the HPC.

**Suggested Actions for Cluster Coordinators and Partners to strengthen Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle**

Coordination	Possible Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively engage and encourage national NGOs and local CSOs to participate in the cluster. and report back on good practices and challenges.</li> <li>• Organise meetings considering issues such as location, interpretation needs, translation of material, etc to facilitate national/local partners access and participation</li> <li>• Review and discuss key themes coming through agencies or joint complaints and feedback mechanism, including protection issues during cluster meetings. Identify collective solutions for the cluster, based whenever possible on consultation with the affected population, and track progress in addressing them.</li> <li>• Share and provide guidance notes for Protection and AAP activities, specific to the cluster if appropriate, and have information on toolkits and resources available.</li> <li>• Raise awareness of PSEA commitments, codes of conduct and related reporting mechanisms among members.</li> <li>• Protection and AAP are included as a standing agenda item at the Cluster/Sectors meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of national NGOs / local CSO who are active members of the cluster. (Active could include attendance at a high % of cluster meetings; membership of SAG, including projects in cluster plan...)</li> <li>• % cluster meetings which discuss and have follow-up action points on key concerns including protection issues identified in feedback reports and complaints mechanisms (use cluster meeting minutes to measure).</li> <li>• % of cluster members having PSEA measures in place based on the four pillars of the Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA</li> </ul>
Preparedness	Possible Indicators
<p><i>(Recommended at ICCG/inter-agency level but if not occurring):</i> organise a cluster meeting/workshop to review protection risks and interventions, current accountability practices, existing mechanisms (including traditional/Government), gaps and opportunities. Use the workshop to identify preparedness actions which would assist in operationalising accountability and protection in a humanitarian response. Depending on what the gaps and opportunities are the follow-up actions could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If not occurring at inter-agency level, organise training for cluster partners to raise awareness and build capacity on protection and accountability to the affected population.</li> <li>• Partners to organise consultations with communities at risk to identify common cultural practices or preferences which would inform relevant and effective response activities within the Cluster.</li> <li>• Identify the most appropriate communication channels for communities, taking into account the preferences of specific groups.</li> <li>• Engage with national organisations and examine the resources needed (such as translation) to support their participation in the clusters.</li> <li>• Ensure PSEA is included in contractual agreement with implementing partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting/workshop has taken place at cluster level to identify preparedness actions which would assist to operationalise protection and accountability.</li> <li>• # of inter-agency trainings on protection and accountability to the affected population.</li> <li>• Existence of a summary of cultural practices to be specifically taken into account by cluster partners in their programming.</li> <li>• % of partnership agreements with implementing partners which include PSEA clauses</li> </ul>
Humanitarian Needs overview	Possible Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure assessments are carried out using participatory methodologies, with a broad and representative spectrum of the affected populations, across age, gender and diversity groups. Use this approach to identify who is at risk of protection threats, how and why, as well as to understand the specific vulnerabilities that underlie these risks for specific individuals or groups in the community, and why. Draw on protection analysis and priorities set by the Protection Cluster/Sector to determine key priority protection risks and interventions.</li> <li>• Adopt open questions in all assessments such as "what are your top priorities?"</li> <li>• Include questions on information needs such as: "What are the main sources of information for people now?" and "What do you need to know now?"</li> <li>• Include questions in assessments to identify existing local capacity, protection concerns, preferred solutions to needs, and preferred ways to provide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of <u>assessments</u> which includes representative sampling of the population and disaggregated data</li> <li>• % of <u>assessments</u> which include open questions.</li> <li>• % of cluster partners who feed back their <u>assessment</u> results to the community.</li> <li>• Identified Protection Risks and Priorities inform the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO)</li> </ul>

<p>feedback/complaints.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to reflecting the following issues in the HNO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The drivers of the crisis and any associated displacement, as well as trends and patterns in both</li> <li>✓ Existing community-based protection mechanisms and capacities;</li> <li>✓ Patterns of violence and harm (including who/what is causing or alleviating them, and why);</li> <li>✓ Historical, political and social dynamics within and between groups, including marginalized and at-risk social groups</li> <li>✓ Specific groups at risk of discrimination; by whom and why (e.g. cultural, religious, economic, political reasons);</li> <li>✓ Physical threats/threats emerging from the conduct of hostilities (e.g. mines, explosive remnants of war and other explosive hazards, presence of combatants, etc.)</li> <li>✓ Forms and prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA); the alleged perpetrators, and persons at risk;</li> <li>✓ Impact of the crisis on children (e.g. recruitment, association with armed groups, child labour, exploitation and family separation);</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure communities are later informed of the outcome/result of the HNO, including information on potential next steps. Remind cluster partners to communicate to the affected population decisions to implement or not to implement certain programs</li> </ul>	
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Humanitarian Response Planning	Possible Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the protection outcomes prioritized in the HRP are reflected in the work plans of the Cluster/Sector, so protection is not a stand-alone objective for which the Protection Cluster is solely responsible</li> <li>• Ensure cluster plans are translated and are in accessible formats to share with communities.</li> <li>• Work with the local media or use another appropriate medium to communicate key messages to the affected population<sup>1</sup>.</li> <li>• Wherever possible, undertake community consultations for receiving feedback on the cluster plans. Ensure to factor the necessary time into your timeline</li> <li>• Demonstrate commitment to Protection Mainstreaming through actions such as the designation of protection mainstreaming staff as focal points and capacity-building</li> <li>• Ensure the Cluster/Sector programmes are designed in a way that takes into consideration and reinforces prospects for durable solutions for the affected population</li> <li>• Engage development actors proactively to promote protection and durable solutions as integral components of national development planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of Protection priorities reflected in the cluster plan.</li> <li>• Cluster plans are translated and shared in appropriate formats with the communities.</li> <li>• # of messages on the Cluster plan relayed to the communities</li> </ul>

Response Implementation and Monitoring	Possible Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that there is a proper feedback and complaints system in place to adjust and change operational plans during the programme cycle so affected populations can 1) comment on the quality, appropriateness and/or adequacy of programme interventions, and 2) report violations of the law, institutional policies and/or codes of conduct (e.g., with regards to sexual exploitation and abuse)</li> <li>• Ensure the feedback and complaints mechanisms in place are (1) tailored to the operational context (2) tailored to the preferences of the affected population (e.g., translated to local languages, delivered through preferred channels, etc.), (3) visible, known and accessible to all individuals and groups in the community, including the illiterate and vulnerable groups (4) designed to ensure the protection and confidentiality of users, their personal data, and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of cluster meetings which include ongoing analysis of protection and joint feedback around meaningful access safety and dignity.</li> <li>• % of action points linked to analysis of protection and feedback mechanisms that are deemed to be successfully achieved upon review.</li> <li>• Number of CBOs involved in field monitoring.</li> <li>• Existence of a cluster/collective message to communicate with</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> For example, in Iraq and Yemen, the field protection clusters set-up a call center to facilitate communication between the Protection Cluster and the affected population.

<p>the information they share (5) formalised in a policy that fleshes out the scope of the mechanism, roles and responsibilities, measures to mitigate harm that can result from participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with communities regarding the conduct to be expected from cluster members (codes of conduct) as well as their rights and the way to provide feedback and complaints. Endeavour to agree on a common messaging to do so.</li> <li>• Contribute to the planning and dissemination of messages on what has been delivered (both assistance and protection), what lies ahead, as well as what has been done with the complaints and feedback</li> <li>• Involve community based organisations and communities themselves to participate in field monitoring.</li> <li>• Ensures systematic and consistent monitoring and assessment of evolving protection threats and risks, based on protection monitoring and feedback from affected communities.</li> <li>• When changes in programmes are made (for example, a distribution does not take place although it was announced), partners should ensure that the population is informed through preferred communication channels in a timely manner.</li> <li>• Ensure mechanisms are in place to ensure that community feedback and lessons learned from this HPC will inform the next one.</li> </ul>	<p>communities on their rights to humanitarian assistance and the conduct to be expected of cluster members.</p>
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Resource mobilisation	Possible Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinator to advocate with donors for resources to support cluster partners to include in their projects activities broadly covering protection activities, complaints and feedback, community consultations and public information campaigns.</li> <li>• Coordinator to promote and encourage cluster partners to also include the same in their proposals to pooled funds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of projects from the cluster funded by an in-country pooled fund which include protection interventions, information/feedback/complaints as a central part of activities</li> <li>• % of funding requests that include protection as a cross-cutting and life-saving objective</li> </ul>
Evaluation	Possible Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proper monitoring and evaluation system is in place to adjust and change operational plans during the programme cycle<sup>2</sup> Coordinator and partners to ensure local actors/NGOs/community members are included in evaluations of the cluster performance.</li> </ul>	<p>% of partners within the cluster who undertake programme evaluations in accordance with the agreed level of community participation.</p>