

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

### Background

This document provides suggested actions for intercluster 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 intercluster 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 ICCG.

The role of the intercluster coordinator group is to provide space for accountability and protection issues to be discussed in ICCG meetings, and to support clusters engagement in operationalising accountability and protection throughout the HPC. A list of suggested actions for the cluster/sectors complements this document. Both are accompanied by suggested indicators which helps the intended groups measure their progress on strengthening accountability and protection in the HPC.

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

Coordination	Possible Indicators
<p>The ICCG should be a forum to promote and share among cluster coordinators advice and materials on AAP, Protection from Sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and Protection. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all cluster coordinators are looking at ways and means to strengthen national NGO engagement in the clusters.</li> <li>• Ensure all cluster coordinators have access to and are disseminating within their clusters relevant guidance, toolkits and resources on AAP and Protection as well as raising awareness of PSEA commitments, codes of conduct etc.</li> <li>• Discuss the appropriateness of establishing a sub working group on accountability and community engagement which would be directly linked to the ICCG.</li> <li>• At each ICCG meeting, review the aggregate results coming through complaints and feedback mechanisms to identify the key issues and concerns including protection and report to the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Humanitarian Country Team. Collectively define solutions and track progress on addressing them.</li> <li>• Develop 4Ws matrix on accountability activities with input from each of the clusters. Focus on activities which have an impact beyond a specific project/programme and are of concern to other organisations and need to be coordinated, as well as best practice worth sharing for replication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of an up-to-date matrix at inter cluster level on activities related to AAP</li> <li>• % of ICCG and HCT meetings which discuss and have follow-up action points on key issues and concerns identified in the reports of feedback and complaints mechanisms (use cluster meeting minutes to measure).</li> </ul>
Preparedness	Possible Indicators
<p>The ICCG should initiate or support the RC/HC in organising a meeting/workshop to review current accountability practices, existing mechanisms (including traditional/Government), gaps and opportunities. Use the workshop to identify preparedness actions to operationalise 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>• Explore the opportunity for an inter-agency joint feedback and complaints mechanism using lessons learned from other contexts, including the global SOPs on Inter agency complaints mechanism on PSEA</li> <li>• Support the roll-out of training to raise awareness and capacity on what accountability and protection are about and how to concretely operationalise both.</li> <li>• Identify the most appropriate communication channels for communities, taking into account the preferences of specific groups.</li> <li>• Share within the ICCG information or reports on common cultural practices or preferences, identified through consultations with communities at risk, which would inform relevant and effective response activities (for example preferred rice, ways in which health services are delivered, children cared for, existing community based protection strategies etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting/workshop has taken place at inter-agency level to identify preparedness actions which would assist to operationalise accountability and protection.</li> <li>• Inter agency SOPs on joint feedback and complaints mechanisms exist.</li> <li>• Existence of mapping of country's communication landscape</li> <li>• Existence of summary of cultural practices to be specifically taken into account for programming.</li> <li>• Orientation/training on accountability and protection has taken place</li> </ul>
Humanitarian Needs overview	Possible Indicators
<p>The ICCG should agree on steps to strengthen accountability and protection in assessments and analysis, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree on a coordinated approach to assessments and the use of participatory methodologies, in particular for the MIRA. Ensure local organisations are involved in inter agency assessments</li> <li>• Ensure assessments include a representative sampling of the population (capturing age and gender, and specific groups at risk of discrimination or who are particularly vulnerable).</li> <li>• Promote the inclusion of questions in assessments to identify information needs, existing local capacity, protection concerns, preferred solutions to needs, and preferred ways to provide feedback/complaints.</li> <li>• Promote the use of open questions for all assessments, such as "what are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of joint assessments which include representative sampling of the population and disaggregated data</li> <li>• % of joint needs assessments which include open questions</li> <li>• Summary of information needs are included in the HNO / MIRA reports.</li> <li>• A consultation with community members on the results of the MIRA and HNO, took place.</li> </ul>

<p>your top priorities?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree on how to communicate to communities the results of the assessments and next steps in order to manage expectations when expressed needs and priorities go beyond what can be delivered in terms of assistance and protection.</li> <li>• Agree on how to pass on information on expressed needs related to other sectors.</li> <li>• Share analysis of the situation in the ICCG and reach a common understanding of the problems including protection issues across the clusters. This will help determine a set of shared priorities before working into clusters.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to validate the results of MIRA and HNO with community members</li> </ul>	
---	--

Humanitarian Response Planning	Possible Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure HRPs are directly based on the finding of participatory assessments and joint analysis of priority needs. Ensure HRPs takes into account locally available resources (human and financial)</li> <li>• Agree that beneficiary selection processes are transparent and informed by engagement with affected population.</li> <li>• Address issues which might not be covered by any specific cluster or might be common to several clusters, including protection aspects.</li> <li>• Translate HRP into accessible format to share with communities and, if possible, validate HRP priorities with a cross section of community members, with respect to age, gender and diversity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRP is based on needs assessments which included representative sampling of the population and disaggregated data.</li> <li>• HRP has been translated, shared in appropriate formats.</li> <li>• HRP reflects protection priorities</li> </ul>

Response Implementation and Monitoring	Possible Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure Inter agency feedback and complaints mechanism cover aspects of quality and appropriateness of programs, targeting, as well as complaints such as fraud, corruption or sexual exploitation and abuse.</li> <li>• Harmonise and agree on messages to communicate with communities regarding the conduct to be expected of humanitarian actors as well as their rights and the way to provide feedback and complaints</li> <li>• Design a coordinated plan for disseminating messages on what has been delivered (both assistance and protection) and what lies ahead, as well as what has been done with the complaints and feedback.</li> <li>• Identify common trends in (joint) feedback and complaints mechanisms and participatory monitoring, and ensure these are informing any strategic and programmatic decisions and where necessary communicate back to the community regarding the way their feedback has been taken to account.</li> <li>• Establish an inter-cluster mechanism to monitor affected population perception of the humanitarian response on a regular basis, and of adequacy of information provision and engagement in decision making.</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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of a coordinated plan to disseminate messages to communities</li> <li>• Number of ICCG meetings which include analysis of joint feedback and complaints.</li> <li>• Existence of perception survey mechanism</li> <li>• Number of action points at ICCG/HCT level linked to joint feedback and complaints mechanism and perception surveys</li> </ul>

Resource mobilisation	Possible Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree and advocate for resources to support a collective, inter agency mechanism, to deal with complaints and feedback, and could be extended further to include joint community consultations and public information campaigns.</li> <li>• Promote the use of in-country pooled funding mechanisms such as ERFs and CHF to support specific activities or projects which involve facilitating community consultations, information campaigns and/or complaint and feedback mechanisms</li> <li>• Where applicable, encourage a dialogue with donors (likely through the HC or HCT) to encourage funding flexibility, to enable to adapt to changes stemming from feedback mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of pooled funding mechanisms supporting activities linked with accountability to affected populations and community engagement</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure communities are informed in case of budget cut with impact in terms of targeting or scope/ content of the humanitarian assistance.</li> </ul>	
<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Possible Indicators</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree across clusters on appropriate level of community participation in evaluation methodologies.</li> <li>• Share results of evaluations with communities and capitalise lessons learned including communities point of view on the intervention.</li> <li>• Ensure lessons learned on accountability and protection from one phase of the response are taken into account for the next phase.</li> </ul>	% of partners within the cluster who undertake programme evaluations in accordance with the agreed level of community participation.