



Centrality of Protection Task Team

9 October 2018

IASC Protection Policy: Field Practices Note

Introduction

We are at the two year anniversary of the [IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), which was adopted in October 2016 following the [IASC Principals Statement on the Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) in 2013. In order to ensure that we are making progress to adopt the ways of working outlined in the Protection Policy, the Task Team on the Centrality of Protection is supporting the GPC in convening a stock-taking exercise on 14-15 October 2018 with a view to sharing emerging good practice as well as identifying challenges and means of addressing them. In the lead-up to the Stock-take, the CoP TT organized a wide-ranging IASC PP survey and two peer exchanges – one focused on protection information sharing and analysis and another on HCT protection strategies.

The purpose of this report is to share some of the highlights from the survey and peer exchange discussions in support of Stock-take discussions.

IASC Protection Policy Survey Highlights¹

Respondents had the opportunity to rank their responses along seven steps, from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” on a range of issues including: their own and the wider humanitarian community’s understanding of the Policy; contribution to protection outcomes by protection and non-protection experts; and HCT and HC engagement in achieving collective protection outcomes.

An overwhelming majority of practitioners, from both UN agencies and NGOs, feel like they have the guidance and resources within their organizations to implement the ways of working described in the Protection Policy: 78% for UN agencies, 88% for INGOs, and 83% for LNGOs. In order to enable *increased uptake and realization* of the Policy, respondents highlighted the need to: (i) enhance collective engagement and action (64%); (ii) continuously monitor and evaluate progress towards protection outcomes (63%); and conduct continuous protection analysis (62%). There was no significant geographical variation between responses related to the uptake and implementation of the Protection Policy.

The resources are there, online and in most organizations, readily available with a bit of research, and if not readily available, can be obtained from the organizations I work with.

- Survey respondent

Progress made on continuous protection analysis. Across all geographical zones, responders stated that the most significant progress towards implementing the Policy related to continuous protection analysis. However, while

¹ While the survey was not a representative sample of the humanitarian community, the responses may be read as indicative of current and key issues. The IASC PP Survey generated 90 responses, including 35 from INGOs, 33 from UN agencies, and 6 from local NGOs. Most of the responses came from country offices in Asia (34) and Africa (31), though 19 came from Europe. Notably, there were only 2 responses from South America, from Argentina and Colombia. While the large majority of responders listed protection as one of their three primary sectors of work (80%), 23% responded that they partly focus on “Other” sectors, 17% on health, and 14% on education.

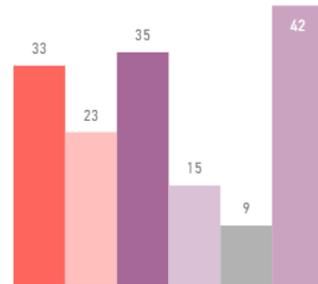
There is more emphasis on protection analysis, but little real emphasis on involving affected populations. And HCs and HCTs find it easier to monitor progress on sectors such as health or WASH as against protection.

-Survey respondent

there might be progress, participants at the peer-exchange on Information and Analysis highlighted that information gathering, sharing, and analysis still remains a challenge, especially in conflict settings (more details under the peer-exchanges section of this paper). Second most progress was seen to be made on involving all humanitarian actors in achieving protection outcomes, indicating that *practitioners believe that the humanitarian community is better at working together to achieve collective protection outcomes.*

17) Has there been significant progress in implementing the ways of working set out in the Protection Policy?

- Affected populations are involved in building own resilience
- HC and HCT regularly monitor progress towards protection outcomes
- Most humanitarian actors are actively involved in achieving protection out...
- None
- Other ways
- Protection analysis continuously conducted



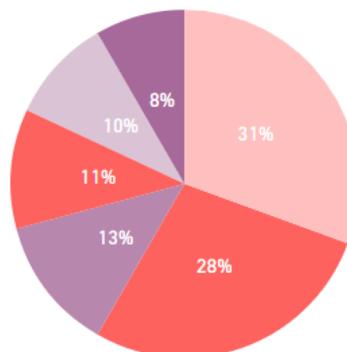
Involving affected populations is challenging. The challenge that most practitioners highlighted in implementing the ways of working set out in the Protection Policy related to meaningfully involving affected populations. The second and third most challenging issues were difficulties with explaining and informing government and non-government actors about the Protection Policy, and difficulties accessing new data on protection to support analysis. Notably, receiving new protection data was seen as a major challenge in Africa, but practitioners still responded that they saw progress on continuous protection analysis, *indicating that analysis is regularly conducted, but not necessarily based on new and continuously collected data/information.* The peer exchange on HCT Protection Strategies also highlighted the challenge of involving non-protection-focused humanitarian actors in work towards achieving collective protection outcomes; however, some non-traditional actors have expressed interest in mainstreaming protection and reaching out to them could result in effective cooperation.

[There are a] lot of difficulties especially in dealing with protracted displacement ... it is rare for affected populations to be meaningfully (as against pro forma) consulted.

-Survey respondent

11) In my geographical context, there is a shared understanding among humanitarian actors of protection risks (i.e. threats, and vulnerabilities and capacities related to those threats), based on continuous context-specific analysis.

- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree



Shared understanding of risk, but insufficient collection and sharing of data and information. 70% of the responders who stated that their primary sector of work is protection, and 61% of those who stated that their primary sector of work is another sector (health, education WASH, etc.), felt that in their geographical context, there is a shared understanding among the wider humanitarian community of protection risks, based on continuous context specific analysis.

Data sharing remains a challenge and is still often underpinned by misunderstandings of what can be shared or not.

The collection and sharing of information are based on personal relationships rather than on a professional basis...

-Two separate survey respondents

Moreover, 49% of the protection-focused responders and 72% of the non-protection-focused responders, believe that most humanitarian actors actively contribute to protection outcomes by collecting and sharing relevant data and information and contributing to integrated protection analysis. Evidently, most actors believe that the humanitarian community has a shared understanding of protection risks (70% and 61% across protection and non-protection sectors). However, protection-focused actors are much less optimistic than non-protection actors that the humanitarian community collects and shares data/information that could underpin integrated protection analysis (49% vs 72%), indicating that they believe the humanitarian actors only collect and use their own data for programming, and when sharing it is often done on a personal basis. This correlates with reflections from the peer-exchange on information and analysis, where participants called for more data sharing and better data-sharing practices.

While the HCT protection strategy foresees regular reporting on protection progress, there has been insufficient follow up.

Often the HCT protection strategies are left for the Protection Cluster to follow up on and there is not a common approach or view about the purpose of the strategy once it has been developed.

-Two separate respondents

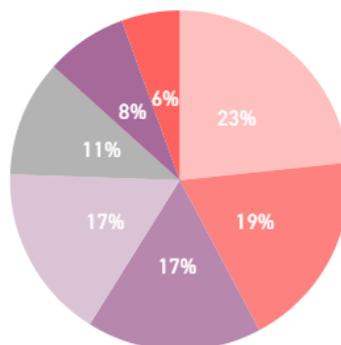
HCTs identify protection priorities and support collective action and HCs promote collaboration. All regions and all sectors agreed (77% in aggregate) that Humanitarian Country Teams identify protection priorities and approve of collective actions to support protection outcomes. Moreover, 69% of the respondents believe that the Humanitarian Coordinators support and promote collaboration among the wider humanitarian community to achieve protection outcomes. There were nearly no strongly agree/disagree responses. This overall positive perception of HCTs and HCs held true across regions, sectors, and organizations (NGOs, UN agencies, etc.).

On the question of whether HCTs regularly monitor and evaluate progress towards defined protection outcomes in a transparent manner, 48% in aggregate agreed to various degrees (strongly agree, agree, or somewhat agree), and this even split between agree/disagree held true across regions, sectors, and organizations. As such,

15) In my geographical context, the Humanitarian Country Team regularly monitors and evaluates progress towards defined protection outcomes in a transparent manner.

while the humanitarian leadership is seen to have a positive role in working towards collective protection outcomes, improvement is still needed in monitoring and evaluating the actual progress.

- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Don't Know
- Strongly disagree
- Strongly agree



Peer exchange on Information Collection, Sharing, and Analysis

This peer exchange brought together a wide range of practitioners from different organizations, discussing their experiences with information collection, sharing, and analysis. Among the panelists were Tiffany Easthom (Executive Director, NP), Isadora Quay (Gender in Emergencies Coordinator, CARE), Jaye Stapleton (Associate Director, Research, Monitoring, & Evaluation, HAI), Daunia Pavone (Senior Data and Analysis Quality Advocate DTM/IOM), Herbert Tatham (Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Needs Assessment and Analysis Section, OCHA), and Leah Campbell (Senior Research Officer, ALNAP). The audio link can be found at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4483925359582249473>

Highlights

Community-level analysis

Practitioners from the panel explained how they combine community-level analysis with macro-level analysis when making strategic programmatic decisions. Data from information gathering exercises is used in tailoring activities around capacity building for local service providers and address the specific needs of the situation, e.g. PTSD or depression in the example of mental health and psychosocial health services (MHPSS). Their overall understanding of the situation is supplemented by an organic approach to context analysis through both formal and informal engagement with different segments of the community. If the developed programs are not adequately addressing the situation at hand, it is necessary to rethink the initial assessment. The need for a re-assessment of the situation varies from country to country and differs with the dynamics of the country and how quickly the situation is changing. It is important for country offices or regional offices to keep track of larger trends in the wider region, as field locations are often too focused on implementation.

Sharing information and trends with relevant operational organizations

The participating practitioners highlighted that Protection Cluster meetings, both at national and subnational levels, are used for information sharing on trends, especially, when it could potentially impact other stakeholders in the area. While cluster members will bring up specific incidents, the Protection Cluster Coordinators point to trends. For emerging issues of concern, humanitarian actors directly contact the Coordinator. A perceived lack of data management capacity prevents more systematic sharing of information from other meetings

Gender-specific information and tools

Gender-based violence is a core protection issue, and information collection and analysis are conducted by various actors, nominally under the umbrella of the GBV Sub-Cluster. Some organizations have developed their own tools to assist programming – one example is the “Rapid Gender Analysis” tool, which is a step by step guide on how to explore people’s cultural norms, capabilities and vulnerabilities. In 2011, no humanitarian emergencies were informed by a gender analysis approach and it remains a substantial challenge until today. When applying gender analysis, the two reoccurring interconnected issues are the link between women’s lack of participation and protection concerns, such as gender-based violence. Another challenge is that gender analysis requires qualitative, narrative data and thus far, there is no equivalent of Kobo that would allow for qualitative data collection at the necessary speed in an emergency setting. However, even when the data on gender and protection issues is available, its impact seems to be limited, due to prevalent patriarchal views. The humanitarian community as a whole needs to improve secondary data research and use pre-existing information, so that they only conduct new assessments when there is an information-gap.

Global-level mechanisms

Global-level efforts to address weaknesses in data systems and approaches to information collection, sharing, and analysis are organized under the global clusters. The Protection Information Management (PIM) project is tackling issues around understanding and developing a conception framework for protection information management, in order to create the tools and instruments that facilitate collaboration. The PIM conceptual framework has been developed by multiple stakeholders, based on best practices of ways of working, in order

to become a common guidance point. The PIM initiative and associated Task Teams organize several trainings, and one of the main challenges identified by participants is a general sense that the humanitarian community does not want to share their information. According to training observations, field level practitioners are concerned about how it is used once shared.

Need for purposeful information collection and analysis

While there is now a relative wealth of data in any crisis compared to previous years, the capacity for analysis is not proportionate, and it remains a significant challenge to ensure that different actors are actually identifying and using all the relevant available data. There should be a clear link between the use, collection, and analysis of information. Information management and needs assessment experts need to work in tandem with technical experts, coordinators, analysts, and others to facilitate better coordination and agree on the purpose of the collection exercises. When deciding on the purpose for conducting a specific analytical exercise, practitioners should identify the parameters and necessary follow-up action, and be prepared to compromise in setting limits on information collection. Research and experience show that qualitative information on the character of individuals or groups – which can be particularly relevant for protection work – is more likely to be shared verbally, and subsequently not easily or regularly captured through systems and tools.

Need for trust

Issues around trust and sharing information were raised by a number of participants and practitioners. It was noted that it is claimed that human error (for example, sending an email with beneficiary information included) may be more of an issue for data security than actual systems breaches. Efforts to reduce human error should be supported.

Key issues

1. Overall, information gathering, sharing, and analysis remains a challenge in conflict settings. In some cases, there is sufficient data but a lack of analysis, and in other cases there is simply just a lack of data to begin with. In order to avoid collecting data which will not be used, the purpose should be clearly identified, and research should be conducted to better understand the contextual information landscape. This will help practitioners understand what information already exists and where gaps may be. These steps are critical to take prior to beginning to set up an information management system.
2. In order to ensure that available data is usable and useful for decision makers, it is necessary to bring together Information management experts, sectoral experts, decision makers and context experts from across the sector, i.e. from NGOs, ICRC, UN agencies, Global clusters, donors, etc., and have a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities at each step of the process, from data collection to analysis and dissemination. Dissemination of both data and analyses remains a challenge.
3. Practitioners need to accept imperfections in available information; it should not inhibit analysis and decision-making: “Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good.” This can be particularly true for protection issues where trends, pre-crisis contextual information on human rights and protection issues, and globally understood scenarios (such as the marked increase in GBV in crises situations) should be sufficient for decision-makers in order to act. Practitioners should learn to deal with imperfection in information collection while not shying away from acknowledging weak data.

Peer exchange on HCT Protection Strategies

The purpose of this peer exchange was to reflect on progress made and challenges encountered in implementing the provisions of the IASC Protection Policy related to identifying HCT protection priorities and developing a system-wide protection strategy. The panelists were Ramesh Rajasingham (former DRHC Syria Crisis, now Director of OCHA's Coordination Division), Anna Rich (PC Coordinator Ukraine), Dalia Aranki (ProCap Advisor and current HLP AOR Coordinator), Max Bonnel (former Deputy Head of Office & Inter-Cluster Coordinator, OCHA Colombia, now Ethiopia) and Capucine Maus de Rolley (NRC Co-coordinator, Protection sector Whole of Syria). The recording can be found at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3673179570297875202>.

Highlights

Humanitarian Country Team Protection Strategies – examples and reflections

The group developing the HCT Protection Strategy for the Whole of Syria (WoS) response outlined several issues related to achieving collective protection outcomes that may be experienced in other contexts as well:

- In Syria, ownership of the centrality of protection, particularly by UN agencies was not at the level it should be. However, this is case-by-case, and one panelist pointed out that in Ukraine, the HCT has taken more ownership: the HC and HCT consistently refer to Ukraine as a protection crisis, and the HCT-level working group on protection regularly reports on the implementation of its workplan.
- Leadership on protection is inconsistent as the pressures faced by those inside Syria were different compared to those outside who had much more space to speak publicly;
- The capacities and resources necessary for a more comprehensive approach to protection are in some cases developed and acquired on-the-run. For example, in WoS, civil-military coordination capacity was developed over the course of the crisis – it would have been beneficial if this capacity had been ready and fully formed in advance;
- The development of the WoS protection analysis was a challenge as there was no common baseline analysis of protection threats, risks, or situational analysis;
- Monitoring and reporting is weak due to data collection and information exchange issues between hubs. The fact-based monthly monitoring and reporting undertaken in Palestine where basic analysis on trends (air strikes on hospitals, aid workers wounded or killed, attacks on camps) is regularly carried out, is a positive example to learn from.

Good practices

While strategies may look good on paper, it is important to know what the next step is in practice and engage as many humanitarian actors as possible. We should not focus too much on terminology, but practically on what has already been done and how to strengthen protection frameworks. Only with a framework in place can we properly address issues, conduct monitoring to assess outcomes, and conduct context-specific analysis with the goal to have a more instinctive approach to protection. HCT strategies require detailed work plans to be effective which need to be as concrete as possible and include indicators. The work plan in Colombia encompassed a broad array of actors to help achieve protection outcomes including the peacekeeping mission and development actors, local level coordination teams, and the ICCG to make the link with the HPC.

In short, strong partners and access to information are important; setting up working groups to address specific crises can be an asset; the presence of a human rights advisor and a protection monitoring task force could aid in identifying relevant issues; and there is a high need for people working on the ground to contribute their firsthand experience and knowledge to the HCT strategies. Specific good practices for the development of a sound HCT Protection Strategy include:

- It is important to have a strong evidence-base for analysis and advocacy. Examples are the response-wide protection analyses used in Somalia and WoS.

- An important element of a comprehensive analysis is to integrate the rich material coming from other sectors into an overall framework for the analysis of risk. This was echoed in the peer exchange on information and analysis.
 - In Colombia, the inter-cluster group contributed to the HCT protection strategy by contributing to the data analysis which helped identify key protection risks and by ensuring some alignment between the HRP and the HCT PS.
- Ensure that each cluster has a protection risk analysis.
- Establish a multi-disciplinary task force to oversee the implementation of the strategy so the Protection Cluster's role would be one of support.
- Engage a senior protection advisor to support the HC and HCT. The consensus by panelists was that it would be useful to have senior level experts involved in supporting the HC and HCT over a longer period of time.
 - Examples included ProCap and human rights advisors. In some responses, OHCHR's human rights advisors provide support on protection issues which fall outside the remit of the Protection Cluster, as was the case in Syria where they played a very important role for the Humanitarian Coordinators. Their work on arbitrary detention highlighted the challenges of raising human rights in humanitarian crisis and the UN's role in terms of Human Rights Up Front.
- Include protection as a regular or standing agenda item in HCT and ICCG meetings, as they do *inter alia* in Iraq, Yemen, and Colombia.
- Ensure that the strategy connects to/complements other frameworks and plans underway at country level, e.g. HRP, NWoW, and GP20 Action Plans.
 - In Colombia, the ICCG ensured the coherence of protection across the various plans (e.g. HRP, Venezuela Border response plan) and the positioning of protection as a permanent issue of the HCT and therefore it's prioritization. There is potential for the inter-cluster coordination group to play a greater role in protection as this is the forum for influencing the work of all clusters, this would also help build a more broad-based ownership.
- Ensure that protection is mainstreamed in the HRP. It is important to identify the role of protection mainstreaming as an objective or a way of working, or both, in the context of HCT protection strategies and how to strengthen them. We should aim to have all humanitarian actors engaging and speaking about protection.
- Include protection risk assessment as part of project proposals in CBPFs.
- Connect with or ensure actual field perspectives. The Colombia response benefited from building from the bottom up and including field and the local coordination teams whose work fed into the development of the HCT protection strategy as well as all elements of the HPC.

Challenges

It remains challenging to involve all actors and stakeholders consistently throughout the development and implementation of a protection strategy. It is also difficult to challenge the underlying assumption that the Protection Cluster/Sector is expected to take the lead, and that involvement in protection work may hinder the ability to be operational.

The Syrian HCT Protection Strategy process had to consider the different hubs across the country and their very different operational realities, and build a consensus on what would be relevant across all the hubs. A major challenge was getting other agencies and sectors to own the strategy and update on their actions to implement; unfortunately, the protection sector was expected to provide all updates.

Identifying and agreeing on realistic objectives was identified as a challenge – one panelist cautioned against setting difficult to achieve objectives. The strategy should be used as a reference point often, feedback should be provided regularly, especially on changes or improvements since implementation.

One concern related to how the system collects and makes use of the information cluster partners have on the human rights situation on the ground. If human rights issues are not addressed up front, it makes it more difficult to turn adequate attention to them in the post-conflict situation. Humanitarian Coordinators should be better prepared to address human rights issues in protection strategies and in protection work in general.

Lack of resources. There is a need to reach out to organizations that have larger resources and to governments to push them to address issues of protection. Engaging more people and creating a larger pool of information, capacity, and resources would be more useful than bringing in one single person.

Inadequate coordination with development actors. Humanitarian data and information collection should be discussed with development actors in order to facilitate a better transition to post-conflict contexts. One way to ensure that development actors get involved is to speak with donors and highlight how to link protection and development in proposals. Recent changes make this an opportune moment to strengthen the information link with the UN development system reform and the new management system for Resident Coordinators. The type of data and information which could be collected include human rights, access to health care, and housing land and property issues.

Data and information exchange tend to be UN driven and could benefit from including NGOs in the process. This would also avoid the responsibility always falling solely on the protection cluster. Analysis and technical knowledge can also be drawn from and connect different actors.

Key Issues

1. HCT Protection Strategies require a strong joint analysis, a concrete workplan, and a monitoring plan; these elements should bring in a broad array of partners both within and beyond the humanitarian field. The strategy itself should be short and concise.
2. UN entities and NGOs should show more leadership on protection mainstreaming but also on protection priorities. Strong HCT Protection strategies are those which have a wider buy-in from the HCT members (and not just the protection actors).
3. Addressing protection priorities also requires linkages with development, peacekeeping, and human rights actors. There are positive experiences in the field – Colombia, Ukraine and Syria – from which draw lessons learned. We also need to seize the potential of the UN development system reform and empowered Resident Coordinators to address protection priorities.
4. The link between national level and the field is important for the purposes of monitoring protection situation and ensuring the firsthand experiences of the ground shape and inform the implementation of the strategy.
5. It is important to increase attention to the kind of data and information that is collected in humanitarian crises in order to strengthening the work on human rights and to facilitate links to longer term development and human rights aims.
6. Having senior level capacity to support the HC/RC can improve their engagement (and that of the HCT) at a strategic level on protection, such as the OHCHR human rights advisor function or having specific capacity on Housing Land and Property issues.