

Framework for Rapid Protection Assessment Tools and Mechanism for Iraq

Rationale:

There is a clear gap in obtaining specific protection related information at the immediate outset of a crisis which is essential for informing the protection response, the broader humanitarian response, and providing the factual basis for protection advocacy aimed at immediately influencing the protection environment. While the Rapid Needs Assessment covers the broader humanitarian needs the Rapid Protection Assessment (RPA) will focus on macro-level protection issues and characteristics which are defining the protection environment, identifying and addressing characteristics placing IDPs at risk.

What the Rapid Protection Assessment is

The RPA is a specific but flexible tool designed to gather macro-level information in diverse protection crisis situation such as sudden large scale population movements or sudden shifts in protection environment of a population.

The tool and the mechanism must be effective within the first week of the crisis, preferably as soon after the onset, must compliment and/or transition into existing protection monitoring and population tracking tools without risk of duplication, and must be designed in a manner that allows remote implementation and monitoring.

The RPA focuses on macro data related to the protection environment, its characteristics and the impact on the IDPs. The assessment gathers data on issues such as freedom of movement and access to safety. It asks questions related to the authorities are in charge of the protection environment and policies which place IDPs at risk, the presence of coercive or exploitative procedures or practices, procedures for supporting persons with specific needs, etc. It gathers population estimates including disaggregated estimates, to compliment but not replace DTM data.

It is designed to provide initial data and estimates of the protection environment and protection regime at the very initial and fluid stages of a crisis. The initial information is never 100% accurate and changes over time as the situation develops or more detailed information come available. The accuracy of the information gathered through the RPA is strengthened through repeated assessments and triangulation. It is corroborated and verified through protection monitoring at the household and community level as is possible in the subsequent days and weeks from the crisis.

What the RPA is not:

The RPA is not a household level or community level assessments. It is not an inter-agency needs assessment. It does not gather information on individuals, their needs or even the broader humanitarian needs of a community. It will not be the basis for individual referrals or case management. It does not track population movements beyond what is related to the immediate crisis. There are already existing assessments and systems in place for this.

It will not provide detailed information on sensitive issues that could place either the individual or monitor at greater risk if collected at such a juncture. The RPA is not designed specifically to collect information on human rights violations, the role of UNAMI human rights monitors, however findings would be shared with human rights actors where relevant.

The RPA focuses on the immediate humanitarian protection environment. The RPA is a short term complementary tool.

Existing Tools:

The assessment, monitoring and tracking tools described below are critical to effective protection monitoring but do not provide the type or level of details on the protection environment required at the immediate onset of a crisis nor do provide for the comprehensive/systematic collection of this type of information in the short term.

The RPA fills this initial gap and complements these tools. As the situation evolves to allow for household or community-level assessment, the RPA phases out.

- **Displacement Tracking Mechanism (DTM)** is an information management tool that gathers specific information regarding the status and location of displaced persons across the country. As part of its methodology, DTM has established an Emergency Tracking mechanism aiming to provide real time displacement estimates from the onset of any large to medium scale crises. Data is collected through flow monitoring techniques via an array of local authority sources as well as on the spot visits to transit sites or bottle necks on displacement routes. This component of displacement tracking is further validated by IOM staff through the standard biweekly reporting cycle. Taking from these verified and recorded IDP populations and locations further in-depth assessments are conducted through a 3-month cycle to identify multi-sectorial needs of the displaced population as well as age and sex disaggregated data. In Iraq, the DTM team is composed of over 135 field staff that collect and verify information through a network of more than 1,300 key informants.
- **Protection monitoring tool** is a household level survey that serves to provide detailed information on protection issues and allows for the identification of vulnerable individuals/groups and referrals. It is designed for use in a static population where sufficient time is available to carry out door to door surveys, focus group discussions, and community level assessments through key informants. The Protection Cluster has agreed on a template and electronic platform. This is being rolled out by UNHCR and its operational partners, while other Protection Cluster members engaged in protection monitoring have not yet adopted the template or tool.
- **Rapid Inter-Agency Needs Assessment** is a community level assessment covering needs in multiple sectors. The protection questions for the community are very limited and do not provide sufficient data to inform either advocacy or strategy but are designed to be asked by an assessment team that does not have protection experience. This type of assessment primarily provides information on basic material needs.

Area of focus and timeframe

The RPA is intended for the onset of a crisis, the first 72 hours, and continue to be employed until the other tools are in place, the information required is being consistently provided through other assessments, and/or the situation stabilizes.

The area of focus of the RPA is the macro protection environment, not the general community needs nor the household level or individual case level.

Mechanism

The KRI Protection Working Group and the Centre/South Protection Working Group cover specific geographic areas of Iraq. These two groups will map the main protection partners covering each governorate or groups of governorates. An international NGO protection cluster member will be identified as the RPA focal point for each area to coordinate, to create the protection network with national and international partners active in the area, or tap into existing protection networks, train of all protection actors in a given area on RPA data collection and most importantly coordinate the RPA when the need occurs. To avoid duplication and capitalize on synergies, the RPA focal points will be distributed, to the extent possible along the lines of the RRM INGO geographic presence. In addition, the INGO focal point will be joined by a national NGO focal point where possible with a view to build longer term capacity.

In the event of a crisis, the focal point will be responsible to coordinate the RPA with the local level actors, act as the collection point for RPA data, collate the data and provide timely and solid information to the National Protection Cluster (NPC) through their respective geographic working group. The NPC will ensure in turn that the information reaches the RRM, ECG, HCT, HC, and donors, advocacy is undertaken and the broader humanitarian response is informed by this information.

Information Flow and reporting lines

The RPA focal point will organize the assessment to ensure the broadest coverage and avoid duplication among local level monitors. They will ensure an agreed upon set of issues to be monitored dependent on the context and input of the NPC and that a consistent approach is applied. The RPA focal point will coordinate which partners will monitor what and where, collate the information and triangulate at the local level.

The NPC/RPA focal point will collate the information from multiple RPA focal points at the Governorate/field level in the event of a crisis impacting more than one area. The NPC focal point will triangulate the data received with the DTM and the Access Unit as well as the thematic sub-clusters at the national level. The NPC focal point will ensure the information is shared with stakeholders who can advocate and influence the events on the ground.

Methodology:

The methodology varies depending on the type of crisis as well as the security environment for both the assessors and the IDPs. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used and information is triangulated and verified where possible. Both primary and secondary sources of information is used.

- Direct observation.
- Key informant interviews
- Focus group discussions where possible.
- Community group discussions¹

¹ Qualitative and Quantitative Research Techniques for Humanitarian Needs Assessment, ACAPS, May 2012

Information and data is triangulated to the extent possible and where not possible, it will be qualified. Print, broadcast and social media can also be monitored as indicators. Where available, secondary data sources will be included. Repeated assessments on specific identified protection concerns will be carried out to determine the evolution of the situation.

RPA Scenarios

As the RPA is not intended to duplicate existing tools, it is applied in specific scenarios triggered by sudden movements of a significant scale and in which protection risks are high. Such scenarios include but are not limited to the following:

- Sudden displacement to area other than check point
- Populations stuck at checkpoints
- Sudden sizeable return movements (forced, induced or spontaneous)
- Evictions on a significant scale

RPA Information Requirements:

Information for the RPA is required on the following categories:

- Population size and estimated disaggregated data
Estimated number of IDPs and/or conflict-affected population, estimate disaggregated by age and sex. If there are primarily only women and children present, this will have protection implications. If primarily young men, other protection implications are of concern.)
- Access to Safety and freedom of movement
Which Authorities in charge of population at the particular time of event (civilian, security, etc.); Do the IDPs have access to safety? (Are they being prevented from entering a governorate, town, city, or specific location which they are trying to get to?) Who is responsible granting or denying access? Is it a civilian authority or a security authority? If they are being denied access what basis are they being prevented?
- Separation of families including men and/or children
Is there screening of IDPs taking place that result in separation of family members? Are their obstacles in place that would result in families being separated? Are only men being denied access? Are there only women and children returning to specific locations due to threats against the male population? Are there only men returning for the same reason.
- Treatment of vulnerable individuals
Are there unaccompanied minors/separated children present? Are there any procedures in place for UASC? Are there special procedures to address the needs of persons with disabilities, injured, sick, pregnant women such as a fast track to allow entry to a specific location? Are there any signs of isolation or neglect of specific persons or groups?
- Procedures being applied to the IDPs/returnees

Sponsorship, screening, eviction, return approval etc.? Is there a legal or administrative basis for the procedures such as a declaration of the provincial council, an eviction order, etc.? How are the procedures being applied? Is procedure being applied in an exploitative or discriminatory manner, such as charging IDPs for sponsorship, IDPs from a specific place of origin being evicted to as a means to induce return?

- **Arrest and/or detentions of IDPs**
Are IDPs (or other conflict-affected persons) being arrested and/or detained? If so, why and on what grounds? Are specific categories of IDPs being arrested/detained? Minors?
- **Recruitment of IDPs**
Are IDPs (or other conflict-affected persons) being recruited into the ISF, civil defense groups, militias, other armed groups?
- **Discrimination**
Is there discrimination against any particular group(s), limiting their exercise of rights or access to services?
- **Physical hazards**
What are the main physical hazards for the population (e.g., mines, IEDs, unsafe buildings)? Who is affected most?

Time Bounded Transition to Regular Protection Monitoring

The RPA is designed for use in the first week, preferably within 72 hours of a critical event. As the situation stabilizes the protection monitoring at the household and community level will be possible and will provide more detailed information, which would validate, corroborate or correct the initial findings of the RPA.