

# SYRIA PROTECTION CLUSTER (TURKEY)

2017 Operational Strategy for the Syria Protection Cluster supported by cross-border operations from Turkey. Drafted February 2017, adopted May 2017.

2017 Strategy



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## Protection Cluster Strategy 2017 (Including Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence and Mine Action Sub-Clusters – Turkey Cross-Border Operation for Syria)

### A. Background and rationale

Protection<sup>1</sup> of affected civilians, in each and all of its forms, is being hindered or denied throughout most of Syria. Massive population groups live in daily fear of mortar shells, airstrikes or bullets. While many access needed humanitarian assistance, in some locations accessing this assistance can be risky and is marked by reports of exploitation and discrimination in its provision. The high occurrence of multiple protection issues in almost all locations shows that protection concerns are inter-linked. Proximity to armed hostilities, displacement, increased poverty, family separation, and lack of civil documentation has been identified as critical factors that increase the protection risks and vulnerability of people in Syria. Housing, Land, and Property (“HLP”) rights have emerged as a critical protection concern, which – along with often related civil documentation gaps – pose immediate *and* long-term obstacles for the protection environment in Syria.

Children have suffered from physical harm and violence and often indiscriminate attacks though the extensive use of shelling, aerial bombardment and deliberate firing on civilian targets. Due to a weakened protective environment in most communities, children are also more at-risk of domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse. As noted in the 2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview, about 7.5 million children are growing up in Syria knowing nothing but conflict, which has inflicted deep psychological effects leading to at least 1 in 4 children at risk of developing mental health disorders. Years of conflict have left most families struggling to meet their basic needs and are increasingly reliant on negative coping practices, including putting children out to work. The prevalence of child labor, including in its worst forms (recruitment & use of children by armed groups), appears to be the predominant reason for the withdrawal of children from schools in many parts of Syria. Children are increasingly being used by all parties to the conflict in either direct combat or supportive roles such as messengers, cooks, spies, etc. The payment of salaries, pressure on communities and the loss of educational opportunities are some of the major push factors. Family separation resulting into unaccompanied and separated children is common. In the 2017 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), separation from caregivers is reported in 72% of surveyed sub-districts and is reportedly linked to death of parents, population movements, disappearance, recruitment into armed groups, and families sending children to live in safer locations.

According to the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Whole of Syria assessment report (Voices 2017), GBV continues to be pervasive throughout women and girls’ lives in Syria. The length of the crisis combined with the deep-rooted patriarchal structures underpinning Syrian society, are normalizing this violence. Of the assessed sub-districts, 85% report early marriage as a major protection concern, followed by domestic violence (71%) and sexual violence (52%). The psychosocial toll of on-going conflict is intensifying the violence experienced by women and girls; for instance, in the case of domestic violence, female participants within the Community FGDs reported that their husbands were quicker to resort to violence within the home as the latter’s capacity to handle external pressures wanes. New concerns are raised about women and girls reportedly being sexually exploited through serial, temporary marriages, either for financial gain to themselves or to their families or as rewards for fighters.

Household-level gender roles are changing with women adopting roles more traditionally associated with men, such as paid labor and heading households, resulting in both empowerment of women, but also increased risks of violence against women and girls. With divorce perceived to be on the rise, the theme of divorce-related discrimination came out strongly in the 2016 assessments.

Conservative practices imposed by extremist groups in some parts of the country, such as prescribed dress codes, negatively impact women’s lives. Although all women and girls are vulnerable to GBV in the public and private sphere, the assessments found that adolescent girls are perceived to be at particular risk of sexual violence, and the female-headed households, including divorcees and widows, face stigmatization and discrimination, potentially threatening their ability to access to humanitarian aid.

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<sup>1</sup> The Inter-Agency Standing Committee defines Protection as all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law, namely human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law. (IASC IDP Protection Policy 1999).



Many areas are contaminated by unexploded hazards of different types and pose a threat to civilians in affected areas, with children, especially boys, at particular risk. It also increases poverty due to lost productive land, and; undermines opportunities for recovery. Key infrastructure such as housing, schools, health centers, and water/sanitation systems have been contaminated and will remain unsafe for use. This implies the need for risk education, victim assistance (basic medical and psychosocial) and for enhancing the integration of humanitarian mine action into other sectors.

Challenges to the Protection Cluster remained largely consistent with previous years, except for significant changes to areas of control in Northern Syria. Since late 2015, the tempo of conflict in Northern Syria has changed with new areas coming out of ISIL control, of the Government of Syria taking over East Aleppo and the overall expansion of GoS and Non-ISIL armed actors holding different pockets of territory in Northern Syria. This has meant that the response from the Gaziantep hub in 2016 and likely through 2017 is likely to be geared towards emergency response, in addition to addressing the other unchanged protection issues which characterize much of the Syrian situation, particularly in locations ranked as most severe i.e. areas most affected by violence and with the largest number of displaced. The scale of the breakdown of social services in much of the country means that even in accessible areas, the quality and quantity of services is inadequate to meet the magnitude of needs. Humanitarian access, implementation capacity, and funding remain significant factors impeding the response.

## B. 2016 Achievements

In 2017, the Protection Cluster and Sub-Clusters seek to build on their achievements of 2016. Key achievements of the Cluster and Sub-Clusters members include:

1. Provided 104,883 protection prevention and response interventions to 94,798 persons in need in 63 sub-districts in 2016<sup>2</sup>
2. Reached 1,439 communities and 4,872 households through protection monitoring
3. Trained 17 protection organizations in data collection for protection focus group discussions (FDGs) and assessments
4. Established the of Protection Monitoring Task Force to support standardization of tools, indicators and referrals
5. Enhanced emergency response coordination and collection of information through geographically-focused operational groups
6. Trained humanitarian workers and community leaders, reaching 2,789 people with trainings on protection mainstreaming, community-based protection approaches and IDP guiding principles
7. Supported the HLG and ICCG through development of guidance on engagement in Menbij, a considerations note for civilians stranded at the Turkey/Syria border and a guidance note on an operational response to IDPs on the move.
8. Reached 174,889 children with psychosocial support, case management and awareness raising services
9. Developed case management SOPs addressing gaps in specialized child protection services
10. Established taskforces on unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) as well as children associated with armed forces armed groups (CAAFAG)
11. Delivered targeted technical training on CAAFAG , FTR and community based CP mechanisms
12. GBV sectors response improved and expanded to more geographical areas with services being available in 22 additional sub-districts (as compared to December 2015)
13. Increased the number of organizations providing GBV services from 22 to 44.
14. Rolled out GBV SOPs providing capacity building and technical support on structured psychosocial support (PSS)
15. Launched the clinical management of rape (CMR) protocol and trained health providers on medical care for GBV survivors in collaboration with the Health Cluster
16. Rolled out the new GBV Guidelines with 4 selected clusters
17. Developed 6 GBV context specific referral pathways
18. Established the Information Management System for Mine Action
19. Endorsed six standardized mine action data collection forms

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<sup>2</sup> 42 organizations as of December 2016 were inputting into the protection cluster 4Ws.



20. Expanded risk education messaging in areas under and retaken from IS
21. Expanded **contamination impact survey** activities

### C. Key activities

Considering the widespread protection needs and gaps in Syria, the fact that meaningful protection interventions require sustained institutions, NGOs, community and individual engagement, and the necessity for those in Syria to be better protected wherever it can be done, for 2017 the Protection Cluster and Sub-Clusters prioritized multiple categories of interventions across the different operational and access contexts in Syria.

Based on the priorities outlined in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Syria, the Protection Cluster and Sub-Clusters will focus on the following critical interventions:

#### Protection Cluster

##### **Objective 1: Increase the protection of populations at risk from the consequences of the conflict through tailored protection activities to prevent, respond to, and advocate against rights violations**

The Protection Cluster will emphasize *providing and informing* lifesaving emergency response services to newly displaced and newly accessible populations and *expanding and enhancing protection* services through wider geographic coverage and outreach capacity, including through mobile teams. Activities include:

- (i) Community-based protection services through both static centers and mobile outreach teams, such as awareness raising, risk mitigation, information, counselling, case management and referrals
  - a. Development of standards and definition of community-based protection programming for this context by the Protection Cluster planned for 2017
- (ii) Provision of individual assistance to mitigate protection risks of vulnerable families and individuals, such as material or cash assistance, information provision or referrals
  - a. Development of common understanding of vulnerability or at-risk-groups in this context by the Protection Cluster planned for 2017
- (iii) Provision of psychological first aid (PFA), structured psychosocial support (PSS), and support to Mental Health PSS in community centers or through mobile outreach teams
  - a. Strengthening collaboration with the MHPSS TWG (under the Health Cluster) to ensure rollout of minimum standards/MHPSS pyramid to Cluster members planned for 2017
- (iv) Provision of legal counselling or assistance on civil documentation/registration, housing/land/property issues, and other legal concerns in community centers or through mobile outreach teams
  - a. Activation of HLP and Civil Documentation Working Group planned for 2017 – the working group will focus on mapping and assessing ongoing services related to HLP/civil documentation and awareness raising on HLP and civil documentation
- (v) Advocacy with duty bearers and key stakeholders and law/policy development
  - a. Continuing support the HLG and ICCG on the following key issues: operational guidance and advice as warranted and support to the following identified key priorities in 2017: Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP); protection mainstreaming (including gender and child protection mainstreaming); protection monitoring; and protection advocacy

##### **Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of humanitarian actors and duty bearers, with a focus on national and community-based actors, to assess, analyse, prevent, and respond to protection needs**

The Protection Cluster will coordinate and support capacity-building with humanitarian actors to support information and advocacy on protection concerns, and Do No Harm (DNH) efforts. Activities include:

- (vi) Capacity building on risk mitigation and response interventions targeting humanitarian actors and national authorities implementing protection activities to mainstream protection and Do No Harm.



- a. Protection Cluster capacity development plan in place for 2017; continued initiatives through members on protection mainstreaming and protection trainings to local authorities and humanitarian actors ongoing
- (vii) Protection Monitoring and periodic needs identification conducted by Cluster members and other humanitarian actors
  - a. Protection Monitoring Task Force running as of mid-2016, monthly dashboards starting March 2017 with quarterly in-depth analysis products to come

#### Improved ways of working

In addition to the activities outlined above, the Protection Cluster will also work to increase donor outreach; strengthen engagement with human rights actors; improve the use of existing protection data and amending the information sharing protocol; and support sub-national coordination through operational working groups in order to obtain real-time information and support effective responses.

#### Child Protection Sub-Cluster

##### **Objective 1: Increased and more equitable access for boys and girls to quality child protection interventions in targeted locations in line with the Child Protection Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Action**

The Child Protection Sub-Cluster will focus on three key areas of interventions for 2017:

- 1. Community-based child protection including psychosocial support and parenting programs through:**
  - (i) Provision of PFA & PSS activities (structured and sustained; center-based and mobile)
  - (ii) Parenting programs (structured and sustained; center-based and mobile)
  - (iii) Awareness raising sessions, community events, activity days (center-based and mobile)
  - (iv) Information, education and communication (IEC) materials on child protection issues (e.g. brochures, posters, magazines)
  - (v) Recreation and early childhood development kits
  - (vi) Child protection committees/groups (led by adults /youths)
- 2. Specialized child protection services including:**
  - (viii) Case management – child protection issues only (individual needs assessment completed)
  - (ix) Referral to specialized services (child protection needs only)
  - (x) Service mapping
  - (xi) Family tracing and reunification for unaccompanied and separated children
- 3. Human resource capacity development to respond to child protection concerns by:**
  - (xii) Training on foundations of child protection (e.g. basics, minimum standards)
  - (xiii) Training on community-based child protection interventions (e.g. PSS)
  - (xiv) Training on specialised child protection services (e.g. case management & family tracing and reunification for UASC)
  - (xv) Training on child protection policies (e.g. child safeguarding and codes of conduct)
  - (xvi) Child Protection policy, safeguarding policy or code of conduct in place for staff

#### Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub-Cluster

##### **Objective 1: Ensure that survivors have access to quality specialized GBV services and measures are in place to prevent and reduce risks of GBV.**

The GBV Sub-Cluster strives to increase opportunities for safe and confidential disclosure for GBV survivors. The GBV Sub-Cluster is implementing different level of activities and collaboration strategies to address the limited quality GBV response services. The strategic priority will be achieved through three results:

- 1. Increase the geographical reach and the quality of multi-sectoral response services for GBV survivors.**



- (i) Lifesaving, specialized quality multi-sectoral GBV services are provided, including case management, and psychosocial support
- (ii) Survivor-centered, multi-sectoral care and referrals are available and accessible
- (iii) GBV Response is provided during emergencies and in new displacement contexts

**2. Enhance strategies to empower women and girls and prevent GBV, with a particular focus on adolescent girls.**

Considering the good results of 2016 and increasing numbers of members carrying out prevention activities and their demand for technical support, the Sub-Cluster will work to support development of harmonized and consistent approach. The Sub-Cluster will prioritize addressing the vulnerabilities of girls as described in the Voices assessment report. This strategic priority will be achieved through the following core outcomes:

- (iv) The quality and reach of community engagement and awareness raising in the communities is increased
- (v) Prevention and women empowerment activities are delivered through safe spaces and mobile teams  
GBV risk mitigation measures are implemented over different humanitarian sectors and inter-cluster collaborations are strengthened

**3. Strengthen GBV capacities building, advocacy and coordination.**

The third strategic priority will be achieved through three results and will continue to build on the progress on 2016. The GBV SC continue to provide tailored technical support and guidance, identify gaps, develop or adapt standardized approaches, focusing on mentoring and development of techniques for remote support.

- (vi) Build the capacity of GBV specialists and non-specialists to respond, prevent and mitigate GBV
- (vii) GBV Sub-Cluster is representative, minimum standards are promoted, and evidence-based programming is implemented
- (viii) Within the Protection Cluster, and the WoS approach, protection analysis for advocacy with international community, humanitarian partners and local actors is provided

**Mine Action Sub-Cluster**

In line with the sector's strategic HRP objective, the Mine Action Sub-Cluster (MASC) has the overall aim of reducing the impact of explosive hazards.

In 2017, the MASC will focus on three key areas of intervention:

- (i) Targeted risk education for vulnerable populations / at-risk groups (such as children, IDPs, host communities, returnees, farmers and humanitarian workers).
- (ii) Expand survey of explosive hazards and their impact
- (iii) Expand the services available for people with disabilities, including survivors of explosive hazard incidents, through activities such as victim and service mapping, physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support as well as other victim assistance programming.

Access and security permitting, the MASC will also seek to expand activities surrounding the removal of explosive hazards. To complement all of these activities, the MASC aims to find ways of integrating with other sectors to implement both risk education messaging and data collection on the impact of explosive hazards, with a view to prior