

Whole of Syria Strategic Steering Group Protection Strategy 2017-2018

I. Introduction

Reflecting its responsibility and commitment to ensure that protection is central to all aspects of humanitarian action, the Strategic Steering Group (SSG) has developed this protection strategy to provide vision and foundation for an operational approach to ensure the Centrality of Protection throughout the Whole of Syria (WoS) response. While acknowledging that the primary responsibility to protect civilian populations lies with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), the SSG commits to demonstrating the necessary leadership to fulfill the shared responsibility to protect civilian populations and their fundamental rights, in collaboration with relevant actors – including the Office of the Special Envoy.

Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action

"[P]rotection of all persons affected and at risk must inform humanitarian decision-making and response, including engagement with States and non-State parties to conflict. It must be central to our preparedness efforts, as part of immediate and life-saving activities, and throughout the duration of humanitarian response and beyond."

Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), December 2013

The WoS Protection Strategy emphasizes that strengthening the protection of affected populations is the responsibility of all humanitarian actors. While the protection sector, at all levels across the response, will take a role in supporting the operationalization of this strategy – particularly in the provision of technical support – the strategy re-affirms the responsibility of all humanitarian actors who have roles to play in ensuring that protection is at the core of the response. In addition, the strategy includes the humanitarian obligations under the Human Rights up Front (HRuF) initiative regarding the responsibility to make efforts to monitor, prevent, and respond to serious violations of International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL).¹ Gender, age, and diversity considerations have also been mainstreamed throughout the strategy, recognizing the different needs and impacts of conflict on men, women, boys, and girls of different ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

II. Commitment to Protection and Human Rights in the WoS Response

Whole of Syria Protection Cluster Strategy Objectives (from the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP))

1. Increase the protection of populations at risk from the consequences of the crisis through tailored protection activities to prevent, respond to, and advocate against rights violations.
2. Strengthen the capacity of humanitarian actors and duty bearers, with a focus on national and community-based actors, to assess, analyze, prevent, and respond to protection needs.
3. Survivors have access to quality specialized GBV services and measures are in place to prevent and reduce risks of GBV.
4. Reduce the impact of explosive hazards.
5. 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 Centrality of Protection and the SSG WoS Protection Strategy are an overarching approach to ensuring protection throughout the humanitarian response and incorporates, complements, or makes reference to the following protection and human rights initiatives across the response:

- **The 2017 Whole of Syria HRP Strategic Objective 2:** Enhance the prevention and mitigation of protection risks, and respond to protection needs through supporting the protective environment in the Syria, by promoting international law, IHL, IHRL, and through quality principled assistance.
- **Protection Sector Strategies/Workplans:** These are the basis for the planning of protection activities. They include an overall protection analysis and focus on the protection sectors' objectives to identify and respond to the protection needs of those most vulnerable, as a direct or indirect result of the conflict.
- **Human Rights up Front:** The initiative to monitor, prevent, and respond to serious violations of IHRL or IHL.

The SSG continues to emphasize the need for adherence to, support, and reinforcement of these and other existing protection initiatives. More specifically, the SSG encourages multi-sectoral protection strategies at hub and other area levels to capture and address more nuanced, detailed, area-specific, and operational protection concerns. Further, in implementing this strategy, the SSG emphasizes the need to adhere to the humanitarian imperatives of

¹<http://www.un.org/News/dh/pdf/english/2016/Human-Rights-up-Front.pdf> and <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/ban-ki-moon/human-rights-front-initiative>

humanity, neutrality, independence, impartiality, and “do no harm” in all aspects of humanitarian action, as well as the promotion of gender equality to support more effective protection of all affected persons in Syria.²

III. Protection Analysis

a. *Protection Risks*

Protection of affected civilians, in all of its forms, is being hindered or denied throughout much of Syria. Large population groups live in daily fear of mortar shells, airstrikes, chemical attacks, or gunfire. International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law continue to be breached with impunity by all parties to the conflict. Violations include extrajudicial killings; enforced disappearances; rape and other acts of gender-based violence (GBV); arbitrary arrests and detention; torture; disappearance; targeted and indiscriminate attacks against civilians not taking part in hostilities; violations against children (including recruitment and use by armed groups, killing and maiming, sexual violence, abductions, child labour and child marriage); violence aimed at spreading terror amongst the civilian population; the separation of families (including separated and unaccompanied children); restrictions on movement; the blocking of access to goods and services; targeting of humanitarian workers; forced relocations; involuntary movements; displacement; explosive hazards; and the looting and destruction of property.

Critically, the lack of respect for IHL has resulted in untold deaths and injuries, and an increase in persons living with war-related disabilities of all types (physical, mental, etc.). Persons living with disabilities often lack access to sufficient specific services and integration into – and adequate access to – humanitarian programmes and services.

Deliberate and indiscriminate attacks against schools, health facilities, water networks and electricity plants, places of worship, economic assets, and other civilian infrastructure continue unabated and unpunished. Some 4.7 million people live in hard-to-reach and besieged areas (for details see UN Security Council resolutions 2139, 2165, 2191, and 2245) with very limited access to basic services, including health care, education, and civil documentation, as well as essential daily needs like water, electricity, and food. As persons become internally displaced and civil documentation is lost, denied, or unattainable (for cost, mobility, accessibility, fear, or other reasons), issues related to housing, land, and property continue to grow. At the same time, in some parts of the country, there has been a voluntary return of internally displaced persons (IDP) to their areas of origin, that also need access to assistance and protection.³

As a result of targeted violence against them, many civilians have been displaced multiple times and continue to be exposed to ongoing protection threats, especially when they move in areas with shifting front lines. The numerous violations occurring in almost all locations throughout Syria show that protection issues are inter-linked and exposure to one risk increases vulnerability to others. Moreover, prolonged conflict has negatively impacted on the effectiveness of the usual protection mechanisms – including social and family protection networks and community-based structures. This, in turn, has increased the vulnerability of specific groups – notably those repeatedly displaced; children and adolescents; female-headed households; women and girls; older persons; persons with disabilities; conflict-affected Palestinian refugees; as well as other refugees and third country nationals (including migrant workers) - by creating greater protection risks. The lack of (or tightly regulated) access to much of the country not only hampers accountability to all segments of affected populations, but it further curtails participation and access to much needed assistance and basic services for to those already marginalised and vulnerable. In essence, at its core, Syria is a political crisis that has created a protection crisis, with humanitarian impacts that are devastating to its people.

²Gender Equality Programming is an umbrella term encompassing all strategies to achieve gender equality. Important examples include gender mainstreaming, gender analysis, prevention and response to GBV and SEA, promotion and protection of human rights, empowerment of women and girls, and gender balance in the workplace. (IASC Gender Equality Policy Statement 2008).

³Even in areas where there is some stability there remain numerous protection concerns for the population. Moreover, protection concerns resultant from social norms and harmful traditional practices that existed prior to the conflict continue (including early marriage, domestic violence), and, in some cases, have been exacerbated by the conflict.

b. Better Understanding of Protection – Protection Analysis

Although basic information about affected populations exists, there is increasing recognition that to inform its response the SSG requires a more consistent and regularly updated understanding and analysis on protection issues across the response. This will require the efforts of all humanitarians for the collection, coordination, and sharing of such information, and specific analysis at the hub level. Affected populations are living in different settings – many persons have been displaced a number of times, some IDPs have been able to voluntarily return, while other persons are restricted in the movements, and others have been involuntarily relocated. This, in turn, requires an updated understanding of the context and identification of specific needs. Furthermore, men, women, girls, and boys of different ages and abilities each experience conflict in different ways. It is important to understand their differences in needs, risks, and vulnerabilities in order to formulate an appropriate and effective response. To have this necessary level of understanding and to strengthen the humanitarian response, more analysis about protection is required: specifically, about who is under threat by whom and why; who is most vulnerable to the threats; what capacities exist for protection; in addition to an examination of overall trends of protection concerns. Such analysis should also inform the Humanitarian Needs Overview.

c. Challenges to the Provision of Protection

Challenges to the effectiveness of the protection sector persist. There are sustained gaps in coverage, particularly in the areas most affected by violence. 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 sometimes inadequate to meet the magnitude of needs. Humanitarian access (both physical access on a sustained basis, and freedom to operate without interference), implementation capacity (technical capacity and partnership opportunities), as well as funding gaps remain significant factors impeding the response.

Despite an increase over the past year of specialized humanitarian services and assistance to prevent and respond to rights violations, the overall picture is still grim. There are risks associated with accessing assistance: physical safety risks might arise at distribution points which can be subject to targeted attacks, and sexual exploitation and discrimination in assistance provision has been reported. Additionally, since resources cannot always keep up with the needs, and because of access constraints, there have been inter-communal tensions leading to violence between those receiving and not receiving assistance. The potential of the response to meet individual and community protection needs will continue to be constrained due to these on-the-ground conditions which will likely remain so for the foreseeable future. Compounding the problems, the institutions of government have been seriously impacted by the on-going conflict leaving civilians – in many instances – without effective access to justice and the means to defend or access their basic human rights, as well as in some cases, inability to, lack of information about, fear, or financial burdens with respect to accessing essential services, including obtaining civil documentation.

Crucially, and underpinning the challenges of delivering protection, is the fact that humanitarians, including protection actors, are sometimes forced to decide between the often competing principles of impartiality (serving those in need) and independence (no political interference in aid), and “doing no harm” (leaving people without any assistance at all, potentially causing greater harm).

The combination of lack of physical access in some parts of Syria and the inability to have sustained access in others; the politicization and manipulation of aid by parties to the conflict-including the inability to operate independently; the interference or restrictions on protection activities (including endangering certain persons by asking protection questions, the sensitivities of such questions, or potentially impeding access in others by such questions); and the lack of adherence to IHL and IHRL all contribute to an extremely challenging operating environment for protection, and a lack of full protection capacities. While advocacy in all its forms is an important tool to address some of the constraints on protection, advocacy itself can cause problems or lessen the effectiveness or reach of the response. If advocacy is not carefully done, consequences weighed, and targeted in the right way (quiet diplomacy versus denunciation, bilateral discussion versus public statement etc.) to the right persons and by the right persons, it could also potentially cause harm. Public advocacy, in particular, may have the negative consequences for operations and therefore has to be carefully calibrated according to the context, while ensuring that concerns are continually and adequately raised through appropriate *fora*.

Finally, humanitarians are told to address people in need while sometimes being put in the position of dealing with *de-facto* authorities whom they cannot be perceived to legitimise for fear of long standing political repercussions to the response, and potentially causing further harm to civilians. It is a difficult situation with potentially grave consequences whatever decision is taken. The presence and activities of terrorist organisations proscribed by the UN Security Council, as well as foreign and other fighters not answerable to any structure are additional complications.

These factors, all told, make it difficult to ensure sustained, meaningful protection of civilians.

IV. The SSG Whole of Syria Protection Strategy

Protection Outcome 1:	Protection of, and accountability to, affected persons are put at the centre of response, including by working to ensure that the response remains principled, avoids doing harm, and serves the most vulnerable and in need.
Gender Outcome 1:	Gender, along with age and diversity factors, is considered in all aspects of the response so that women and girls' needs, experiences, and capacities, as well as men and boys' of different ages and abilities are reflected throughout humanitarian response.
Protection Outcome 2:	Contribute to a protective environment whilst continually minimizing risk.
Gender Outcome 2:	Promote gender equality to contribute to a protective environment, particularly to enable the women and girls to obtain full respect of their rights.

b. Objectives of the Strategy

This strategy aims to support the SSG to prioritize its objectives and activities, and assign complementary roles with a view to maximize each partner's expertise, knowledge, and resources to deliver protection outcomes in the current humanitarian response. The strategy focuses on the issues that the SSG is best placed to provide vision for, or take action on, denoting other issues that – while of grave concern – should be, or are already, addressed by other processes, mechanisms, and stakeholders, or are better addressed by more nuanced, operational-level strategies. In other cases, they are beyond the scope of humanitarians' capacities to resolve at present, or require political solutions. Outside of this strategy, the SSG commits to continue principled, sustained advocacy to address serious matters beyond its purview, to try to hold accountable those who must take action, and to vigorously advocate for political solutions to the conflict.

b. Protection Priorities/Risks and Outcomes

The priorities of the SSG WoS Protection Strategy are based on the current context, and support achieving the Strategic Objectives set out in the WoS HRP 2017, with the main focus on direct, life-saving assistance and protection, as well as on increasing resilience and access to services. In addition, the priorities of the SSG WoS Protection Strategy intend to complement the Strategic Objectives of the WoS Protection Cluster Strategy and strengthen the ability of each sector to include protection as part of their own strategies and activities. Overall, this SSG WoS Protection Strategy aims to enhance the practical approach to achieving the HRP objectives with protection, gender, and advocacy at the core of the response across all sectors.

The two protection and gender outcomes, outlined below, provide an overarching focus for activities and provide guidance for humanitarian actors. As per the Whole of Syria approach, the implementation of this strategy will need to be tailored to the specific needs prevailing in each operational context.

The protection and gender outcomes addressed in this strategy, and detailed more fully in action plan (Annex II), are noted below:

Protection Outcome 1: **Protection of, and accountability to, affected persons are put at the centre of response, including by working to ensure that the response remains principled, avoids doing harm, and serves the most vulnerable and in need.**

Gender Outcome 1: **Gender, along with age and diversity factors, is considered in all aspects of the response so that women and girls’ needs, experiences and capacities, as well as men and boys’ of different ages and abilities are reflected throughout humanitarian response.**

The SSG commits to ensuring that protection and accountability to affected persons are placed at the centre of the humanitarian response in Syria, including by incorporating protection in service delivery by all the sectors and ensuring that partners provide equitable and meaningful access to assistance and essential services. By doing so, the SSG seeks to ensure that humanitarian action does not cause unintentional harm, but rather maximizes protection outcomes. The SSG strives to ensure that protection and gender considerations underpin interventions by all humanitarian actors during all stages of the project cycle, that individual rights are respected as part of programming, and that potential protection risks are identified from the outset and mitigated. Critically, the four protection mainstreaming principles:

- **Prioritize Safety & Dignity, and Avoid Causing Harm:** Prevent and minimize as much as possible any unintended negative effects of your intervention that can increase people's vulnerability to both physical and psychosocial risks.
- **Meaningful Access:** Arrange for people’s access to assistance and services – in proportion to need and without any barriers (e.g. discrimination). Pay special attention to individuals and groups who may be particularly vulnerable or have difficulty accessing assistance and services.
- **Accountability:** Set-up appropriate mechanisms through which affected populations can measure the adequacy of interventions, and address concerns and complaints.
- **Participation and empowerment:** Support the development of self-protection capacities and assist people to claim their rights, including – not exclusively – the rights to shelter, food, water and sanitation, health, and education.

must guide all interventions. Much needs to be done, especially so that each sector and all actors understand and consider the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement; child protection; gender; GBV; age; disability; non-discrimination; do no harm; and UXO/ERW/mine action in all their activities, and capacity is built to incorporate protection and gender principles in response. It is imperative that those who have specific needs and those who are most vulnerable are identified and prioritised.

With respect to accountability to affected persons, inclusion of Syrian humanitarian workers (who are at the forefront of the response) in decision making processes is vital,⁴ as well as is making all efforts to communicate with affected persons and, where possible, enabling participatory programmatic approaches. Syrian workers are at the forefront of the response, and lives have been saved because of their efforts working under extremely difficult circumstances to protect affected persons.

Protection Outcome 2: **Contribute to a protective environment whilst continually minimizing risk.**

Gender Outcome 2: **Promote gender equality to contribute to a protective environment, particularly to enable the women and girls to obtain full respect of their rights.**

A protective environment is one in which all individuals enjoy full respect for their rights in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law, regardless of their age, gender, ethnic, national, religious, or other background. As required and requested, the SSG commits to advocate, as advised and needed, on specific issues that contribute towards the aim of creating a protective environment. In particular, under this rubric, freedom of movement is not only a right on its own; it is also a pre-condition for the enjoyment of other rights and the free development of the person. Lack of freedom of movement hampers civilians’

⁴This is in line with “The New Way of Working” from the World Humanitarian Summit, which notes, “Efforts should reinforce and strengthen the capacities that already exist at national and local levels.”

ability to access life-saving assistance, and it can prevent them from using displacement as a protection strategy, from seeking asylum, or from voluntary return when internally displaced. The SSG commits to monitor and advocate for freedom of movement and choice of residence in safety and dignity. Protection analysis will contribute to a better understanding of the obstacles to freedom of movement – including understanding the political dynamics and motivators of parties controlling territories that restrict, regulate, force movement, discriminate, or prohibit civilians from freely choosing their place of residence.

Lack of civil documentation is an obstacle to free movement in many instances, and it can be a first step to ethnic or sectarian cleansing and to the exclusion of vulnerable women and children from society, as well as lead to statelessness. Ridding people of their legal identity makes it appear that they have never existed and makes it easier to take their lives and property and to abuse, exploit, recruit, detain, or traffic them. Inside Syria ongoing lack of birth, marriage, death, divorce registration and loss of property deeds will for many people have a long-term negative impact. The widespread disruption of governance structures has led to a breakdown of the rule of law and the overall effectiveness of public administration in many parts of the country, impeding access to legal remedies and justice, with civil registration services no longer functioning in areas outside government control and resulting in limited capacities even in some government-controlled areas. Moreover, physical registries have sometimes been destroyed and fees increased making access prohibitive. In non-government held areas, various incompatible systems have been established for the *ad hoc* issuance of civil status documentation, which is not recognized beyond these areas, and could lead to harm – particularly due to imputed political opinion. Thus, supporting civil documentation to be issued by the Government of Syria without discrimination or distinction is vital to complement efforts to increase freedom of movement.

Finally, over-arching protection analysis is a critical foundation to all humanitarian work, informs about what is hindering a protective environment, and how best to programme to address and mitigate protection concerns. With respect to this, as a key output of this strategy, regular protection analysis is expected to be undertaken, both at hub level and compiled at WoS level – recognizing the limitations of collecting and sharing information at the different hubs, and recognizing that information will never be comprehensive or complete. It is intended that within three (3) months of the approval of this strategy, basic common indicators to report, should be agreed to by the SSG with support of the protection sector at all levels, as well as regular timelines for conducting analysis.

c. Limitations

Considering the severity of the crisis in Syria and the related realities of limited access and inadequate coverage on the part of humanitarian actors, the SSG is under no illusions of the magnitude of the challenges. There can be no expectation that adequate protection services will be delivered countrywide in the short-term (as noted above in the challenges to protection section). Documentation of protection concerns is severely restricted, including by limitations placed on actors by authorities, and with response that is done remotely in some areas, or with extremely constrained time on the ground in others, humanitarians are frequently unable to monitor and assess protection concerns comprehensively. Human rights monitoring by OHCHR and the Commission of Inquiry are also limited, given their inability to access the country.

A large operation like the Syrian response, with its multiple hubs - each confronting differing realities, governance structures, changing lines of control, armed factions, challenges with response, and distinctive risks - makes creating an over-arching protection strategy challenging. Many of the protection challenges facing operational actors on the ground by their very nature, do not lend themselves to such proscriptive guidance, since how best to avoid harm requires contextualised analysis. While the four Sphere Protection Principles:

- Avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions.
- Ensure people's access to impartial assistance – in proportion to need and without discrimination.
- Protect people from physical and psychological harm arising from violence and coercion.
- Assist people to claim their rights, access available remedies and recover from the effects of abuse.

and their ancillary guidance provide some insight into how to conduct operations, in the case of Syria these core principles often contradict each other. Avoiding exposing people to harm can contradict with assisting people to claim their rights and access remedies, as they may suffer adverse consequences for doing so; or it may also

contradict with enabling impartial assistance in proportion to need, as giving some people assistance and not others could trigger tensions; asking protection questions could broadly impact the permission to operate, could have repercussions on the presence of the humanitarian actors in the country, or could expose people – including humanitarian workers – to harm. Permutations of these contradictions are seemingly endless. Thus, at best, humanitarians must do a protection risk analysis,⁵ whether it be at project level or inter-sector level, the HCT level, or in cases affecting the entire response, the Whole of Syria level, to determine the “best” option which causes the least harm. As the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action directs:

In practice, for a humanitarian response to be protection-oriented, it is essential to understand and seek to prevent, mitigate or end actual and potential risks, including violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, producing the harm that affected persons experience during a conflict or disaster. This requires a continuous analysis of risks people face, of threats, vulnerabilities and capacities of affected persons, and of the commitment and capacities of duty bearers to address risk factors. It also requires the identification of measures to reduce those risks, avoid exacerbating risk, including to stop and prevent violations, avoid reinforcing existing patterns of violence, abuse, coercion or deprivation and restoring safety and dignity to people’s lives. This analysis provides the evidence-base for programming, advocacy, and dialogue for the purpose of influencing and changing behaviours and policies in support of a more favourable protection environment.⁶

The answers to solve protection issues are not clear-cut. No black and white parameters can be put in place that addresses the nuances, risks, and political overtones of each scenario confronting humanitarians in different contexts. Each scenario confronted dictates analysis and weighing of principles and, at the highest levels, requires the guidance and support of the SSG where issues affect or potentially jeopardize the entirety of the response, or to address contradictory positions. Fundamentally, as noted above, without a political solution to the crisis – as well as sustained, unhindered, independent access to populations in need, and a respect for IHL and IHRL – protection efforts are, and will continue to be, very limited. Simply put, humanitarians cannot solve political problems.

That said, the SSG has chosen priorities that it believes can strengthen the response, noting some of the limitations in even addressing these priorities. Given the complexity of the protection crisis in Syria, several other protection priorities were noted as key, but have not been detailed in the action plan at this time for a variety of reasons. Many are advocacy points that fall into the existing advocacy framework within the Action Plan, or best fit in operational level strategies, and yet others already have specific, dedicated SSG processes and task forces. These protection concerns are noted and detailed in Annex I.

V. On-going Review and Monitoring

The Action Plan (Annex II) details lead responsibility for the overall implementation and critical actions under each of the protection outcomes. Each objective includes the main activities and indicators that can be monitored and measured. The activities are not exhaustive, and more specific activities should be included in operational plans. It should be noted, as well, that indicators listed on the Action Plan generally measure response rather than impact; this is related to access limitations, and relies on the professional capacities of those responding to use best efforts to maximize impacts. As access improves, indicators can be revisited.

The SSG WoS Protection Strategy is not static. It will adapt to the evolving situation and require the technical support of the Hub Protection Sector groups, the WoS Protection Cluster, and OHCHR, and all other sectors, as well as senior leadership at the hub level to provide a regular and updated understanding and analysis of protection risks and violations across the response so that the SSG can identify the most appropriate way to address these. An Action Plan for implementing the strategy is included in Annex II to:

- i. Have an efficient implementation approach, highlighting common outcomes, outputs, and activities;

⁵A protection risk analysis helps humanitarians to understand who is at risk, from what or whom as well as why, and the consequences humanitarian action or inaction may have on the threats people experience and their vulnerability and capacity to respond to these threats. A protection risk analysis should look at i) what is provoking and shaping the crisis dynamics and resultant situation; ii) what is triggering or will trigger threats; iii) who is vulnerable to these threats and why; and iv) how the foregoing impacts the coping mechanisms of all affected persons; v) Will programmes/response cause more harm than inaction, and how can potential harm or risks be mitigated. Doing a protection analysis can be supported, technically, by the protection sector, but must be principally carried out by the implementing actor or sector.

⁶https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc_policy_on_protection_in_humanitarian_action_0.pdf

- ii. Strengthen the SSG’s ability to address protection priorities effectively; and
- iii. Underscore the roles and responsibilities of all humanitarian actors.

The SSG and the WoS Inter-Sectoral Group, with the technical support and guidance of the hub protection sector groups, WoS Protection Cluster Leads and OHCHR, should review the Action Plan and Strategic Priorities regularly, and update them as required, depending on progress, new priorities, or changes in context – including increased or decreased access. Discussion of this strategy and related progress and challenges should be considered under the Standing Item on Protection on the monthly SSG agenda.

The SSG, in its monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, should ensure that best practices are collected by hub in terms of successful activities done under this and subsequent operational strategies, as well as challenges and what did not work well or could be improved and adapt the strategy accordingly. With respect to advocacy, it is useful also to record positive/negative reactions to interventions to indicate what may have worked most effectively and what commitments were made, although demonstrating causality will be difficult.

The RHC, DHRC, or HC Syria should convene regular protection roundtables in the hubs on a quarterly basis. Additionally, the SSG should conduct workshops after six months, and at the end of one year to measure the progress on the strategy.

Finally, in formulating operational-level action plans and strategies, sectoral working groups should be guided this strategy to ensure that their plans and strategies work to reinforce and support the aims of the SSG strategy.

ANNEX I: OTHER KEY PROTECTION PRIORITIES

- i. **Humanitarian Access:** The lack of safe, unimpeded, independent, and sustained access for humanitarians operating in Syria remains the greatest obstacle to assistance and protection, as at the time of writing there is not a permissive environment. As a caveat of this policy, humanitarian access is a precursor to achieving many the protection outcomes/outputs denoted within this strategy (as they require access to populations, and the sustained presence of protection actors), and access is an over-arching issue that is addressed operationally at hub level, and through an access task force reporting to the SSG. In light of this, and guided by the IASC Protection Policy 2016 which notes of protection strategies, “The objective should be to ensure that strategies are streamlined, complementary, and mutually reinforcing, and to avoid duplication, including at the delivery level,” access has not been listed as a priority *per se*, but is nonetheless seen as underpinning and intricately interlinked to the protection strategy. Thus, the protection strategy and the work of the access task force should be viewed as complementary and mutually reinforcing, and the access task force must be guided by protection principles. As access increases, the SSG will review this strategy and discuss adding further priorities. In the meantime, the SSG, the HC Syria, the RHC, and the DRHC, will continue to advocate with authorities and all parties to the conflict for safe, unimpeded, independent, and sustained access, including free movement of staff, the granting of visas for staff across the response – particularly to conduct protection activities and assessments without interference – and will be guided by the work of the access task force.
- ii. **Protection of Syrian Humanitarian Workers:** The issue of targeting of Syrian humanitarian workers and ensuring their protection is of deep concern to the SSG and all stakeholders in the response. The importance of this issue cannot be overemphasized, and thus the SSG has created a task force to report to them on this issue. The work of the task force must be complementary and necessarily interlinked and supportive to this protection strategy.
- iii. **Explosive Hazards:** The clearance of landmines, unexploded ordnance, cluster munitions, improvised explosive devices and other explosive hazards remains of concern, and the SSG will continue to advocate for humanitarian mine action experts to obtain access to enable this important work. It will also call upon those at higher levels to lend their support to enable this to happen.
- iv. **Housing, Land, and Property (HLP):** HLP issues are of concern, and will have long term implications as populations are forcibly displaced or flee, cannot freely choose their residence, and when persons voluntarily return. HLP issues existed prior the conflict, and have also been exacerbated by the conflict. HLP concerns are now widely agreed to be critical in the quest for long-term stability following conflict. These concerns relate to conflicts over access to land and resources; discrimination; ethnic or political cleansing; displacement and forced eviction; loss of HLP documentation; the destruction or damage of property; the loss of productive lands due to the presence of explosive hazards; disinheritance – particularly of women and children; secondary occupation of displaced persons’ homes; the right to restitution; the complexity and inconsistency of the legal framework; the weakening of State institutions responsible for promoting and protecting HLP rights, as well as, in some cases, a lack of recognition of HLP rights by duty bearers. Specifically, if the rights of displaced persons to voluntarily return to their choice of residence after conflict are not fully recognized, the residual impact of the conflict may never entirely dissipate, with unresolved HLP rights and claims potentially leading to renewed conflict.

The SSG will continue to advocate to the Syrian government, as duty-bearer, to uphold its obligations with respect to these rights, as well as that issues related to HLP be addressed and included in peace agreements.

- v. **Gender-Based Violence:** GBV is pervasive throughout Syria in all its iterations.⁷ Women and girls suffer disproportionately from it, although it also affects men and boys. Ensuring the response addresses this critical

⁷Some GBV issues existed pre-conflict related to social norms and harmful traditional practices (e.g. early marriages, domestic violence), as well as legal provisions that disadvantage women in claiming their rights. During the crises other types of GBV have emerged including serial temporary marriages that increases the risk to unregistered children.

issue remains a priority, but proper response arises from good protection analysis and effective targeting using a protection lens. Thus the SSG strategy considers this an important priority and considers prevention and response part of creating a protective environment, and believes more specific multi-sectoral strategies at the operational level best serve to address these concerns, but emphasizes the need to consider this issue in analysis, risk assessment etc. by all sectors and consider services for those affected.

- vi. **Child Protection Concerns:** Children form some 50% of the affected population, and their specific needs and protection are an important priority. In creating a protective environment, the needs of boys and girls and considering them in protection analysis to inform programming is essential. In this regard, ensuring the collection and analysis of information through the UN Security Council mandated Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Violations against Children is part of developing appropriate responses to respond to their needs.⁸ The SSG will solicit regular briefings on the observations and analysis arising from the MRM, support ongoing and future advocacy and dialogue efforts on children and armed conflict, and ensure strengthened contributions of its individual members to the work of the MRM in-country and the sub-region. More specific multi-sectoral strategies at operational level best serve the nuances detailed by analysis to address these concerns, and the SSG emphasizes the need to ensure that all the sectors integrate child protection and examine the specific needs of boys and girls.
- vii. **Persons with Disabilities, Survivors of Torture, Older Persons, and Other Groups of Concern with Specific Needs:** There are many groups with specific needs, and in particular in the case of Syria with the alarming increase in persons with disabilities of all types (as well as an existing group of persons with pre-existing conditions), older persons, particularly those without family support, survivors of torture and unlawful detention, and other rights violations leading to trauma, physical wounds, and psycho-social concerns. These groups need to be specifically considered in all sector plans, and fall under the rubric in this strategy of contributing to the creation of a protective environment, as well as putting protection at the centre by ensuring that their specific needs are mainstreamed into assessments in order to serve those with the greatest need and vulnerability. Their specific needs should be addressed and taken into account in operational level strategies.
- viii. **The Long-Term Consequences of Failure to Protect Affected Persons:** In addition to advocacy to find solutions and for the protection of rights, the SSG in its advocacy efforts must also be clear of the long-term, devastating human consequences if solutions are not found and civilians are not protected. Highlighting stories that show the real and painful effects of the conflict, in addition to legal and rights based advocacy must alert the world to the devastating consequences of inaction.

⁸See Security Council Resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009).

ANNEX II
SSG PROTECTION STRATEGY-ACTION PLAN

- This action plan represents the outcomes and outputs of the SSG Protection Strategy.
- The *main activities* for each outcome/output are examples of the overall activities needed to achieve each outcome/output. These will be accompanied by additional activities, which will arise from and be included in sector operational planning in line with this strategy after its endorsement. Indicators – because of limited access – are largely limited to process indicators but should be adjusted to impact indicators where access permits.

OVERALL PROTECTION GOAL: Address protection through a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach that is central to all phases of the response in Syria.							
OVERALL GENDER EQUALITY GOAL: Ensure that humanitarian actors incorporate gender equality programming in throughout the response.							
Protection Outcome 1: Protection of, and accountability to, affected persons are at the centre of response, including by working to ensure that the response remains principled, avoids doing harm, and serves the most vulnerable and in need.							
Gender Outcome 1: Gender, along with age and diversity factors, is considered in all aspects of the response so that women and girls' needs, experiences and capacities, as well as men and boys' of different ages and abilities are reflected throughout humanitarian response.							
Outputs	Indicators	Main Activities	Indicators	Focal Point	Other Responsible Actors	Status Update	Limitations and Assumptions and Notes
Protection Output 1.1 Interventions by humanitarian/recovery actors, including in newly accessible areas, are supported by a thorough protection risk / Do no harm/ and conflict sensitivity analysis (referred to as PRA) to promote rights-based approaches.	1.1.1 % of programmes in the HRP conducting analysis.	a. Basic standards set for PRA analysis.	a. Basic standards/guide lines have been set.	a. SSG with support of Protection sector and AoRs, at all levels.	Other sector members.		It will not always be possible to guarantee the quality or to measure the impact of the protection risk/conflict sensitivity analysis as access to areas of intervention is limited. Moreover, gathering relevant information is challenging because of a lack of trust by the local populations, the manipulation of
	1.1.2 % of situations when joint analysis is conducted at Inter-sector/hub level on specific situations in order to shape the plans/response (emergency response, micro-plans, etc.).	b. Conduct PRA (at all levels of response- i.e. project, programme, and response plans - including micro-plans, contingency plans (in such response plans joint	b PRA is done and analysis is provided. b.1. The number of projects funded in the HRP that are informed by PRA and directly contribute to a protection outcome.	<i>b. For sector⁹ based Interventions:</i> Sector coordinator (see output 1.4 as well). <i>For Agency/Organization Specific Interventions:</i> Agency/Organization <i>For Inter-agency Interventions:</i> head of HCT/HLG/CBWG with the support of	Protection sector and AoRs, at all levels and OHCHR to provide technical support to do analysis including where appropriate standards/gui		

⁹The term sector refers also to clusters.

	1.1.3 % of plans designed in accordance with PRA to mitigate risks (demonstrated by how plan reflects and mitigates risks identified).	analysis would be appropriate).		the inter-sector. (Joint analysis).	dance for the analysis.		information, the rapid evolution of the situation on the ground, and the need to protect national staff members involved in the analysis. Given the scant information about many areas, and the capacity of partners on the ground, the ability to do a proper analysis will be limited. In addition to the reluctance to discuss or share protection information, there is also a reluctance to collect it, which could limit analysis. Lack of full protection staffing in some areas could also impede analysis.
		c. SSG to provide redline guidance about activities/interventions where requested by hubs on specific issues arising from the analysis.	c. SSG provides clear red line guidance and feedback when requested by HLG/HCT/CBWG	HC Syria, RHC, DHRC, SSG.	HCT/CBWG/HLG to bring forward issues arising in their hubs.		
Protection Output 1.2 Communication with affected populations using relevant, and accessible communication mechanisms.	1.2.1 % of organizations deploying resources for communications with affected communities and staff capacity at field level.	a. Provide all information possible to affected communities at minimum about: •Services and assistance available and eligibility for services.	a. HRP review reports include a community accountability component.	Sector lead agencies Sector members individually who have programme/projects.	Support from Public Information staff/communication groups.		While two-way communication is the ideal, without sustained access, responding to complaints, ensuring meaningful feedback, and referral to sustained quality services is not often possible. Raising expectations

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their rights to access services without charge. • That civilians will be provided services based on need no matter what side of the front lines they are on, even if those front lines change. 					<p>in this regard could do more harm.</p> <p>Sensitivities by certain actors to the term AAP may be a limitation. Capacity of partners may be an obstacle.</p> <p>It was noted/observed that civilians are unaware of their rights or fearful to ask for humanitarian assistance when front lines shift control.</p> <p>Specific attention should be paid to ensure women and girls receive information through networks and means that are accessible to them.</p>
Protection/Gender Output 1.3 Renewed efforts in the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) through increased support and resources in various hubs for capacity building and sensitization.	1.3.1 Humanitarian leadership (SSG) has set up a system or strengthened existing systems to address PSEA concerns, including a PSEA taskforce.	a. Resources dedicated to PSEA, including setting up PSEA task force.	a. Number of human resources mobilized to support PSEA, including PSEA task force.	SSG/PSEA task force.	All agencies and organizations.		When access is able to be maintained and full services operational, protocols and standard operating procedures for incident reporting must be activated, and outreach and awareness activities increased. Otherwise, without the ability to
		b. Code of Conduct is signed by all humanitarian actors.	b. Conduct for all Humanitarian Actors and such commitment is requirement to have a project in HRP.	SSG/PSEA task force.	All agencies and organizations.		

		c. Training on PSEA.	c. PSEA is a mandatory component of staff induction to the mission (like security). # staff who have received PSEA training.	SOG/PSEA task force.	All agencies and organizations.		meaningfully respond and refer, there is the possibility of doing more harm. Certain national NGOs in Syria might be very reluctant to sign a code of conducts, considering that the GoS views accountability towards the beneficiaries as the exclusive prerogative of the state.
		d. PSEA focal points are in place across the hubs.	d. # of focal points.	SOG/ PSEA task force.			
		e. Protocols and Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) developed for response to incidents of PSEA.	e. Protocols and SOPs have been developed.	SOG/PSEA task force.			
Protection Output/Gender Output 1.4 Uptake and incorporation of protection and gender, mainstreaming ¹⁰ by all sector leads in their respective sectors.	1.4.1 Each sector in designing their sector specific strategies and responses relies on an analysis that fully integrates the principles of do no harm, access, participation and empowerment of and accountability to affected populations.	a. Sectors, International and Syrian NGOs, and UN agencies mainstream protection and gender in plans and activities with the guidance and support of the Protection sector and AoRs (such support	a. #of initiatives or activities to support mainstreaming (as per requests) by protection sector and AoRs.	All Sectors Protection Sector and AoRs, Gender /GBV Focal points to support.			Mainstreaming support must be tailored to need and nuances of local situations, rather than generic checklists created at a central level. It is noted limited access and the politicisation of aid, by their nature, will limit mainstreaming efforts.

¹⁰Protection mainstreaming by its nature must consider differences in age, gender, and diversity.

	1.4.2 HRP 2018 prioritizes protection and gender mainstreaming, including protection risk assessment in projects.	should be based on expressed need and nuanced to context).					<p>Of particular note for doing mainstreaming in this response, is recognising the increased number of persons with disabilities (of all types) who need specific focus to ensure meaningful access to services.</p> <p>Gender/GBV mainstreaming means paying specific attention in response and programmes to the specific needs of women and girls to address inequalities in participation and access, as well as to the needs of men and boys. The new IASC guidelines should be considered by all sectors.</p>
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<p>Protection Output/Gender Output 1.5 Engagement, support, and investment in Syrian humanitarian organizations that are working directly with affected populations providing protection and assistance. (This means also including Syria humanitarian workers in decision making <i>fora</i>, being mindful to include Syrian women in such <i>fora</i>.)</p>	<p>1.5.1 Regular participation in meetings, increased and sustained funding, and capacity building that responds to stated needs is provided.</p> <p>Gender 1.5.1 % of Syrian women participating in decision-making <i>fora</i>.</p>	<p>a. Inclusion of Syrian humanitarian workers, and Syrian women’s representatives in high-level meetings, including the SSG, and hub level decision making <i>fora</i>.</p>	<p>a. % of Syrian humanitarian representatives included in high-level meetings, including % of Syrian women included in such meetings.</p>	<p>HC Syria, RHC, DRHC.</p>	<p>HCT/HLG/CBWG.</p>	<p>Funding to Syrian NGOs is often project-based and based upon a short-term vision. International actors should also offer comprehensive rather than piecemeal support to Syrian NGO networks to build strong relationships with their members.</p> <p>Given the lack of access to affected populations, the voices of Syria humanitarian workers who are closest to affected persons need to be heard.</p> <p>Ensuring there is adequate protection staffing available and able to operate independently to work with partners to build capacity is critical.</p> <p>Counter-terrorism legislation limits what can be done in terms of funding, which may need advocacy for change, but only where appropriate.</p>
		<p>b. Support capacity building on protection for Syrian humanitarian organizations where needed and requested.</p>	<p>b. # of initiative for capacity building based on request.</p>	<p>Protection sector and AoRs at hub level, Protection staff, Gender/GBV focal points/gender working groups and OHCHR.</p>		
		<p>c. Dedicated efforts made to increase funding to Syrian humanitarian groups.</p>	<p>c. % increase in funding in 2018.</p>	<p>HC Syria, RHC, DRHC, OCHA, WoS Sector Leads.</p>	<p>HCT/HLG/CB WG, Sector leads at hub level.</p>	

<p>1.6 Enhanced dialogue with the Government of Syria to create more genuine protection partnership opportunities inside Syria.</p>	<p>1.6.1. More protection actors allowed to operate in Syria in order to increase expertise and partnership opportunities, contributing to improved quality in protection analysis and response.</p>	<p>a. Humanitarian leadership to dialogue with the GoS to relieve bureaucratic impediments that prevent the presence of more protection actors in the country.</p>	<p>a. # of interventions made by the SSG with the GoS. # of new protection actors able to operate in the country.</p>	<p>SSG, HC, RHC.</p>	<p>Protection Cluster Lead Agency.</p>		<p>The GoS regulates the number of national partners with whom protection agencies are authorized to cooperate, not necessarily based on competency.</p> <p>At the same time, the possibility for other international NGOs with protection expertise to operate in Syria is restricted. This has negative consequences on the overall protection capacity, as well as on the possibility to build the capacity of local NGOs.</p>
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Protection Outcome 2: Contribute to a protective environment whilst continually minimizing risk.

Gender Outcome 2: Promote gender equality to contribute to a protective environment, particularly to enable the women and girls to obtain full respect of their rights.

	Indicators	Main Activities	Indicators	Focal Point	Other Responsible Actors	Status Update	Limitations, Assumptions, and Notes
<p>Protection Output 2.1 Reinforced protection analysis with the cooperation and input of all sectors is used to inform response.</p> <p>Gender Outcome 2.1 Enhanced protection of women and girls by ensuring attention to gender within protection analysis.</p>	<p>2.1.1 Protection analysis is discussed at SSG, HCT/HLG/CBWWG, inter-sector for planning of response.</p> <p>2.1.2 Response plans reference protection analysis.</p> <p>Gender 2.1.1 Specific attention to gender and gender inequality in protection/gender analysis, as well as age and diversity.</p>	<p>a. Protection analysis is done at the hub level to feed into the WoS analysis and enable tailored responses, including resilience-building measures.¹¹</p>	<p>a. # of times per year hubs conduct protection analysis.</p>	<p>a. Analysis guided by Protection Sector and AoRs, Gender/GBV focal points/Gender Working Groups and OHCHR with information and content provided by Sector Lead Agencies/Inter-sector and DSS, INSO or other organizations that may be present in the hub.</p>	<p>HCT/HLG/CBWWG to review and sign off on analysis.</p>		<p>The fragmentation and changing alliances inside and outside Syria make it difficult to track and respond to violations, so underreporting is rife. The politicization of humanitarian work means many organizations are not reporting or are afraid to report violations as a matter of course, or even discuss, collect, or share more general protection information. This will create enormous challenges in trying to do protection analysis.</p> <p>While analysis can be done with existing information, more</p>
		<p>b. Common indicators are put in place to report against in analysis.</p>	<p>b. Common indicators agreed to within 3 months of the endorsement of this strategy.</p>	<p>b. SSG with support of protection section and AoRs at all levels, OHCHR, and other WoS Sector Leads.</p>			
		<p>c. Protection analysis of threats and vulnerabilities is provided to humanitarian leadership at WoS level by synthesizing</p>	<p>c. # of times of WoS protection analysis is conducted and presented to SSG.</p>	<p>OHCHR with WoS Protection Cluster Leads.</p>			

¹¹Resilience refers to the ability of individuals, households, communities, and societies to withstand shocks and stresses, recover from such stresses.

		hub level protection.					access will improve analysis. Analysis under this rubric is done to inform programmatic response, and thus if not perfect or complete, or is more general indicating trends, it might still better enable programmatic response.
		d. Protection information is shared at the hub level to inform protection analysis.	d. Information sharing method established at each hub based on their specific needs and risks.	HCT/HLG/CBWG.	Support of hub level protection sector, OHCHR, inter-sector, and OCHA.		
		e. Ensure standardized methodology to report on core violations of all parties to the conflict for advocacy purposes.	e. Standardized methodology developed for core violations of all parties to the conflict is in place, with appropriate information management in place.	SOG.	OHCHR.		Analysis will require dedicated, qualified protection and gender specialized personnel, both to enable information sharing, as well as to perform the analysis. This is a gap, particularly in Syria.
		f. Reports of core violations are produced on at least a quarterly basis highlighting advocacy messages.	f. Reports produced.	OHCHR			WoS Protection Analysis carries the risk of appearing biased if it cannot be comprehensively done Syria wide, and release of information other than for programmatic or response use must be considered in terms of the harm it could do.

							<p>The format of the analysis shall be decided by the hubs to maximize effectiveness in their context.</p> <p>For advocacy on core violations there will need to be standardized methodology and verification of the information.</p>
<p>Protection Output/Gender 2.2 Advocacy around IHL/HRL, including on targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure is informed by protection analysis, including highlight specific issues that impact women, especially gender inequality.</p>	<p>2.2.1 # of specific advocacy interventions generated by protection analysis.</p>	<p>a. Hub level messages on specific issues developed by inter-sector and approved by leadership and circulated prior to SSG meeting.</p>	<p>a. # of hub level/issue specific message developed.</p>	<p>HCT/HLG/CBWG.</p>	<p>OHCHR, Sector Leads, NGO <i>fora</i>.</p>		
	<p>2.2.2 #of advocacy interventions taken up by OSE or ERC or HTF.</p> <p>2.2.3 Reactions to advocacy by target (negative or positive).</p> <p>Gender: 2.2.1 # of advocacy interventions that highlight issues gender inequality.</p>	<p>b. SSG to identify priorities, including addressing and deciding on contradicting positions, as well as to feed more senior political levels with advocacy points.</p>	<p>b. SSG identifies priorities and creates advocacy points for political actors and themselves.</p>	<p>SSG</p>			

Protection Output 2.3 Enhance protection by advocacy for freedom of movement.	2.3.1 # of advocacy interventions to promote freedom of movement (FoM). 2.3.2 # and nature of actions taken by the parties to the conflict to enable freedom of movement. 2.3.3 Information and analysis is available to IDPs on relevant issues, including on access to services, especially for vulnerable groups.	a. Monitor and assess all obstacles to freedom of movement, in particular for vulnerable groups, as part of protection analysis.	a. Obstacles to freedom of movement discussed at SSG meetings.	SSG	HCT/HLG /CBWG OHCHR, Syrian International NGO Forum (SIRF). Inter-sector, CCCM, Protection Sector at the hub level feeding into a WoS Analysis (see 2.1-FoM should be considered in protection analysis).		
		b. Incorporate explosive hazard risk education across sectors.	b. Explosive risk hazard education is considered in response plans, and sector plans.	Mine action AoR, including WoS Mine Action.	All Sectors		
		c. Advocate with the parties to the conflict to ensure freedom of movement, including enabling civilians to freely choose their place of residence.	c. # of advocacy interventions on freedom of movement.	HC Syria, DHRC, RHC, to advocate or to pass information to higher levels including OSE and HTF where appropriate.	HCT/HLG/CB WG to craft messages from their hubs with support from Protection Sector Lead UNHCR, OHCHR as requested.		

		<p>d. Support initiatives for the restoration or provision of civil status documentation from the Government of Syria (GoS) - including by advocacy to donors for adequate funding, and by supporting and advocating with the GoS to facilitate access, and remove obstacles, (including fees) to obtaining documentation."</p>	<p># of high-level advocacy interventions regarding documentation issues.</p> <p>Funding for documentation initiatives.</p> <p># number of programmes/ initiatives to support documentation, including cross-border initiatives.</p>	<p>SSG, HC Syria, RHC, DRHC.</p>	<p>HCT/HLG/CB WG.</p> <p>Protection Sector, including protection sector lead agency UNHCR.</p>	<p>As a caution, however, in certain areas requiring or asking for documentation can pose risks, and thus the SSG stresses requests for documentation must be voluntary and should not endanger affected persons. It notes also that linking documentation to assistance could, in some cases, cause harm, and cautions against this in such cases, and alternate forms of identifying persons such as witnesses could be used.</p> <p>Duty bearers, i.e. recognized state authorities must issue documentation.</p>
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ANNEX III
SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS OF DRAFTING THE SSG WoS PROTECTION STRATEGY

An SSG strategy for protection was first drafted and endorsed by the SSG in October 2015. However, the strategy was felt to be too long, and a decision was taken by the SSG to update the strategy in 2017. A task force led by a Procap and supported by OHCHR and the Whole of Syria Protection Leads (NRC and UNHCR) was appointed to lead the process.

The process started in April 2017, with a plan of how to undertake the task, and timelines which was presented to the SSG at their meeting at the end of April 2017 and was approved by the SSG. From there, starting in May 2017, the Procap, supported by the task force undertook consultations with different constituencies of stakeholders (Protection clusters/sectors and AoRs, inter-sectoral groups, human rights actors, NGO *fora* (national and international), and the HCT/HLG/CBWG) across the hubs (Syria, Turkey, and Jordan), as well as in Lebanon, and with donors. Stakeholders were asked to suggest protection risks or issues they felt that the strategy should address, and frame what they wanted to achieve in terms of protection outcomes. The SSG was updated about the consultation process and the outcomes of it at their meeting on May 28, 2017.

A first draft of the strategy was sent to the hubs, Lebanon, and donors on June 8, 2017. The three hubs and Lebanon were asked to submit consolidated feedback (one submission per hub) by June 18, agreeing on two protection priorities per hub, and donors were met with to discuss their feedback.

A second draft of the strategy, incorporating the feedback received, was prepared and sent to the SSG for comments on June 28, 2017, with comments due on July 6.

A final draft of the strategy was prepared and submitted to the SSG on July 11, 2017 to be endorsed at the next meeting of the SSG.