



 **SOUTH SUDAN HCT**
CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION

Strategy
2020



| The Centrality of Protection in South Sudan

The centrality of protection means more than protection mainstreaming. It includes ensuring that leadership, coordination, and engagement in protection and all sectors is more strategic, aligned and directed toward a stronger response. While protection of the rights of people is primarily the duty of member states and, in conflict, the parties to a conflict, Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams are responsible for ensuring that protection is the purpose and intended outcome of humanitarian response.

The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action, Q&A, Global Protection Cluster

Background & rationale

South Sudan remains a protection crisis with civilians subject to widespread and grave violations of their rights and limited access to life-saving services. The primary responsibility to protect civilians within South Sudanese territory lies with the Government of the Republic of South Sudan. In line with the IASC statement on the Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action (2013), all humanitarian action must be aimed at enhancing the protection of affected and at-risk populations and ensuring that humanitarian operations do no harm. Protection is a central, shared responsibility of the senior leadership of the humanitarian response, and a priority area for which all members of the HCT are mutually accountable, as outlined in the 2018 HCT compact. The Centrality of Protection recognizes the complementarity of different mandates of humanitarian agencies and actors in working toward improving protection for affected populations.

The HCT Protection Strategy provides the strategic guidance necessary for addressing South Sudan's humanitarian protection concerns through a coordinated and coherent, multi-sectoral approach to response and advocacy. The strategy incorporates inputs from members of the HCT. Members of all sectors are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the HCT Protection Strategy, and the Protection Cluster, with the GBV, Child Protection and Mine Action Sub-Clusters, has the responsibility to provide technical guidance for its operational implementation.

The strategy covers the period of one year with the aim to reflect the fluid and uncertain nature of the situation for early 2020. The potential exists for highly disparate impacts on the protection situation depending upon political and conflict developments early in 2020. The one-year duration of the strategy will permit an early stocktaking of the situation following these developments and adjustment of the strategic priority areas of focus for 2020/2021 and beyond as needed. As such, the strategy will be a working document to address existing protracted as well as emerging and pressing protection concerns, requiring a multi-sectoral response or high-level intervention by the HCT. A concise implementation plan that details critical priorities, geographic areas, and responsibilities as well as linkages and complementarities with other actors and initiatives can be found at Annex I.



Key Protection Focus Areas

While recognizing the multitude of serious protection concerns in South Sudan, the scope of this HCT Protection Strategy is narrowed to focus on a limited number of key protection priorities in need of a comprehensive and system-wide response by the HCT. Based on ongoing protection monitoring and an analysis of risks, threats and needs, these key protection priorities for the HCT in South Sudan are as follows:

- Promoting respect for IHL, IHRL and refugee law by all parties to the conflict through collective advocacy and prioritization of humanitarian response activities which contribute to the protection of civilians.

Protection of civilians



- Ensuring access to protection and services for the most vulnerable and people with specific needs, while mitigating the repercussions of risk of famine, disease outbreaks and collapsing livelihoods on individual and community coping capacities and the potential for violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation.

Vulnerable groups and persons with specific needs



- Ensuring that the response to the protection needs of affected populations is systematically put in effect through mainstreaming and integration of protection across the humanitarian response.

Protection mainstreaming and integration



| Key Protection Principles

- Protection-oriented planning and programming
- Accountability to affected populations (AAP)
- Non-discrimination in the context of impartial humanitarian action
- Internal displacement and international refugee law
- Humanitarian access
- Human security and vulnerability

Centrality of Protection – Priority Areas

To ensure that protection is at the center of the humanitarian response, the HCT commits to prioritizing four key initiatives. Each priority initiative has a number of strategic areas outlined in the following pages.

Priority 1



Prevention of sexual exploitation & abuse (PSEA)

The HCT will commit to ensuring that mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to SEA are strengthened and meet required minimum core humanitarian standards.

Priority 2



Safe & dignified access to life-saving assistance

The HCT will commit to ensuring that life saving assistance is prioritized based on needs and is delivered in a manner that is safe, dignified and accountable to those being served.

Priority 3



Prevention, mitigation, or end of grave violations.

The HCT will commit to ensuring strengthened advocacy and accountability for all violations of rights

Priority 4



Prevention of protracted displacement

The HCT will commit to ensuring that all humanitarian activities are implemented through the lens of multi-dimensional early recovery.

Priority 1

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation & Abuse

Context & Objective: Incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) have grave impacts on affected individuals and communities, contravene humanitarian principles, and jeopardize the humanitarian response. Humanitarian actors – both UN and NGOs – must have mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to SEA and meet required minimum core humanitarian standards. Existing mechanisms for the prevention, reporting, and investigation of SEA need to establish stronger linkages between the UN and NGO communities. There is also a need to continue to support the effective operation of the PSEA Task Force.

<p>.1 Advocacy: Robust multi-lateral advocacy with key stakeholders such as national and local level actors, humanitarians, Heads of Agencies, private sector and peacekeeping mission. In particular national and local actors could be support in reporting mechanism and community sensitization.</p>	<p>Heads of Agencies, NGOs</p>
<p>1.2 Accountability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen accountability measures for all humanitarian actors through protocols, process, and concrete action plans for PSEA. - Ensure a common awareness strategy and reporting mechanism for all UN and non-UN entities. - Improved accountability of all relevant actors for the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and expansion of geographic coverage of SEA reporting mechanism. - Ensure that the geographic coverage of PSEA measures is guarantee in all South Sudan, with capacity to receive SEA complaints, appropriately handling confidential and sensitive information, ensuring the safety of survivor. 	<p>Heads of Agencies, NGOs.</p>
<p>1.3 Services: Strengthen availability of services to survivors / encourage awareness raising and outreach on available services. Strengthen the report and response mechanism.</p>	<p>Agencies and NGOs</p>
<p>1.4 Resources: Support national NGOs compliance in meeting minimum requirements to have internal mechanism in place or defined access to external, collective mechanisms to respond to allegations of SEA. Allocate adequate resources for community sensitization on SEA and awareness raising on reporting mechanisms.</p>	<p>Heads of Agencies, NGOs, UNCT, RCO.</p>
<p>1.5 Risk identification and management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase numbers of SEA risk assessment conducted and risk mitigation plan developed. - Ensure PSEA mainstreaming at all cluster level. 	<p>Heads of Agencies, NGOs, Cluster coordinators.</p>
<p>1.6 Coordination:</p> <p>Support the effective operation of the PSEA Task Force</p>	<p>Heads of Agencies, NGOs</p>

Priority 2

Safe & Dignified Access to Life Saving Assistance

The safety and dignity of affected populations is increasingly compromised as they are exposed to protection risks while moving to and remaining in areas where assistance is available, including restricted freedom of movement and exposure to direct attacks, trafficking and heightened risk of GBV. In addition, the capability of humanitarians to deliver life-saving assistance to affected populations is compromised by on-going insecurity, attacks on and killing of humanitarian workers, denial of humanitarian access, facilitated or spontaneous population movements, and resource constraints. Persistent political instability and conflict contribute to a fragile humanitarian and protection environment, which requires continuous analysis and deliberation for principled humanitarian action.

The HCT will commit to ensuring that life-saving assistance is prioritised based on needs identified by the affected populations and is delivered in a manner that is safe, dignified and accountable to those being served.

STRATEGIC AREA	ACCOUNTABILITY
<p>2.1 Advocacy: Develop and implement an HCT advocacy action plan to ensure that duty-bearers are accountable for their responsibilities and that the HCT body take leadership on key humanitarian advocacy points as well as taking timely and decisive advocacy actions on urgent issues affecting safe and dignified access to life saving assistance. HCT to engage with actors constraining humanitarian access.</p>	HCT
<p>2.2 Needs-based response: Ensure that humanitarian assistance is prioritized based on needs, irrespective of status, gender, ethnicity or other characteristics, or whether someone is an IDP, returnee, refugee or host community member by ensuring that the HRP, funding, coordination and response is needs-based and that all inter-agency needs assessment tools are standardized across clusters and agencies. In an environment with highly complex political and conflict dynamics, this also requires that assistance is informed at HCT level by a nuanced understanding of local power dynamics, is conflict-sensitive, and prioritizes the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.</p>	Strategic: HCT Operational: ICWG
<p>2.3 Protection analysis: Ensure that there is national and regional quarterly analysis of protection risks and trends through primary and secondary monitoring and that protection analysis is communicated to the HCT and ICWG for prioritization of assistance. Protection information sharing protocols should be established to ensure sensitive information is shared responsibly without putting anyone at risk.</p>	Protection Cluster
<p>2.4 Accountability: Ensure accountability to affected populations (AAP) by ensuring that data on needs and assistance is disaggregated, that affected populations are active participants in the development of the HRP and programming and that there are regular participatory after-action reviews completed for life-saving or emergency responses at ICWG level.</p>	ICWG
<p>2.5 Integrated services: Mainstream protection into existing service provision and promote scale up of specialized protection services through enhanced funding for both static and mobile response assistance, including through scaled up funding in protection analysis and response, ensuring evidence-informed programming SGBV prevention and response, child protection, MRE and child protection services.</p>	HCT

Priority 3

Prevention, mitigation, AND end of grave violations

The expertise, mandates and capacities of the HCT are mobilized to identify and respond to protection risks; to prevent and stop the recurrence of violations of IHL, IHRL, IRL, and grave violations committed against children in conflict; and to advocate for accountability for rights violations. The conflict in South Sudan has severely undermined the already weak rule of law creating a culture of impunity for armed groups and others, resulting in a cycle of violence continuing to pose threats to life, safety and freedom for civilians across South Sudan. Impunity for crimes and lack of redress or remedial assistance for victims of crime and human rights violations, whether politically-motivated or not, is reported to have a disproportionate impact on women, children, minorities, through intimidation or harassment, physical or other abuse, gender-based violence, and others.

STRATEGIC AREA	ACCOUNTABILITY
<p>3.1 Reporting: Reinforce that all HCT members have a responsibility to ensure the centrality of protection through regular reporting on protection concerns, known violations of IHL, bringing critical protection concerns to the attention of the Protection Cluster or HCT, as appropriate.</p>	<p>HCT / Protection Cluster / OHCHR / OCHA</p>
<p>3.2 Protection, prevention, and mitigation: HCT to develop a strategic approach to advocacy on protection through: a) common messages on key protection concerns including the reaffirmation of the primary responsibility of national authorities for the security, safety, and wellbeing of civilians and displaced persons throughout the country; b) issuance of quarterly position paper on protection of civilians, IHL and IHRL, issues of grave violations against children, and protection of vital civilian infrastructure or objects accorded specific protection; and c) advocacy plan to encourage parties to the conflict to abide by IHL and reinforce national advocacy efforts through engagement with regional and international stakeholders, as well as with local authorities.</p>	<p>HCT / Protection Cluster / OHCHR (UNMISS HRD)</p>
<p>3.3 Accountability: HCT to establish a core group to guide proactive engagement with the parties to the conflict and/or duty-bearers on accountability for violations of IHL and IHRL, grave violations committed against children, and other relevant violations and abuses. Engagement will focus on institutions' and duty-bearers' responsibility to address individual cases of violations and the importance of strengthening institutions and creating a culture of accountability and the rule of law.</p>	<p>HCT / Protection Cluster / OHCHR (UNMISS HRD)</p>
<p>3.4 Engagement: In conjunction with the Human Rights Up Front Initiative, HCT to initiate a strategic roadmap with parties to the conflict, taking into account political, security, human rights and humanitarian priorities, to end violence and human rights violations, including against women and children. The need to address the root causes of conflict and displacement, along with the importance of social cohesion, will be considered at all relevant stages and accountability as highlighted in Strategic Area 3.3 will be a critical component.</p>	<p>HCT / Protection Cluster</p>

Priority 4

Preventing protracted displacement and supporting early recovery

The expertise, mandates and capacities of the HCT are mobilized to identify and respond to protection risks; to prevent and stop the recurrence of violations of IHL, IHRL, IRL, and grave violations committed against children in conflict; and to advocate for accountability for rights violations. The conflict in South Sudan has severely undermined the already weak rule of law creating a culture of impunity for armed groups and others, resulting in a cycle of violence continuing to pose threats to life, safety and freedom for civilians across South Sudan. Impunity for crimes and lack of redress or remedial assistance for victims of crime and human rights violations, whether politically-motivated or not, is reported to have a disproportionate impact on women, children, minorities, through intimidation or harassment, physical or other abuse, gender-based violence, and others.

STRATEGIC AREA	ACCOUNTABILITY
<p>4.1 Advocacy: The primary responsibility to provide for durable solutions and prevent protracted displacement rests with national authorities. The HCT will therefore develop and implement an advocacy action plan to ensure that duty bearers are accountable for their responsibilities and that the HCT body take leadership on key humanitarian advocacy points as well as taking timely and decisive advocacy actions on urgent issues affecting safe, dignified, informed, and voluntary access to durable solutions.</p>	HCT
<p>4.2 Needs-based response: Uneven economic development and security environment across South Sudan risk shaping patterns of return and relocation, and indeed the future of the country. Even as the HCT supports close collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, special care must be taken to ensure that humanitarian assistance is prioritised based on needs and does not leave behind geographic areas and ethnic groups most acutely affected by the crisis. This also requires that opportunities for early recovery are offered to all crisis-affected and displaced persons, regardless of displacement status. Any early recovery assistance must be informed at HCT level by nuanced understanding of local power dynamics, be conflict-sensitive, and prioritise the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.</p>	Strategic: HCT Operational: ICWG
<p>4.3 Protection analysis: Ensure that there is regular protection analysis produced at the national and local levels of protection risks and trends and conflict dynamics. Analysis should consider both areas of return and settlement, as well as locations of displacement, and consider intentions of displaced persons and receptivity of communities of return. Protection analysis is communicated to the HCT and ICWG for prioritization of assistance, including the necessity of supporting early return for those facing acute protection risks.</p>	Protection Cluster
<p>4.4 Consultation and accountability: Build opportunities for public, open civil conversations about good governance, peacebuilding, and the path toward durable solutions in all response to protracted displacement. All activities should be driven by the needs and wishes of displaced persons and affected communities, both those hosting displaced persons and those likely to receive them.</p>	ICWG
<p>4.5 Protection services: Promote the scale up of specialized protection services through enhance funding and capacity for both static and mobile response assistance, especially including information sharing with displaced and affected communities, as well as case management mechanisms for early return of acute protection cases to areas that are not yet conducive for return.</p>	HCT

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The HCT Protection Strategy covers the period of one year with the aim to reflect the fluid and uncertain nature of the situation for early 2020.

In light of the dynamic nature of the conflict and humanitarian emergency in South Sudan, the strategy will be considered a working document to be amended depending on developments which require high-level intervention by the HCT.

An action plan will be drafted to monitor implementation of the collective protection outcomes of the HCT Protection Strategy, including clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all humanitarian actors in the actions and outcomes of the strategy.

The HCT, through a designated task force on centrality of protection, will monitor the implementation of the activities, and review the Action Plan regularly, at least on a quarterly basis and update it as required.

Next Steps

1. Articulate an Implementation Matrix for the 4 Key Priority Areas, integrating Monitoring and Evaluation into all priority areas.
2. Lead Agencies assigned to articulate One-Pager Implementation Matrix for each of the 4 Key Priority Areas as follows:
 - Priority 1 on PSEA – PSEA Task Force
 - Priority 2 on Safe and Dignified Access to Life Saving Assistance – OCHA and PC
 - Priority 3 on Prevention, Mitigation and End of Grave Violations – OHCHR / UNMISS HRD and PC
 - Priority 4 on Preventing Protracted Displacement and Supporting Early Recovery – AGS and OCHA