

ETHIOPIA PROTECTION CLUSTER STRATEGY

2020 - 2022

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Ethiopia Protection Cluster Strategy arises from a workshop in which numerous members of the protection cluster in Ethiopia [representatives of United Nations (UN) agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs) and donors] – from the field and from Addis Ababa – engaged in active discussions about the larger and pressing protection issues in Ethiopia (the time of the creation of the strategy, November 2019).

While there were many pressing protection issues facing affected persons in Ethiopia, for the purposes of achieving collective outcomes, output, activities it was necessary to prioritize – not only to ensure focus, but also to enable the cluster to make progress towards achieving the

outcomes. Prioritization does not mean that individual organizations within the protection cluster will not work on other important and pressing protection issues, as they already are, and will continue to do so. Further, the specialized areas of responsibility (AoR) within the protection cluster – Gender Based Violence (GBV)/Child Protection (CP), Housing, Land and Property (HLP), and Site Management Support (SMS) will also continue to address more specific protection issues related more closely to their areas of specialization.

It is important to note, as well, that the strategy remains a living document; thus the priorities and outcomes, outputs, and activities therein will be reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to be relevant, achievable, and be changed as needed to reflect changed priorities or a changing situation on the ground.

After discussing the key protection concerns, the cluster members chose two (2) priority protection outcomes to focus on achieving collectively. The criteria for selecting the priority protection outcomes and outputs included:

- What issues are most appropriate/realistic for the protection cluster to address?
- Are others addressing the issues, or is the protection cluster best placed to address the issues?
- What is the gravity or need?
- Can the protection cluster members realistically achieve the outcomes?
- What is the cluster and its members' own capacity/funding/mandate?
- The context in Ethiopia (at the time of writing the strategy), and
- Is progress towards the outcomes measurable?

Additionally, the participants reviewed the protection priorities in

II. PROTECTION ለሰላም ማረጋገጫ

At the time of drafting of this strategy, the situation in Ethiopia remains dynamic with sporadic flare ups of conflict, ethnic tensions and resultant displacement; limited recovery from previous shocks (including climatic issues such as drought and flooding); chronic and systemic problems in service delivery; limited access for humanitarian assistance in certain areas and denial of assistance itself; a lack of accountability for rights violations; loss of livelihood activities due to climate variability; and occasional disease outbreaks. At the same time, peace-building activities and durable solutions initiatives have started in certain areas of the country – albeit slowly and with continued challenges for the population to access basic services, protection, and claim their rights.

Insecurity and violence continue to limit humanitarian access in multiple locations, including along the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region (SNNPR)-Oromia boundary, as well as in the Oromia, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Afar Regions. Security in West Guji and the Wellegas is extremely fragile and has prevented movement and, therefore, assistance to areas where internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees are living. In the Somali Region, humanitarian actors have had difficulty reaching crisis-affected nomadic pastoralists in drought-affected area, as well as others in remote areas that are virtually inaccessible during the rainy season. Localized clashes in western and southern Oromia continue to limit access to persons in need of assistance. The security situation in Guji Zone significantly deteriorated in 2019, limiting assistance to IDPs, and increasing

displacement. Renewed violence in Amhara at the end of September 2019 displaced an estimated additional 15,000 people, and tensions remain high in the area.

Humanitarian assistance is still not reaching all persons in need – in particular IDPs who have not returned to their areas of origin and remain displaced, as well as those who have been secondarily displaced who are challenging to reach. There are reports of access being denied to an estimated 40,000 IDPs in Gedeo (SNNPR), 20,000 IDPs in the Wellegas (Oromia), and 17,000 IDPs in Awi zone (Amhara). In some areas, IDPs are being coerced to return or relocate through the denial of humanitarian assistance – with assistance being made conditional on return/relocation – in violation of the principles of voluntary, safe, and dignified return and humanitarian principles. The dismantling of displacement sites and the ending of food assistance has compromised services to IDPs in Awi Zone. A reduction in food assistance and humanitarian access in IDP sites has also prompted the return and self-relocations of IDPs from Dire Dawa – despite indications from the IDPs that these departures were not their preferred durable solution. Insufficient food assistance to the affected population has been reported in multiple locations, including the Hararges, Dire Dawa, Wellegas, southern Oromia, central Gondar, parts of Somali Region, and Benishangul Gumuz. This has led to an increase in malnutrition rates and pushed IDPs to resort to negative coping mechanisms. Additionally, there remain significant gaps in the provision of basic services, security, and protection (including accountability for alleged human rights violations) in areas of return or relocation, compromising the sustainability of returns and relocations.

The protection of crisis-affected persons remains an overarching concern across the country. Affected populations face longer-term systemic protection concerns, as well as protection concerns arising from shocks such as conflict, climate change, and disasters (e.g. flooding or drought). Systemic, long-standing protection concerns such as gender-based violence (GBV) – including harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation; child labour; weak security and accountability mechanisms; a lack of access to specialized protection services – including case management for children and survivors of GBV, mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS), as well as to other basic services – has been exacerbated by conflict or the effects of disasters or climate change.

A general lack of awareness of the right to assistance and limited coverage of response services, complicated by deep-rooted social norms related to gender and a weak law enforcement, in addition to weak systems including for protection (as noted above) make accessing services ever more challenging. Shocks such as conflict, climate change, and other disasters (e.g. flooding or drought) have created additional protection concerns both for those displaced, and for those who remain behind in precarious conditions. These heightened challenges include physical harm; denial of basic rights and freedoms (including freedom of expression, movement and work); lost or destroyed documents; housing land and property (HLP) issues; loss of livelihoods; unaccompanied and separated children (UASC); loss of/denial of access to education and other basic services; displacement leading to unsafe and unsanitary living conditions, in collective sites and communal shelters; denial of humanitarian assistance; discrimination;

violence; forced return or relocation – sometimes leading to secondary displacement; as well as continuing insecurity for those displaced and heightened risks of GBV. In addition, displaced women and girls face barriers in accessing basic services and facilities due to long distances, unsafe routes (lack of lighting etc.), and discrimination, thereby making it more challenging for them to meet their basic needs.

Some of those who returned voluntarily, or who were returned to their places of origin, or those who relocated live in fear due to ethnic tensions, flare up of conflicts, and a gap in law enforcement. Some are without access to land, shelter, or property (or compensation for lost property or for unlawful occupation of their land or home), some have difficulty accessing their properties, basic services and livelihoods, and many have inadequate shelter – potentially leading to negative coping mechanisms – and increasing protection concerns. Older persons, persons with disabilities, and female-headed households face particular obstacles when they attempt to access HLP rights and legal identity documents, given their marginalization with respect to accessing land rights and their vulnerability to violence during disputes over access to HLP rights.

Many IDP returns/relocations have fallen short of international standards. Many returning IDPs live in secondary displacement situations, in collective centres, or within the host community, as they have not been able to return to their homes. While the desire by some IDPs to return to their places of origin remains strong, concerns persist that conditions in many areas are not yet conducive for returns because of insecurity or uncertainty regarding livelihoods. Ensuring the principles of voluntariness, other durable

solutions such as local integration or settlement to a different area should be an option for IDPs that do not want to, or cannot return home, and must be a pre-requisite when planning site closure.

Rights have been repeatedly violated, including but not limited to, IDPs being discriminated against and denied humanitarian assistance; gender-based violence (in addition to other forms of violence); children denied or unable to exercise their right to education, forced to work or into early/child marriage or trafficked; individuals denied or unable to exercise their rights to basic services; in addition to involuntary return, relocation, or forced eviction. During the first six months of 2019 alone, there were worrying protection trends, including an increase in GBV – including rape cases, an increase of reporting of cases of human trafficking including children, increases in child labour and children living and working on the streets, as well as significant increases in unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). The UASC caseload across four emergency affected regions was less than 6,000, with the estimated total number in excess of 10,000 – meaning that about 50 per cent of the total UASC caseload were accessing case management support and services. Of these cases, it is estimated that about 20 per cent were unaccompanied children – i.e. children with no adult caregivers. Additionally, about one million children were unable to access education because their schools were damaged during conflict,¹ with adolescents largely overlooked in the response. Overcrowding and inadequate shelter conditions in displacement and return areas, in combination with lack of access to livelihoods and basic services, also increased the risk of GBV. This, together with insufficient or delayed food

distribution, contributed to women and girls engaging in negative coping mechanisms such as transactional sex, in exchange for non-food items and money.

Notably, while some areas of the country continue to experience tension and conflict, simultaneously in other parts of the country, there are opportunities for durable solutions for the displaced populations. The launch of the Durable Solutions Initiative (DSI), and plans for area-based support to durable solutions will require protection support, to ensure that a rights-based approach is incorporated and so that those who integrate locally, return, or relocate do so voluntarily, participate in decision-making, and are able to exercise their rights when obtaining a durable solution.

Conflict, disaster, and displacement will continue to pose serious protection concerns for IDPs, returnees/relocatees, and host communities. Of particular concern are regular and recurrent disasters and climatic shocks, as well as new events and shocks that could lead to displacement, increasing humanitarian needs and escalating an already precarious protection situation.

¹ UNICEF Humanitarian Situation Report, July 2019

III. VISION

The overarching vision of the protection cluster is:



All persons in Ethiopia – and in particular those persons affected by conflict, disasters, and climate change – are protected and have access to protection services.

Under international law, the state is primarily responsible for the protection of its citizens and those residing in its territory. Acknowledging this, the protection cluster strives to work with and build the capacity of the state to better protect those within its territory. In-line with the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) Statement on the Centrality of Protection (2013), and the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action (2016), all humanitarians have the obligation to consider protection within their programming. To address protection threats and to better serve affected communities to 'Do No Harm,' the humanitarian response will need to be centred on protection and ensure potential protection risks arising from humanitarian assistance are examined and mitigated.



IV. PRIORITY PROTECTION OUTCOMES

The two priority protection outcomes that the protection cluster will seek to achieve are:

1. Crisis-affected persons are able to exercise their rights.

Crisis affected persons are not able to exercise, or are denied, rights –including but not limited to, by denial or inadequacy of humanitarian assistance, forced/involuntary return or relocation, lack of access to justice and legal remedies, being subjected to violence and discrimination, denied documentation and HLP rights. The core of protection is ensuring that affected communities are able to re-claim their rights and holding duty-bearers to account to ensure that their rights are protected. The inability to exercise rights or being denied rights is a pressing protection concern.

2. Humanitarian actors provide protection sensitive assistance, in-line with humanitarian and protection principles, in an inclusive, participatory, and accountable manner that does no harm to affected communities.

By ensuring humanitarian assistance takes into account potential risks and does no harm, communities are better protected, and those most in need receive assistance, potentially reducing negative coping mechanisms. This outcome complements outcome 1, in that not only the government enables rights to be exercised, but also that all humanitarian assistance strives to be protective and rights based.

be important in the implementation of this strategy.

Repeated assessments of the response in Ethiopia have highlighted a lack of attention to protection (including the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) of the Drought Response in Ethiopia, 2019, the 2016 Senior Transformative Implementation Team (STAIT) mission, and the 2012 IASC Real-Time Evaluation). Amongst other observations, the IAHE Evaluation (2019) noted (echoing past missions):

The planning and monitoring of the humanitarian response in Ethiopia gave very little consideration to questions of gender, age, disability, and other factors that affect the vulnerability of different groups.

Collective planning and monitoring documents contain very little analysis of how gender or age affect people's needs – even though detailed, separate gender analyses exist – and include very little disaggregated data. Previous evaluations confirm that this is a long-standing issue, and there is little evidence of learning over time.

Affected people also provided some examples of how assistance (or the lack thereof) fueled tensions. Participants of two focus group discussions with women in Oromia explained that assistance can have severe negative effects on women, who are usually the ones to collect food assistance. According to participants, it took up to six hours to walk to food distribution points. This disrupted their daily routines. Due to the distance and to unpredictable distribution schedules, women were at times also required to spend the night

V. IMPLEMENTATION

The specific activities and outputs leading to the achievement of these outcomes are detailed in Annex 1 (Implementation Plan).

The Ethiopian protection cluster members are mindful that the country is simultaneously experiencing a humanitarian crisis in some parts of the country, while transitioning in other parts of the country to development – including in achieving durable solutions. Thus, ensuring a protection-centered approach across the humanitarian-peace-development nexus will

VI. ON-GOING REVIEW AND MONITORING

Like any strategy, the Ethiopia protection cluster strategy should remain a living document, reviewed by protection clusters both in the field and at the capital level in Addis Ababa, to measure progress towards achieving outputs and outcomes, as well as to check that the outcomes and outputs remain relevant in a context that main change, and in which new protection risks or priorities may arise. At minimum, the document should be reviewed quarterly and indicators reported on, as well as

challenges/obstacles in fulfilling the outputs and activities detailed, and the strategy adjusted accordingly.