Framework for the establishment of a Protection Cluster strategy

I.   Summary

The protection of civilians during armed conflict and natural disaster is a complex and bold endeavour, requiring a multidimensional response to address the various sources of vulnerabilities affecting populations. In this context, humanitarian professionals and coordination bodies must engage in multifaceted and complex approaches addressing the legal, political, and social aspects of crises, in addition to managing operations in often remote and hazardous environments. Each of these domains may become the subject of various interpretations and agendas by the belligerents, host countries, donors, international agencies, and non-governmental organizations, increasing the importance of the strategic thinking, dialogue, and negotiation skills of humanitarian practitioners. The purpose of this framework is to offer field Protection Cluster a basic framework on establishing protection strategy. Strategy planning is a process that includes:

- Analysing potential emergencies;
- Analysing the potential humanitarian impact and consequences on protection during an emergencies;
- Establishing clear objectives, strategies, policies and procedures and articulating critical actions that must be taken to respond to an emergency, and;
- Ensuring that agreements are recorded and necessary actions are taken in order to enhance response and preparedness.
- Identifying the level and timeline for humanitarian exit strategy and transition to recovery and development.

Protection strategy planning can be used to plan for all types of emergencies including complex emergencies, natural and environmental disasters and other significant crises to which the humanitarian community must respond. Inter-agency protection planning should focus on situations in which the scale and impact of the emergency requires the concerted action of a number of agencies/organizations. Planning should address response, remedial and environment building actions.

Basic Components of an Inter-agency Protection Planning Process are:

- Information management and analysis;
- Identification of responsibilities;
- Response planning;
- Implementing actions;
- Contingency planning.

II.   Information management and analysis

1. Context analysis

Provide a short description of the country situation which the aspect of the emergency affecting the country (natural disaster, complex emergency, etc…), the general political and humanitarian situation emphasizing its impact on protection and humanitarian situation.

2. Risk analysis

Provide a brief analysis of the risks analyzed during the planning process.

3. Identification of protection risks

Identification of protection risks must be the first step taken in the establishment of a protection strategy. Protection risks identification must be made through the conduct of rapid protection assessment, population profiling/participatory assessment, IDP registration, protection monitoring, etc… Due to the transversal aspect of protection within humanitarian framework it is important to

engage at inter-cluster level and establish referral mechanism on protection issue in sector specific (food security, WASH, access to education, etc…).

A sustainable information management should answer the following questions:
- What are the protection threats faced by civilian population?
- What are the protection needs of the civilian population?
- Who are the affected populations and communities?
- What the mechanisms adopted by the population to cope with the threats?
- What is the national response to protection risks adopted by the authorities (national, regional and local) and by the civil society?
- What are the gaps in the protective measure taken by the authorities and by the communities?

III.   Identification of clear objectives

Based on the identification of protection risks, the protection cluster and its working groups should establish priorities in population needs of protection. Depending on the context (natural disaster or complex emergency) these priorities should be translated into achievable results that fulfill the minimum standards of protection.

IV.   Identifying responsibilities
1.   National responsibility
Protection of civilian population remains the primary responsibility of National authorities. Protection agencies and coordinative framework should identify the implemented policies, the level of engagement and the gaps of hosting government in the provision of protection measures. Whenever possible, planning should involve the government as they hold the primary responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance and protection to people in need[1]. One of the accountabilities of the cluster lead at country level is to establish and/or maintain appropriate linkages with government counterparts.

2.   Civil society
Civil society activists are essential partners in the establishment and the conduct of protection assistance. As part of an information management and context analysis process, protection agencies should identify the level of adherence to human rights and humanitarian principles and the national culture and commitment to assist affected communities.

3.   International response
a) *Commitment*
The success of strategy planning depends on a strong commitment of senior decision makers. Appropriate leadership by Humanitarian Coordinator, Heads of Agencies/Organizations and sector leads will ensure that organizations are committed to the planning process and that the necessary resources, both human and financial, are provided and follow-up actions are taken[2].

b) *Senior decision makers*
Establishing a steering group of senior decision-makers at national cluster level can help to ensure a balance between participation and effective management, particularly in situations with a large number of actors. This group will be responsible for providing overall strategic direction and guidance to the planning process and ensuring that adequate resources are available to keep the process active. The

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[1] "Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. Hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory." GA Resolution 46/182

[2] See IASC planning guidelines for humanitarian assistance.

steering group will approve the plan and monitor implementation of the actions identified. The steering group should be composed of technical sector leads and leadership of the Protection Cluster.

c) *Technical level*

With regards to technical complexity of protection assistance it is essential to establish technical working groups at the first stage of an emergency. This decision should be based on an analysis of the context, the planning assumptions and the potential needs for coordination. These working groups, formal or informal (child protection, SGBV, Mine action, HLP, etc...), will manage the practical planning process and will ensure that agency/organization and sector response plans are in line with the overall planning framework. It will consolidate the results of different elements of the planning process and ensure that cross-sector issues are addressed. Practical experience suggests that a smaller group (8-10 participants) is more likely be effective than a larger group. However, appropriate representation is essential and should include representatives of agencies/organizations. The establishment of these on-going, technical level working groups on planning is increasingly common in field Protection Cluster.

d) *Mapping the capacities*

In order to establish the operational capacity and gaps it is essential to identify the organizations, their activities/capacities of response, and their geographical areas of intervention.

Comment: More often at the first stage of an emergency, protection mandated agencies have a limited presence at country and field level. However, other sectors of humanitarian assistance are able to identify protection issues and provide primarily assistance this in integrating protection standards.

V.   Response Planning

1. Defining Response Objectives and Strategies

Establishing common objectives and strategies helps to ensure that all sectors and agencies/organizations are working towards the same overall goal. It is important to define Objectives of the Protection response which are high level statement of what humanitarian actors will seek to achieve.

> **Example of Protection Cluster objective** (2012 South Sudan)
> *"to monitor and reduce the adverse effects of displacement and humanitarian emergencies on the civilian population".*

Agree on Strategies which articulate the way the defined objective will be achieved by describing the broad activities of the response.

> **Example of response activities** (2012 South Sudan)
> - Conduct protection assessments of affected and at-risk populations;
> - Provide protection advice and assistance in humanitarian emergencies;
> - Undertake interventions with authorities to prevent violence and promote accountability and legal remedies for harm done;
> - Advocate preventing and addressing causes of conflict in priority areas of greatest risk;
> - Promote the use of community protection strategies including early warning systems;

2. Defining Management and Co-ordination Arrangements for Protection Response

Establishing clear mechanisms for accountability and coordination is critical to effective Protection response. A number of key decisions taken at the beginning of the planning process will shape the

basic coordination and management arrangements. It is important to establish comprehensive Term of References for Protection Cluster, its technical working groups and/or other Protection related forums[3]. Identification of the limit of Cluster coordination and Pre-identification of handoff to a governmental or development framework is an important part of a strategy building for the preparation of future exit strategy.

3. Developing Response Plans

Once the over-arching objectives, strategies, management and coordination arrangements have been established, specific response plans should be developed. These plans will describe how agencies and technical groups will respond to needs within the sector. In developing response plans the Protection Cluster groups should:

a) Discuss and Define specific objectives based on the identified Cluster plan:

Example of specific objectives (2012 Afghanistan)[4]	
Protection Cluster Objective	**Specific objective**
Enhance prevention of Gender based violence and Response to GBV survivors as part of Afghan civilians" protection and assistance humanitarian responses	• Development of referral model to address GBV role and integration of coordinated response to GBV in piloted provinces. • GBV SC organizations have increased capacity on GBV Coordination and linkages established at national and regional level with actors working on GBV prevention and response.

b) Define Individual and Collective Actions to meet the Cluster Objectives:

In developing these plans of action the Protection Cluster and its technical sectors should consider the following issues:

- Do specific agencies/organizations have to take on specialized roles within the cluster or on technical issue?
- What common standards will be used to guide the response?
- What are the current capacities of the agencies/organizations to respond?
- What are the gaps between the current response capacity and the scale of the emergency as described in the need analysis?
- How will sub-Cluster/Cluster members address needs assessment?
- What information management mechanisms are required?
- What kind of monitoring and reporting tools will the sector/cluster develop?

c) Develop a Strategy for Initial Assessment:

Given the importance of assessment in defining the scope and nature of the Protection response, how initial assessment will be undertaken is an important component to include in the planning process. Planning for initial assessment should include:

- Identification of agencies/organizations that will participate.
- Agree on specific assessment tools.
- Discussion of how sector/cluster assessment information will be collated and shared with others at Cluster and inter-Cluster level.

d) Consolidate and Review Planning Outputs:

After the initial phase of sector response planning has been completed, the Protection Cluster should consolidate and review all the outputs to ensure that the sector response plans are complementary and coherent. The consolidated response plans should be analyzed against the initial planning to identify any remaining gaps or significant issues that have been overlooked.

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[3] See example of Somalia Protection Cluster T.O.R : ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1119261
[4] CAP 2012 Afghanistan: http://afg.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/default/files/CAP_2012_Afghanistan.pdf

Global Protection Cluster

Example of strategic outputs (2012 Afghanistan)		
Protection Cluster Objective	**Specific objectives**	**Outputs**
Enhance prevention of Gender based violence and Response to GBV survivors as part of Afghan civilians" protection and assistance humanitarian responses	• Development of referral model to address GBV role and integration of coordinated response to GBV in piloted provinces. • GBV SC organizations have increased capacity on GBV Coordination and linkages established at national and regional level with actors working on GBV prevention and response.	• Referral Model for Afghanistan identified and established in selected by GBV SC locations • Increased capacity of GBV prevention and response actors • Strong linkages established with GBV networks and APC in regions; • Functioning GBV IMS in identified by GBV SC piloting locations

VI. Preparedness and protection contingency planning[5]

When rapid needs assessment constitutes the initial part of an emergency planning process contingency planning helps humanitarian actors to plan while there is time and includes:

- Analysing potential emergencies;
- Analysing the potential humanitarian impact and consequences of identified emergencies;
- Establishing clear objectives, strategies, policies and procedures and articulating critical actions that must be taken to respond to an emergency, and;
- Ensuring that agreements are recorded and necessary actions are taken in order to enhance preparedness.

Contingency planning should respond to the following questions:

- What could happen?
- What would be the impact on the people affected?
- What actions would be required to meet Protection needs?
- How would agencies/organizations work together?
- What resources would be required?
- What can agencies/organizations do to be better prepared?

VII. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is essential for measuring the impact of humanitarian response and adapting the response during its operational phase. A good monitoring and evaluation system begins at the first stage of strategy planning. When the needs have been identified, the designing of a strategy should include clear objectives interpreted into explicit measurement indicators.

a) Monitoring and Evaluation definition

Monitoring process would permit to control the positive or negative effects that the assistance is bringing to the beneficiaries situation. Regular or sporadic evaluations give you the capacity to identify the changes brought by the intervention and integrate into the Protection Cluster information management system. Impact assessments should ideally be carried out when impacts are likely to be visible and measurable, and not finished or forgotten, so timing of the assessment is critical.

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[5]See IASC contingency planning guidelines for humanitarian assistance:
http://www.google.co.uk/url?q=http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/downloaddoc.aspx%3FdocID%3D4454%26type%3Dpdf&sa=U&ei=SUFHUIowhMm0Bq_6gZgH&ved=0CCUQFjAF&usg=AFQjCNFB3S4hvdwwL9dhcqmZKTBj6B5jPA

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multimedia/publications/publications/manuals-tools/t101_en.htm

Monitoring: it is a continuous process of collect and analysis of information in order to appreciate how a project is conducted.

Evaluation: It is a periodic action to appreciate and measure the relevance, the achievement, the efficiency and the durability of an intervention and its impacts. It may generate a reorientation or a new cycle of intervention.

b) *Challenges, constraints and solution to measure protection activities*

It is evident that measuring protection impact is a difficult exercise. However, some constraints could be overreached, at least partially.

1. In protection we manage processes more than products, non-events (as example: Social cohesion, reduction of discrimination). Studying the impact is de facto a speculative exercise. Participatory assessment, interview, focus group could facilitate a better understanding of intangible aspects, behavior, perception and emotion.

2. The increasing of the value of an indicator might be the signal of positive change (as example: reduction of SGBV cases/ abuses cases referred to competent authority).

3. Information collection and management requires time, time which is often in contradiction with the emergency to act. Information gathering process should be permanent. It is possible to initiate Protection activities with fragmented or uncompleted information. However, the collect of information should be permanent during the implementation in order to reorient the project if necessary.

4. Whenever a radical change occurred in the situation, a quantitative database has a partial utility. It is important to regularly update the baseline to follow-up on the changes and conduct qualitative analysis to document the changes.

5. Mobility (population movement, military, authority) generate difficulty to measure the changes. A good Cluster coordination and information sharing with field actors may improve monitoring activities.