

1. Purpose

This Protection Framework serves to compile all protection specific guidance notes adopted by the Iraq Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). Additional protection notes will be included following HCR validation, to take account of the critical protection needs emerging in the humanitarian operation, and the overarching need to mitigate against a further deterioration of the protection environment.

2. Rationale

Protection is a shared responsibility beyond the Protection Cluster and cuts across the entire humanitarian response, a point underscored by the Operational Peer Review (OPR). To give effect to the 'centrality of protection' in this context, operational results for all partners need to be associated with clearly defined protection accountabilities, under an overarching protection framework.

3. Protection challenges in Iraq

The crisis in Iraq is deteriorating at a rapid pace. The number of people displaced by the conflict has reached 3.2m and more than 2.1m Iraqis are estimated to need assistance in hard to reach areas. The prevailing displacement situation in Iraq has generated significant protection challenges including denial of access to safety; exploitation, harassment and intimidation in the place of displacement; restrictions on freedom of movement; lack of access to basic services as well as evictions and expulsions.

Children are exposed and subjected to the worst forms of physical and sexual violence including killings, injuries, abduction, and recruitment into armed forces. Many suffer from psychosocial distress and an increasing number are out of school and involved in child labor. Women and girls are most affected by displacement due to prior existing systemic gender inequalities in addition to weakened traditional systems. Accessing specialized services for persons with specific needs is a continuing challenge. The vulnerability of the elderly and disabled increases during displacement as family and community support networks are disrupted. Gender based violence is an increasing risk affecting men and boys as well as women and girls.

A complex pattern of push and pull factors influenced by security, political and economic factors is simultaneously driving displacement and return. Amidst the unstable security environment in Iraq which continues to cause and prolong displacement for many, there is also growing IDP return. While some IDP returns are voluntary in nature, others are forced to return involuntarily

and at times to conditions which are neither safe nor dignified. Some IDPs wishing to return to their places of origin are being prevented from doing so.

4. HRP Strategic Priorities through the Protection lens

In prioritizing the activities in the operation, the Humanitarian Country Team privileges the role of protection, it elevates the humanitarian imperative to reach people in areas outside Government control, insists on the need for principled returns, and actively prepares for a viable exit strategy.

The 2015 HRP outlines five strategic priorities, namely: specialized protection support; essential life-saving assistance; expanded access; safe returns; and social protection transition. Each priority is underpinned by protection principles. Combined, these priorities aim to mitigate the protection risks faced by Iraqi citizens affected by the conflict, including displacement and grave violations of their rights. At the same time the strategic priorities aim to provide, to the extent possible, a protective environment by providing for basic needs and services.

5. Shared responsibility

Members of the Iraq Humanitarian Country Team are stakeholders in ensuring that humanitarian interventions are implemented in a protection sensitive manner. In particular, this concerns:

- the identification and analysis of protection concerns.
- an enhanced awareness-raising and concerted advocacy related to policies and practices which violate the rights of the persons in need.
- programming for the specific protection needs of women and girls to mitigate further harm and to help restore and maintain their dignity.
- the urgent need to expand reach and access to protection services and assistance for populations in need, particularly women and children, including in hard-to-reach areas.
- the sustained engagement with local actors, communities and national authorities to strengthen their capacity to assess, analyze and respond to the protection needs of affected populations.

6. HCT endorsed protection guidance notes

The following specific guidance notes have been adopted by the HCT on the date indicated, and form an integral part of this framework:

- December 2014 : **Operational Guidance Note on Spontaneous Returns** outlines the humanitarian principles related to return in safety and dignity which are applicable in all return scenarios, including but not limited to spontaneous returns.

- May 2015: The **Protection Advocacy Strategy** provides a succinct overview of areas of particular concern and provides advocacy advice for HCT members.
- May 2015 : **Access To Safety for IDPs** . Outlined principles underlying the right of IDPs to access safety and recommended points for HCT advocacy and to address restrictions on access to safety.
- May 2015 : Policy update on **establishment and management of camps** and camp-like settings for IDPs addresses issues with access to safety and ensuring camps provide a safe environment for IDPs.