

Action Plan

CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION ACTION PLAN 2023-2025

In follow up to the Independent Review of the
Implementation of the IASC Protection Policy

November 2023

Endorsed by IASC Principals

In 2016, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) adopted a Protection Policy to reaffirm the importance of protection in humanitarian action and emphasize its significance as a collective responsibility of all humanitarian actors. Six years after the adoption of the Protection Policy, the IASC Principals commissioned an independent review to assess its implementation. The Review identified six key areas for improvement: conceptual clarity, leadership and accountability, collective responsibility, simplified architecture, protection as an outcome, and inclusive approaches. The findings were received by the IASC Principals in September 2022, and UNHCR and InterAction were nominated to rally support for their implementation, including through the development of an action plan to deliver on agreed recommendations.

- I. **Vision:** Protection of all persons affected and at risk must inform humanitarian decision-making and response, including engagement with States and non-State parties to conflict. Reduction of protection risks must be central to our preparedness efforts, as part of immediate and life-saving activities, and throughout the duration of humanitarian response and beyond. The Principals agree to pursue a re-orientation of humanitarian action towards reducing protection risks for affected people. They will pursue stronger, collective and strategic leadership on protection issues; ensure an operating environment in which protection is prioritized and will hold themselves and their staff to account for this objective.
- II. **Overarching goals:** By endorsing this Action Plan, as a follow-up to the 2022 independent review of the implementation of the IASC Protection Policy, the IASC Principals pursue four main objectives:
 1. **Delivering collectively** on agreed and prioritized protection outcomes;
 2. Strengthening **accountability of and support to humanitarian leadership** (HCs and HCTs) to give priority to protection as an objective and an outcome central to humanitarian action;
 3. **Strengthening protection analysis** - with inputs and priorities from affected people - to inform collective priorities, common response plans and concrete actions, including protection advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy efforts;
 4. Working with parties to the conflict, peace and development actors, local/national actors and affected people, including through knowledge exchange, to **achieve protection outcomes**.
- III. **Key enablers and opportunities:** The IASC Principals and wider system will ensure synergies between this Action Plan and other ongoing initiatives, including the ERC flagship initiative; AAP, localization and nexus workstreams pursued by the IASC through the work of dedicated task forces 2, 4 and 5; the Principals Advocacy pilot; IASC Principals country visits; and existing performance assessment tools (HC's and HCT's Compacts, as they relate to protection, AAP, PSEA and GBV). Synergies will also be sought with the UN SG's Agenda for Protection, UN Common Country Analysis/UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), integrated assessment and planning processes in mission settings and UN facilitated political dialogues (DPA).
- IV. **Oversight and implementation:** The IASC Principals – under the leadership of the ERC – commit to a 2023-2025 timeframe for the implementation of this Action Plan. The Principals will be responsible to: 1) continue identifying opportunities and key enablers in relation to the implementation of the plan; 2) address and mitigate any challenges related to implementation; 3) in addition to instituting an annual briefing of the ERC to donors on progress with regards to the Action Plan, based on IASC Principals inputs, **convene a protection conference in 2025** at which IASC members and donors will report on what they have done to internalize the policy and to advance other elements of this Action Plan; 4) Agree on a few key – sustained – roles for the principals/ERC to follow on from the tenure of the co-champions, to ensure sustained, high-level engagement with and implementation of the recommendations in this action plan.

V. Planned Actions

Action Area 1: Conceptual Clarity of Centrality of Protection, protection as an outcome, collective responsibility				
Key Actions	Time Frame	Lead	Contributors	Responsibility / Accountability
1.1 - Develop a concise operational Aide-Memoire: that will: 1) provide a succinct, operationally focused overview of what protection as an outcome entails for all humanitarian actors and how they can contribute to this strategic goal, in relation to the implementation of the IASC Protection Policy (Centrality of Protection); 2) give concrete examples and tips to HCs, HCTs, and heads of agency, with regards to the implementation of CoP	March 2024	InterAction / NRC	UNHCR, IASC Task Force 1 on CoP (TF1), Donors, HCs/HCTs, ProCap	HCs and HCTs, OCHA, Donors (support in encouraging uptake of tool within their own programming and reporting requirements)
1.2 - Develop a set of Benchmarks designed to support and facilitate the consistent application of, and meaningful monitoring of the collective efforts of the HCT in regard to identifying and reducing protection risks, as per the IASC Protection Policy	March 2023	TF1	Selected HCs and HCTs, ICGG Coordinators, Protection Cluster Coordinators, NGO Forum Directors, Donors	HCs and HCTs, Donors (support in encouraging uptake of tool within their own programming and reporting requirements)

<p>1.3 - Develop a tool to clarify key parameters of an outcome-oriented approach to the measurement of protection risk reduction, including a range of methodologies, examples, and best practices.</p>	<p>December 2023</p>	<p>InterAction</p>	<p>TF1, Select HCT reps, ICCG coordinators, Cluster Coordinators, NGO Forum Directors, Donors</p>	<p>HCs and HCTs Donors</p>
<p>1.4 - Formal roll-out and dissemination of the COP toolkit (i.e. Aide-Mémoire, Benchmarks & protection outcomes measurement considerations tool) to strengthen common knowledge base and help track and support performance in operationalization of the IASC protection policy, through global and country briefings for all HCs and in-country leadership teams, with a focus on actions required by HCs, Heads of Agencies, other senior leaders</p>	<p>April 2024</p>	<p>InterAction /UNHCR/ TF1, OCHA, Field senior leadership</p>	<p>IASC Secretariat, P2P project, ProCap in countries where deployed</p>	<p>TF1 HCs and HCTs</p>
<p>1.5 - HCs are presented with a menu of options for support in advancing protection outcomes and using the COP toolkit (as best fits their needs and context), including through P2P and ProCap support or predictable in-country capacity</p>	<p>April 2024</p>	<p>OCHA, individual agencies, EDG</p>	<p>P2P, ProCap, TF1, Donors</p>	<p>Principals and individual agencies</p>

<p>1.6 - Donors adapt policies (including requirements, reporting, etc.) in support of the incorporation and effective use of the COP toolkit, through adaptation of stated expectations and reporting mechanisms (to better reflect what “success” means vis-à-vis protection outcomes, and to better incentivize risk taking, including through advocacy</p>		Donors	TF1 IASC Principals	Donors
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<p>Action Area 2: Robust and Effective Leadership & Accountability Ensure stronger institutional and individual leadership to address acute protection risks. IASC leadership demonstrates that it is promoting and implementing a culture of accountability for IASC protection policy implementation through regular interaction between field and HQ leadership on collective approaches to reduce protection risks and performance assessment tools to ensure feedback on senior field management performance.</p>				
Key Actions	Time Frame	Lead	Contributors	Responsibility / Accountability
<p>2.1 - [Leadership and Accountability at <u>Agency level</u>] Each IASC organization develops a plan (with timeframe) for internalizing COP in humanitarian action by factoring the IASC protection policy in its organisational strategic framework, policies, capacities, workplans and practices and by holding themselves and their staff accountable in advancing protection as an outcome in accordance with the IASC protection policy (or if an internal policy already exists- ensure its full implementation, links with the Aide-Mémoire/Benchmarks and internal progress monitoring)</p>	<p>December 2024 – with bi-annual reporting on implementation of internalization plans</p>	<p>Each agency</p>	<p>Provision of technical support made available by UNHCR and InterAction to assist organisations develop their policies and practices and ensure minimum understanding of COP by cluster staff and in-country managers of IASC organizations, TF1 (to facilitate knowledge exchange and documentation of best practices), Donors</p>	<p>IASC Principals</p>

<p>2.2 - [Leadership and Accountability at <u>Principal level</u>] All IASC Principals commit to undertake COP centred dialogues with HCTs and other relevant actors, where relevant, on the occasion of their country visits and to elevate issues and concerns raised by HCs/HCTs, as deemed appropriate.</p>		IASC Principals	InterAction/ICVA Donors	IASC Principals HCs and HCTs
<p>2.3 - [Leadership and Accountability at <u>Principal level – jointly and individually</u>] All IASC Principals commit to step up their advocacy and engage with member states to support risk taking, including at the request of HCs/HCTs, thereby providing political backing and, as required, mobilizing other actors to address protection risks.</p> <p>Building on the IASC Principals pilot to step-up high-level advocacy/humanitarian diplomacy targeting Burkina Faso, Afghanistan, Haiti and Myanmar, expand such efforts to critical crises to ensure that protection issues are addressed at global and regional levels systematically.</p>		ERC, IASC Principals	HCs OCHA	ERC in coordination with other IASC Principals
<p>2.4 - [Leadership and Accountability at <u>HC level</u>] Building on the HC's Compact, identify ways to clarify expectations regarding the role of HCs in exercising leadership towards implementing CoP and include COP as a mandatory reporting requirement to the ERC</p>		ERC, OCHA, IASC Principals		ERC HCs

<p>2.5 - [Leadership and Accountability at <u>head of HCT member organisation level</u>] Using individual performance appraisal frameworks for heads of HCT member organizations, require reporting on contribution to collective efforts to advance identified protection outcomes (as outlined in HCT protection strategy, HRP, HCT Compact) and relevant decisions taken, provide feedback and help take corrective action where necessary</p>		IASC Principals		IASC Principals Heads of HCT member organisations at country level
<p>2.6 - [Joint Leadership and Accountability] Leverage EDG and, where the IASC Scale-Up Protocol has been activated, Operational Peer Reviews (OPRs) to assess HCT performance in working together towards identified protection outcomes and to identify required support</p>	<p>Terms of reference for Emergency Directors Group and Peer-to-Peer missions reflect this Action from Sept 2023</p>	EDG P2P project	ProCap (where deployed)	Head of EDG and head of P2P missions
<p>2.7 - [Leadership and Accountability at <u>HCT level</u>] HCTs develop, implement and monitor HCT Protection Strategies/Action Plans, in accordance with the guidance provided in the Benchmarks, that include joint/collective advocacy strategies, with division of labour (including with peace/security, political and human rights actors), based on relative risk, capacity and comparative advantage.</p>		HCs/HCTs	HCT members Donors ProCap (where deployed)	HCs/HCTs

Action Area 3				
Inclusive Approaches. Effect fundamental behaviour change and build trust and coherence to normalise collective ways of working between the international humanitarian community, local and national actors, and amongst humanitarian, human rights, development and peace actors				
Key Actions	Time Frame	Lead	Contributors	Responsibility/Accountability
<p>3.1 - Champions to advise on best way to connect with security, peace, human rights and political actors - noting that HCTs have requested support from IASC Principals to increase engagement with other actors, specifically in the peace, political and security spheres – in order to encourage their enhanced collaboration with HCTs at country level, within the framework of humanitarian principles, in reducing protection risks as identified by the HCT. Champions will identify a concrete approach to leverage synergies (e.g. with regard to inter-disciplinary approaches to reducing risks or joint advocacy strategies).</p> <p>Recommendation 6.3 re the UN Agenda for Protection is oriented to the SG's office and not the IASC. Follow-up actions include: 1) Communicating this recommendation to SG's office/team working on the Call 2 Action for Human Rights and an SG Agenda for Protection; 2) Holding a consultation with that team to assess opportunities to strengthen follow-up on the Review Recommendation (e.g. with regard to leadership accountability; incentives; inter-disciplinary approaches to reduce risks, etc.). 3) Familiarity amongst humanitarian actors on UN Integration policy and guidance so that humanitarian actors can actively engage in integration arrangements and ensure that protection of civilians is included in the UN's integrated strategic approach and analysis of risks.</p>	December 2023	UNHCR InterAction	OHCHR OCHA TF1	RCs and HCs IASC Principals

3.2 - Invest in research, pilot, institutionalization of good practice on (multidisciplinary) approaches to reducing protection risks and measuring protection outcomes	December 2024	InterAction TF1	ProCap	TF1
3.3 - Ensure inclusion of the relevant recommendations from the review in Agencies' investments into AAP and localization and relevant IASC collective efforts to ensure complementarity between COP, AAP, gender equality and localization in humanitarian action.	December 2024		TF1 (through liaison with TF2 on AAP, TF5 on Localization and Gender Reference Group) GPC OCHA	IASC Principals OPAG

Action Area 4:
Simplify and streamline the protection architecture to ensure more coherence while maintaining technical specialist support and coordination

Key Actions	Time Frame	Lead	Contributors	Responsibility/ Accountability
4.1 – Consultations with a view to exploring changes to the protection architecture that could be proposed to enhance a more integrated and inclusive approach to protection programming and coordination, including by promoting participation by non-specialist agencies, initiatives to increase the representation and participation of local/national actors, and considering recommendations for reducing the significant overemphasis on routine bureaucratic processes as compared to achieving results and impact.	March - September 2023	UNHCR	ICVA, InterAction, donors, GPC and AORs, ICRC, OCHA, OHCHR, other clusters, etc.	
4.2 - Presentation of findings to Principals	October 2023	UNHCR		
4.3 – Commitments to implement measures to address architectural inefficiencies				IASC Principals

4.4 - Principals will seek donor support for the implementation of changes to the protection architecture and link these to potential changes to the broader humanitarian architecture	October 2023			IASC Principals
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