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Protection Field Coordination Toolkit

Chapter 2: Humanitarian Programme Cycle



Global Protection Cluster

Chapter 2: Humanitarian Programme Cycle

Overview

This chapter contains:

- Key elements and principles of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC).
- Roles and responsibilities of Protection Clusters in the HPC process.
- Guidance on Flash Appeals and pooled funding mechanisms like CBPF and CERF.
- Integration of cross-cutting issues and the Centrality of Protection within the HPC.

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) provides tools and processes to assist humanitarian actors in planning, prioritising, and monitoring collective responses to crises. It ensures that individual organisational efforts contribute to cohesive and effective humanitarian strategies.

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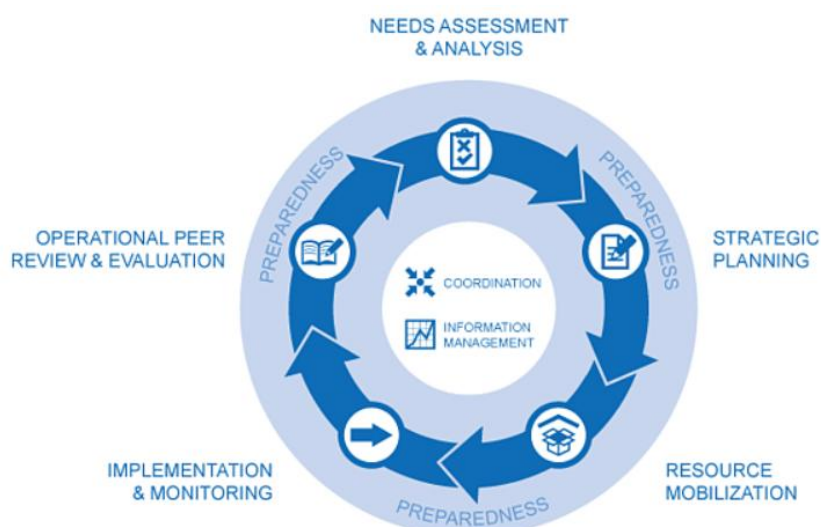
2.1 Elements of the HPC

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) is the term given to the tools and processes that are designed to assist the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) prepare, prioritise, steer, and monitor the collective humanitarian response. It is expected that each individual organization's response should "fit together and contribute to the overall results", and that the HPC should influence programming and resource allocations of all actors. The Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) are part of the HPC. In many operations, these documents have been merged into a single Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP).

There are five elements to the HPC, which take place in order: needs assessment and analysis, strategic planning, resource mobilization, implementation and monitoring, operational peer review and evaluation. A sixth element of emergency response preparedness should be in place throughout, and the HPC is dependent on effective coordination and information management. OCHA is responsible for coordinating the overall process.

The HPC can take place over two timelines:

- **Quickly:** after sudden onset crisis/escalation of crisis see [2.4 Flash Appeals](#)
- **Annually:** to a regular cycle for annual or multi-year planning in protracted crises.



For more information on Operational Peer Reviews and Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE), check out the [IASC Reference Module for the Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#).

The Annual HPC

The HPC for annual or multi-year planning in protracted crises is the ongoing cycle each year that produces the HNO and HRP. The calendar for the HPC is set at country level by the HC with the HCT, although there are suggested overall timeframes that many countries follow. A global appeal – the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) – is launched in December each year, compiling needs and requirements from country-level plans.

The **Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP)** is a critical component in the planning and coordination of humanitarian responses, particularly within the context of Protection Clusters. It is a document that outlines the humanitarian needs in a given crisis and provides a comprehensive strategy for addressing those needs over a specified period, typically a year. The HNRP is developed through collaboration between various humanitarian actors, including UN agencies, NGOs, local authorities, and other partners.

Key Features of the HNRP for Protection Clusters:

It is important to anticipate the official start of the HNRP process in a country. The Protection Cluster must be ready early, as it contributes to the HNRPs scope definition and to the process of identifying humanitarian needs priorities.

1. Needs Assessment:

- The HNRP starts with a detailed needs assessment that identifies the humanitarian challenges faced by affected populations. For the protection clusters this include the identification of protection risks and the resulting humanitarian needs. This assessment typically includes input from various protection actors within the cluster, ensuring that the protection risks are well-understood and accurately documented, and the resulting protection needs are more clearly defined.

2. Prioritisation of Protection Needs:

- Based on the assessment, the HNRP prioritises the most urgent protection needs. This is important because resources are often limited, and the HNRP helps ensure that responses are focused on the most vulnerable and critical situations. *Acute* protection needs are prioritised, and in some cases the protection cluster might want to draw attention to moderate needs.

3. Response Objectives and Strategies:

- The HNRP outlines specific protection cluster objectives to address the identified needs, with clear and measurable goals for each objective. The plan details the strategies and interventions that will be employed to meet these objectives. These objectives must be clearly linked with the Protection Cluster strategy and include direct provision of people-centred service and assistance, as well as activities that increase the protective capacities of people at risk.

4. Coordination and Roles:

- Within the Protection Cluster, the HNRP defines the roles and responsibilities of various actors, ensuring that all humanitarian partners are aligned in their response. This avoids duplication of efforts and ensures that resources are used efficiently.
- It also sets out the coordination mechanisms to be used during the response, which may include regular cluster meetings, joint assessments, and coordination with other clusters.

5. Monitoring and Reporting:

- The HNRP includes a system for monitoring progress towards the protection objectives. This is critical to ensure that interventions are on track, that protection needs are being properly responded to and protection risks are addressed effectively. Regular monitoring and reporting mechanisms allow for adjustments to be made to the response if needed, ensuring that protection needs are continually met throughout the humanitarian crisis.

6. Resource Requirements:

- The plan also outlines the financial and material resources required to implement the protection activities, helping to ensure that funding gaps are identified and addressed. Protection Clusters will need to advocate for resources to meet the identified needs and ensure that all planned interventions are adequately funded.

7. Accountability and Community Involvement:

- A key aspect of the HNRP is its focus on accountability to affected populations. Protection responses must involve the communities themselves, ensuring their participation in decision-making processes. The plan should include feedback mechanisms, ensuring that the concerns of affected individuals and groups are heard and acted upon, thus improving the relevance and effectiveness of interventions.

8. Integration with Other Clusters:

- Although the HNRP for Protection Clusters focuses on protection-specific needs and strategies, it also needs to be integrated with the broader Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which addresses all sectors of humanitarian assistance. Protection activities must be considered across all sectors, as protection needs often intersect with other humanitarian needs (e.g. nutrition, health services, and education).

Why is the HNRP important for Protection Clusters?

- **Strategic Planning:** The HNRP ensures that protection responses are well-coordinated and strategically planned, making the best use of available resources to meet urgent protection needs.
- **Coordination and Alignment:** It helps protection actors, both national and international, to align their efforts and avoid gaps or duplication, enhancing overall efficiency and impact.
- **Advocacy for Funding:** By clearly outlining the protection needs and required interventions, the HNRP serves as an advocacy tool for securing the necessary resources and funding for protection responses.

- **Monitoring and Accountability:** It provides a framework for ongoing monitoring, allowing protection actors to assess the effectiveness of their actions and adjust as necessary. This ensures that interventions remain responsive to the evolving needs of affected populations.

Mid-Year Reviews

In some responses, a mid-year review is conducted – usually if the context has significantly changed since the HRP was developed. The aim is to make sure that response activities and indicators are still relevant, or if they need adjustment. It is a much lighter process than a full HNO/HRP development, although follows the same logic: a review of the need analysis to determine any change in humanitarian need and to consider new analysis, and adjustment to the strategic response plan.

Annual Updates to the HPC

An updated guidance package for developing an HNO/HRP is usually released each year by OCHA. This contains templates and detailed guidance on all the processes that are expected for that year, and is released in English, French, and Spanish. This is circulated by the OCHA inter-cluster coordination team in country. You can find all the most up to date HPC Tools at [OCHA's Knowledge Base](#).

2.2 JIAF 2.0

The Joint and Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF 2.0) is an updated approach setting global standards for the analysis and estimation of humanitarian needs and protection risks of populations in crises. It guides the Clusters to ensure a more efficient and effective identification of needs during crises. It provides an IASC-endorsed methodology to generate the official estimations of humanitarian needs that inform the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (the country specific HNO).

Key Elements of the JIAF

1. Coordination:

- The JIAF facilitates collaboration between different humanitarian organisations and agencies, ensuring that their efforts do not overlap unnecessarily and that resources are used effectively. It helps establish clear roles and responsibilities within the Protection Cluster for the identification of needs.

2. Scope setting:

- It provides a collaborative approach to define the cause and impacts of the crisis, identifying the most affected population groups. This supports the definition of the scope of the needs assessments and related analysis of most urgent humanitarian needs.

3. Needs Assessment:

- It promotes a detailed, contextualised needs analysis that allows all stakeholders to understand the humanitarian needs faced by affected populations. This is essential for planning interventions that are appropriate and responsive to the actual needs on the ground.

4. Prioritisation:

- The JIAF assists clusters in identifying and prioritising the most urgent humanitarian needs, ensuring that responses focus on those who are the most vulnerable. It helps humanitarian actors decide which interventions should be tackled first, by providing a mechanism for intersectoral and protection cluster specific prioritisation.

5. Human Rights and Principles:

- The JIAF emphasizes a people-centred, rights-based approach to humanitarian needs analysis, aiming to identify and address the multiple, overlapping needs of crisis-affected populations, including protection risks and related human rights violations.

Why was the JIAF created?

The JIAF was created to address the challenges of responding to humanitarian needs in complex crises. In many emergencies, various actors—often with different mandates, approaches, and capacities—are involved. Without proper coordination and a shared framework, this can lead to fragmented responses, duplication of efforts, or, conversely, gaps in humanitarian action. By having a shared framework, the JIAF helps all involved parties align their actions, ensuring that there is a coordinated, effective approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable groups.

JIAF 2.0 — What's New?

The JIAF 2.0 represents a revision and update of the original framework. It is designed to be more flexible, adaptable, and better aligned with current humanitarian response needs. The update places more emphasis on inter-agency cooperation, better contextual analysis, and a stronger focus on accountability to affected populations.

How the JIAF contributes to the HNRPs?

The JIAF provides an agreed framework for mapping the most acute needs in a country to guide the identification of specific response targets. This aims to support the development of a coherent response strategy with clear goals, objectives, and action plans to address humanitarian needs.

This facilitates the response planning of the HNRP, considering available resources, time constraints, and the capacity of each actor involved. The HNRP is a common framework to track the effectiveness of interventions, measure progress, and ensure that all actions are accountable to the affected communities including feedback mechanisms to ensure their voices are heard.

2.3 Role of the Protection Cluster in HPC Process

Protection Clusters have a leading role in the HPC process to:

1. Provide a strong basis for a protection risk informed common analysis and shape the prioritisation process of the HNRP.
2. Develop the Protection Cluster response strategies.
3. Support the centrality of protection in the humanitarian response by providing protection risk analysis to inform risk mitigation approaches and protection mainstreaming.

Protection Inputs into the HPC

JIAF	Analysis which supports the definition of the HNO Scope
JIAF	Protection Cluster specific <i>severity of needs</i> and a number defined as <i>People in Need</i>
JIAF	Protection Risks severity and related analysis for the Outcome indicators on HR/IHL violations
HNRP	Protection Cluster specific <i>targets</i>
HNRP	Protection Cluster Response Framework (Strategic Objectives, Results, Activities and Indicators)
HNRP	Protection Cluster specific needs overview and response strategy narrative.

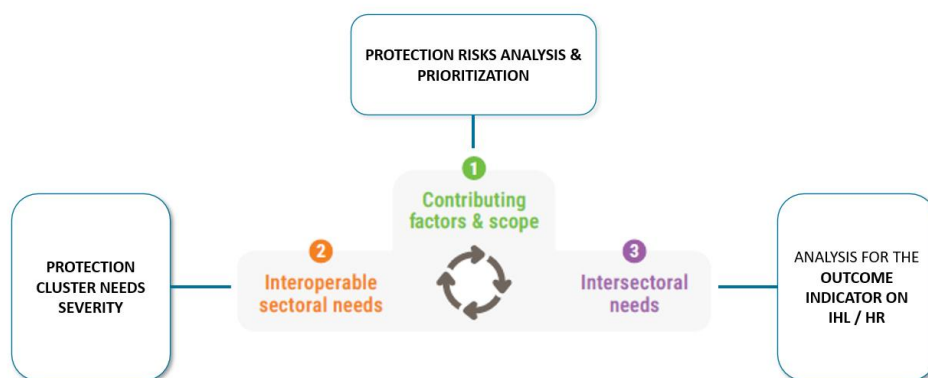
Ensuring a Protection Risk Focused Approach to the HNRP

In addition to developing the cluster needs overview and response strategy, Protection Clusters support analysis and inputs that guide the centrality of protection in the humanitarian response and inform the risk mitigation measures and protection mainstreaming of the other sectors.

Protection Coordination teams will be asked to provide inputs into the JIAF and the overall HNRP document and will also have an opportunity to make strategic edits. It is recommended that coordinators review the document and take the opportunity to integrate protection in the following sections of the report.

Understanding Key Terms

Cluster coordination teams will have to familiarise themselves with specific terms linked to the HNRP, to understanding how and where protection is integrated into the analysis and the process benchmarks.



Scope Setting

The term “scope-setting” is used to describe the process of defining the HNO scope of analysis (i.e. the analysis of the shocks and impacts, prioritisation of geographic areas and population groups). This should not be confused ‘boundary setting’ which is a separate process in the response planning stage. Protection Clusters play a key role in assisting this scope setting and ensuring that it is protection and risk informed.

By undertaking a [protection risks prioritization](#) between the finalization of an HRP cycle and the start of the following, the analytical outputs and updates on protection risks patterns can contribute to the definition of the HNO scope. The analysis is particularly relevant to contribute to the OCHA coordinated exercise to identify the shock of *conflict, violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation*.

- Engage with OCHA from the start to create a common plan for the inclusion of protection risk analysis in the HNO process.
- Invite OCHA and/or other sectors to joined-up analysis workshops (including at a subnational level) to undertake a [protection risks prioritization](#).
- Provide humanitarian actors with the most up to date data and analysis of protection risks severity.
- Actively participate in the HNRP workshops. Protection Clusters are encouraged to have an early calculation of the number of [people exposed to protection risks](#).
- Circulate the most recent [Protection Analysis Updates](#).

Interoperable Inter Sectoral Needs Analysis

The term ‘Interoperable inter sectoral needs analysis’ is used to describe the process to promote consistent sectoral analysis of humanitarian needs by using a common severity scale (1–5) and shared guidance for

estimating People in Need (PiN). JIAF 2.0 introduces interoperable standards, so all clusters align their methods, enabling coherent, comparable data across sectors for joint analysis.

The term interoperable simply means that data collection and analysis processes are adapted to enable actors to easily exchange and make use of data.

There inter sector needs analysis brings together sectoral findings through collaborative analysis with clusters, OCHA, NGOs, and partners to produce intersectoral results. Its goal is to:

- (1) Estimate the **joint overall PiN**, reflecting all people in need across sectors;
- (2) Determine **intersectoral severity** levels, highlighting the depth of needs, including any catastrophic situations backed by evidence; and
- (3) Identify **intersectoral patterns**, such as geographic, population, and sectoral linkages and trends.

Protection Risks and Protection Needs

It is critical to differentiate the analysis of protection risks from the analysis of protection needs, to align with the JIAF 2.0 agreed standards.

Protection Risks and Protection Needs	
PROTECTION RISKS	PROTECTION NEEDS
DEFINITION: Actual or potential exposure of the affected population to violence, coercion, or deliberate deprivation. For the scope of Protection Cluster analysis, protection risks correspond to the intensity and damage or harm (violence, coercion, or deliberate deprivation) affecting an individual or group of individuals.	DEFINITION: Protection needs refers to the gap or discrepancy that populations are experiencing in relation to the ability to move and access to public spaces, ability to participate in safe practices and activities and access to rights and services.
SEVERITY: Protection Risks severity is an overall estimation of the severity of 15 protection risks in a specific geographical location based on value judgement elicitation combined with a convergence of evidence analysis.	SEVERITY: Protection needs severity represents the degree of protection needs resulting from the exposure to protection risks in relation to the ability to move and access to public spaces, ability to participate in safe practices and activities and access to rights and services.
PEOPLE EXPOSED TO PROTECTION RISKS: People exposed to protection risks are a subset of people affected by the crisis whose life is directly affected by current violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation in the form of protection risks severity.	PEOPLE IN NEED OF PROTECTION: Individuals, across all population groups and considering their age, gender and diversity, exposed to protection risks in the areas affected: 1. whose safety constraints limit their ability to move freely and access public spaces, 2. who cannot perform practices that ensure physical, emotional, psychological, and social safety, such as social interaction, educational pursuits, economic engagement, and healthcare, and 3. who are deprived of their rights, including adequate access to essential services and justice, considering their age, gender, and diverse needs

The 3 Pillars of Protection Needs

The 3 Pillars of Protection Needs are a common language framework between GPC, AoRs and UN OCHA that can help shape the common narrative that discusses the populations exposure to risk, and the resulting humanitarian need.

Pillars of Protection Needs	
Pillar	Description
PILLAR 1: ABILITY TO MOVE AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACES	Individuals, across all population groups, are able to move freely and access to public spaces is not limited by physical, emotional, psychological, and social safety constraints
PILLAR 2: ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN SAFE PRACTICES AND ACTIVITIES	Individual, across all population groups, are able to participate in social, educational, economic and healthcare safe practices and activities of their choice.
PILLAR 3: ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND SERVICES	Individuals, across all population groups, have access to services and justice, proportionate to age, gender, and diversity needs.

HR/IHL violations and the HRP

Protection Clusters support the process of revising intersectoral severity levels in response to any situation involving violations of Human Rights (HR) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Protection risk analysis serves as a proxy analytical tool in this context.

Outcome indicators on HR/IHL violations
OHCHR, OCHA or another appropriate actor might develop proxy indicators for HR/IHL violations. - The protection risk severity levels are the starting point in defining the proxy indicators to measure HR/IHL violations. - The Protection Cluster should engage with OCHA and OHCHR to present the protection risk subnational severity data set (defined in the JIAF Manual Annex 4).

Where to ensure a risk focus approach to the HNRP document

When engaging in the HNRP report – during the preparation and drafting phase – coordinators should consider the following actions linked to the specific sections of the HNRP.

HNRP Sections and Actions	
HNRP Section	Actions and Review
1.1 Crisis Overview	- Include the number of people exposed to protection risks. - Include the protection risks that most significantly impact humanitarian needs.
1.2 Analysis of Humanitarian needs (& risks)	Protection risks should be included when presenting drivers and shocks. The overall response will benefit from a clear understanding of the protection drivers and impact of shocks.

2.1 Humanitarian Response Strategy	- It is recommended that the Protection Cluster engages early with other clusters, the ICCG, HCT and OCHA to ensure that clusters and HCT members are informed on up-to-date protection risk analysis. - The Protection Cluster can review the chapters of other clusters to advise on considerations on protection risk mitigation/protection mainstreaming.
2.2 Response Boundary Setting, Prioritization & Risk Informed Action	- The Protection Risk Analysis informs boundary setting and prioritization. - It is possible that after boundary setting and prioritization, some groups/locations that face protection risks fall outside of the scope of the HNRP. The Protection Cluster can advise on further support required for these groups/locations.
2.3 HRP Strategic Objectives	It is recommended that at least one of the HRP overall strategic objectives should focus on protection. This will be informed by the most severe protection risks.
3.1 Cluster/Sector /AoR Pages	The summary of needs and response strategy of the Protection Cluster should be consistent with the analysis of risks and resulting needs.

Role of the Cluster Lead Agency

Senior management of the Cluster Lead Agency (CLA) and the Cluster Co-Coordinating agency should be kept well-briefed by the Cluster Coordinator or Co-Coordinator on the Cluster's work within the HPC. This is particularly important for the needs assessment and analysis phase (all the work leading up to the HNO), and on the strategic planning phase (developing the strategy and its costing, as well as the HRP draft).

Buy-in of the CLA to all stages of Cluster HNO and HRP development is necessary, particularly where the CLA acts as provider of last resort. It also ensures that senior management from the CLA and the Co-Coordinating agency can represent and support the Protection Cluster, and the strategy as needed in higher-level forums, for example in the HCT.

The CLA should ensure the participation of a technical expert in the process of developing the HPC strategy – usually the person who is already actively engaged in regular participation in the Cluster and as a SAG member.

Ensuring the HNRP coherence with the Protection Cluster Strategy

A Protection Cluster must have a Strategy in place. This is a separate document to the HNO and HRP, although all the documents should be coherent with each other.

What is the difference?

The HNO and HRP are designed to outline inter-sectoral needs and response and contain sectoral chapters which outline in brief the sectoral needs analyses and response plans. This document should be an easy-to-read reference point explaining the protection response during the implementation of that HNRP.

A Protection Cluster Strategy is more detailed and specific to Protection. A strategy describes the technical aspects of protection response and details collective objectives linked to the protection response, policy and advocacy. In many cases, the Protection Cluster Strategy is multi-year and can involve a broader set of actors that do not participate in the HNRP.

However, the cluster-led protection risk analysis process will inform the Protection Cluster strategy. The HNRP will be aligned with this cluster strategy. The Protection HNO and HRP chapters should reflect the protection needs and planned activities described in the Protection Cluster Strategy, and the Protection Cluster Strategy is aligned with the HRP's inter-sectoral priorities and Strategic Objectives.

The [GPC Protection Response Framework](#) and the [Integrated Tool](#) provide a useful overview of protection programming modalities commonly used in protection responses, consolidated protection activities to develop a common framework and to discuss the linkages between the Protection Cluster strategy and protection risks. You can read more in **Chapter 12: [Understanding Protection Programmatic Approaches and Interventions](#)**.

What is the process?

In most situations, it is usually a good idea to develop or update the Protection Cluster Strategy to the same timeline as the HNO/HRP. This is likely the most efficient use of your time, meaning one analysis process and one response planning process is carried out, to produce complementary documents. This also enables your protection needs analysis to inform inter-sectoral analysis, and for inter-sectoral and other Clusters' analysis to inform protection planning. Depending on the requirements of the HNO in your context, a Protection Cluster Strategy needs analysis could include additional data and information sources than the HNO. For example, taking into consideration qualitative as well as quantitative data.

In conclusion, the HRP and HNO Protection chapters are summary documents, and the Protection Cluster Strategy is the full document that will inform your objectives and activities moving forward.

Mainstreaming Cross-Cutting Issues

Requirements

Each Cluster, and the overall response, is expected to consider cross-cutting issues when developing the response plan. HCTs sometimes set specific cross-cutting issues as priorities for a response, so the Protection Cluster might be expected to put particular focus on one or more issues in the eventual protection chapter narrative. The HRP template includes specific sections now on some cross-cutting issues that cluster might be requested to input to the drafting of, as well as including them in the protection chapter.

The Protection Cluster should consider several cross-cutting issues (e.g. protection mainstreaming, age, gender, and diversity (including disability), GBV, child protection, accountability to affected people, environment) at all stages of the HPC:

- **Needs assessment and analysis & HNO drafting:** Is the right data being collected to be able to understand the issues and needs of specific populations (e.g. gender, age and disabilities data, inclusion of questions on access to information and complaints mechanisms)?
- **Strategic planning & HRP drafting:** How are these issues going to be focused on or addressed in the protection response?
- **Implementation and monitoring:** Will the Cluster monitor either the context or activities that specifically relate to cross-cutting issues?

See related resources on gender, disability inclusion, localization, and GBV risk mitigation in HNO and HRP processes. See **Toolkit Chapter 11: [Cross-Cutting Issues](#)** for more information.

Making Mainstreaming Work

Protection Clusters are expected to play a leading role in the mainstreaming discussion within their country operation. Mainstreaming can sometimes be seen as a 'checkbox' exercise, particularly when writing an HNO

and HRP. However, the concepts are vitally important to ensure equitable access to services and inclusion of all individuals, and to identify and address risks and barriers specific groups or individuals face.

The Protection Cluster should also use this emphasis on cross-cutting issues to think with protection actors about programming impact and how to broaden inclusion of who benefits from protection work – and how this will be put into practice.

For example, the Protection Cluster can:

- Use the Protection Risk Analysis and related HNO analysis to identify groups that can't easily access protection services and working with Cluster members to adapt service access methods and improve outreach strategies.
- Run a session during strategy consultation workshops on cross-cutting issues (e.g. improving disability and age inclusion in protection activities or improvement of accountability processes).
- Invite thematic experts, such as inclusion and PSEA specialists, to cluster meetings to discuss ways to improve accountability and mainstreaming.

Centrality of Protection

In line with the [IASC Protection Policy](#), the HRP should demonstrate what action protection actors and the Protection Cluster will take to address, mitigate and prevent critical protection risks and how implementation will be monitored.

Critical protection risks might be identified as priorities by the HC/HCT in their protection strategy, in the HRP's centrality of protection Strategic Objectives, and through the Cluster's own analysis. This entails identifying who is at risk, where, and from what or whom, considering the specific vulnerabilities that underline these risks for all affected population groups, relevant to protection activities.

The Protection Cluster Strategy & the HRP should demonstrate how the protection response will address these risks – clearly articulating roles and responsibilities of protection partners and the Cluster in contributing to protection outcomes. Affected communities should be actively involved throughout the process.

Read more on this in the Toolkit under **Chapter 5: [Centrality of Protection](#)**.

Ensuring Regular Protection Risk Assessments

The Protection Cluster should carry out regular protection risk assessments, including protection analysis workshops. These assessments and reviews feed into products such as the Protection Analysis Updates and the Global Protection Updates. These regular reviews provide the evidence base on protection risks, and its impact on specific groups and individuals and the human rights context.

Tips for Regular Protection Risks Prioritization

The [Protection Analytical Framework \(PAF\)](#) is a global standard, referenced in key documents such as the ICRC Professional Standards and the IDP Protection Policy. Consistent use of the PAF helps harmonize data and supports collaboration with other sectors and humanitarian actors. The [15 standard protection risks](#) of the Global Protection Cluster are widely used by protection partners and other actors, offering a common language and narrative to support joint prioritization.

- Use a common framework but adapt the prioritization process to the level of engagement, capacity, resources, and available data in-country (*support is available from the GPC*).

- Facilitate a prioritization workshop by presenting an initial analysis (e.g., severity of the 15 risks or a preliminary prioritization). This often enables more practical engagement from diverse partners with specific areas of expertise.
- Avoid holding a one-off workshop solely for the publication of a Protection Analysis Update or similar product. Instead, ensure regular check-ins and discussions on risk prioritization with partners and the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG).
- Support partners' efforts in community engagement by establishing mechanisms to incorporate community perspectives into risk analysis and prioritization.
- Ensure that risk prioritization is linked to the ongoing Protection Cluster strategy, response mapping, partner consultations, and advocacy efforts.

2.4 Flash Appeals

The HPC for New Crises

In a new emergency, where there is a new sudden onset crisis or an escalation of an existing crisis, elements of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) are conducted quickly.

The global guidance on the HPC recommends steps that should be taken at country level – by the Humanitarian Coordinator, in coordination with the Humanitarian Country Team – in a new emergency. The HPC steps are designed to be followed flexibly, and quickly.

The following is the timeline given by the IASC as a recommendation in a new emergency. Depending on the context, different timelines might be followed, and different steps might be taken. More detailed information can be found in the [IASC Reference Module for the Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#).

- The response might be declared a Level 3 Response by the IASC.
- By days 3-5, a Flash Appeal is developed based on an initial analysis of needs.
- By day 14, a Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) is conducted.
- 30 days after the Flash Appeal, an HRP is developed or updated.
- 60 days after the HRP, a Periodic Monitoring Report is issued.
- By day 90 for L3 responses, an operational peer review must be conducted, and between months 9-12 an inter-agency humanitarian evaluation (IAHE) might be conducted.

Flash Appeals

The creation of flash appeals typically occurs during period of very fluid context dynamic and in sudden onset disasters, feature limited information availability and low but expanding response capacities. It is therefore important, when developing a flash appeal, to avoid overly complex methods for calculation of people in need estimates and to avoid having overly specific/complex or too many response activities.

Flash appeals should be light process, easy to understand with clear action, and sufficiently flexible to adapt to future information on needs and priorities, and the changes in the context dynamics. Flash appeals often coincide with the activation of the cluster. In these situations, it is very important that the protection section clearly explains its target population, the role protection is/will play in addressing the impacts of the shock, who the key stakeholders are (partners, government line-ministries) and what activities the cluster plans to best meet the needs.

The process of developing flash appeals can be very challenging for cluster coordination teams due to the extreme fluidity of the situation and the parallel information and resource demands. Cluster coordination teams are strongly encouraged to work closely with the GPC when developing flash appeals, and to utilise global support capacity.

2.5 Pooled Funds

Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF)

What are CBPF?

Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF) are humanitarian funds held at country level. They allow donors to pool their contributions into single, unearmarked funds to support country humanitarian efforts. They are established when a new emergency occurs or when an existing humanitarian situation deteriorates and are designed to complement other humanitarian funding sources.

CBPF are given country-specific names (and acronyms). For example: ‘Yemen Humanitarian Fund’ (YHF) or ‘South Sudan Humanitarian Fund’ (SSHF).

CBPF are managed by OCHA at the country level under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator, in consultation with the humanitarian country team. They support the priorities set out in HRP, enabling funding to be prioritized locally to support highest-priority projects. Funds can be allocated to national and international NGOs, UN agencies, and Red Cross/Red Crescent organizations.

Governance & Management

The HC has specific responsibilities for CBPF, including defining the strategic focus and amount of funding for each allocation and leading country-level resource mobilization efforts, and is supported by OCHA and an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board has a consultative role on CBPF strategic approach. It is made up of representatives from contributing donors, UN agencies, national NGOs, and international NGOs.

Programmatic and financial aspects of CBPF are managed and supported by a Humanitarian Financing Unit (HFU) that sits within the OCHA country office. CBPFs follow global guidelines, with an Operational Manual developed to describe specific arrangements for the country context.

Types of Allocations

These pooled funds are disbursed in “allocations”. If a CBPF is established in a response, there might be one or several allocations during a year, depending on the requirements of the context. There are two types of allocation of Country-Based Pooled Funds:

Standard Allocations

A Standard Allocation is the regular process of a CBPF. It usually takes place against the backdrop of the HRP. There are set steps for a Standard Allocation:

Standard Allocation Workflow (Indicative timeline: 35–45 working days, plus disbursement)

Step 1: Allocation Strategy Development

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1.0 | HC: Decides to launch an allocation in consultation with the AB, setting out its strategic intent in a concise Strategic Statement. |
| 1.1 | OCHA/HFU: Prepares a detailed Allocation Strategy with inputs from sectors/clusters and/or other coordination mechanisms and from relevant stakeholders. |

- 1.2 **OCHA/CBPF Section:** Reviews the Allocation Strategy to allow for feedback and guidance and ensure high quality in line with global templates and standards.
- 1.3 **OCHA/HFU:** Shares the Allocation Strategy with the AB for feedback. HC endorses the final version.
- 1.4 **OCHA/HFU:** Issues the Allocation Strategy by initiating the call for proposals.

Step 2: Submission of Project Proposals

- 2.1 **Eligible Partners:** Submit project proposals.

Step 3: Review of Project Proposals

- 3.1 **OCHA/HFU:** Conducts preliminary screening of submitted project proposals to verify basic eligibility requirements.
- 3.2 **Review Committees:** Recommend funding project proposals based on selection criteria specified in the Allocation Strategy and informed by the use of scorecards and other tools.
- 3.3 **OCHA/HFU:** Consolidates recommendations from Review Committees, scrutinizes coherence with the agreed Allocation Strategy and any relevant parameters, and submits to the Humanitarian Coordinator a final list of recommended projects. The Humanitarian Coordinator reviews and endorses projects for final technical and financial review.

Step 4: Final Technical and Financial Review

- 4.1 **OCHA/HFU + Technical Experts:** As needed and conducts the technical and financial review.
- 4.2 **Partners:** Address comments from Review Committees, OCHA/HFU and technical experts. Proposals can be revised in three cycles to reach required quality.
- 4.3 **OCHA/HFU or CBPF Section:** Conducts budget clearance, subject to prevailing delegations of authority.

Step 5: Final Approval by HC and Grant Agreement

- 5.1 **HC + OCHA/HFU:** Gives final approval for projects. OCHA/HFU prepares Grant Agreements with start date, reporting timelines, disbursement schedule and other conditions.
- 5.2 **HC, Partner, OCHA EO:** Sign Grant Agreement.

Step 6: Disbursement (10 working days)

- 6.1 **OCHA/CBPF Section:** Actions disbursement.

Reserve Allocations

A Reserve Allocation is primarily intended to respond to rapid onset and unforeseen circumstances. Exceptionally, it may be used to support special initiatives for which a Standard Allocation is insufficient. A Reserve Allocation has a streamlined process. Funding applications are from a limited number of partners by invitation, according to criteria. A short allocation strategy is drafted, and the timeline of project submission and approval is shortened.

Role of the Protection Cluster (Pooled Funds)

Clusters are required to closely engage with CBPF processes. CBPFs are important for a cluster, as they are designed to support the priorities set out in HRPs and respond to highest-priority gaps or unforeseen circumstances. They can be an important funding mechanism for cluster partners, especially for local organizations.

During the Allocation Process

As Protection Cluster coordination teams, you will be involved to:

- Give input to the Allocation Strategy, often through the inter-cluster coordination group, identifying and advocating for highest priority protection gaps as per the HRP and funding status monitoring.

- If HRP protection priorities are approved for inclusion in the allocation, develop any necessary additional guidance for protection partners.
- Ensure to make provision for funding allocation to local and national actors.
- Form a Strategic Review Committee, to review proposals (see below).
- Participate in technical review with OCHA/HFU and engage with partners on finalization of proposals.

Forming a Strategic Review Committee

For the proposal review step, each cluster ordinarily is requested to form a Review Committee – usually referred to as a Strategic Review Committee.

The Strategic Review Committee meets to review each project proposal submitted to the CBPF by a protection partner, and scores them against set criteria. Standard scorecards are provided by HFU, and you might wish to add protection-specific criteria decided by the Review Committee to this. For example, to ensure good technical aspects to the proposal, or to promote funding for local and national actors.

The Review Committee decides whether to recommend each proposal for funding and decides if any adjustments are needed to proposal activities and budget.

A Strategic Review Committee includes the Cluster Coordinator and Co-Coordinator, nominated Cluster members (including at least one representative from INGOs, NNGOs, UN Agencies), and a member of the OCHA/HFU team. The existing Cluster Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) can act as the Strategic Review Committee, or the Cluster can form a separate committee. This should be done transparently.

During Implementation of Protection CBPF Projects

If protection projects are approved, the Protection Cluster might be required to:

- Review partner interim and final reports.
- Participate in monitoring visits with the HFU team.

Administration through ‘GMS’

The Grant Management System (GMS) is an online platform used to manage CBPF processes, including partner registration and the full grant management cycle (project proposal submissions, proposal review and approval, narrative and financial reporting, project revisions, and closure processes).

As a Cluster Coordinator, you will likely be required to interact with the GMS platform to view partner proposals, add comments following the Strategic Review Committee stage, and to review partner project amendments and reporting, according to guidance set out at country level.

Tips for Localization in CBPF

- Ensure local and national actors have information on how to access CBPF and understand the processes. Consider holding briefings for local and national actors, and consider how the Cluster can support local actors to overcome any language and administrative barriers.
- Support training and learning opportunities for local partners, including OCHA-led CBPF focused trainings.
- Advocate for and include funding for institutional capacity-building in pooled fund priorities.

- Prioritise local actors' applications in pooled funds.
- Support the creation of consortium applications, based on partnerships between national and international actors.

Read more about steps you can take to promote local and national actors' access to funding in section 11.3 on Localisation in **Chapter 11: [Cross-Cutting Issues](#)** of the Protection Field Coordination Toolkit.

Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)

The **Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)** is a global funding mechanism that pools the contributions from donors, mainly governments but also private donors, into a single fund. The fund is set aside for immediate use, to jump-start critical relief operations and fund lifesaving programmes not covered by other donors in rapidly deteriorating situations and in underfunded protracted crises. CERF allocation mechanisms include rapid response grants, underfunded emergency grants, and loans. UN agencies, funds and programmes can receive CERF funds for lifesaving activities in emergencies around the world. NGOs are not eligible to apply for or directly receive funding from CERF. However, NGOs may be recipients of CERF funding where they are implementing partners of the UN agency that is a recipient of the grant (or loan).

The Humanitarian Coordinator or Resident Coordinator recommends use of CERF and identifies priority lifesaving needs by consulting the Humanitarian Country Team. UN organizations jointly apply for CERF funding through the RC or HC.

For the Protection Cluster, the Cluster Lead Agency will be involved in discussions on CERF applications in the HCT. A Protection Cluster coordination team might be required to provide analysis and consultation with Cluster partners to inform CERF allocation requests, using the CERF life-saving criteria for protection as a guide ([CERF Life-Saving Criteria](#)). This will likely be done in collaboration with the CLA, if it is needed. UNHCR coordinators can reach out to the Division of External Relations (DER) for guidance on CERF allocations, including for thematic allocations.

2.6 Key Resources and Tools

The Global Protection Cluster [protection analysis guidance](#) and [the information management and analysis toolbox](#) provides the most up to date resources for information management and analysis, including IM and Analysis for the HNRP.

Title	Type	Language	Year
Humanitarian Programme Cycle			
HNRP Tools and Templates (OCHA)	Website	ENG	-
GPC HPC Learning Series	Web series	ENG	2024
ToT material – Introduction to HPC for Protection Cluster partners	Training Material	ENG <i>Upon Request</i>	2024
Protection Cluster Approach to Protection Analysis	Guidance	ENG	2024
GPC Methodology for Calculating Protection Severity and Estimating People in Need (PiN) at a Household and Area Level	Guidance	ENG	2024

HPC 2026: Streamlined Approach for the Protection Cluster Consolidation	Webinars	ENG , FRA , ESP	2025
HPC 2026: Specific Session on Targeting	Webinar	ENG	2025
JIAF 2.0			
JIAF 2.0 Technical Manual (IASC)	Guidelines	ENG	2023
Dialogue with GPC & HPC focal points: Protection Analysis Framework and linkages to JIAF	Webinar	ENG <i>Upon Request</i>	2024
République Démocratique du Congo Rapport de l'atelier JIAF 2.0 du Cluster Protection	Example	FRA	2024
Pooled Funds – CBPF and CERF			
Country-Based Pooled Funds (OCHA)	Website	ENG	-
Country-Based Pooled Funds Global Guidelines (OCHA)	Guidelines	ENG , ARA , ESP , FRA	2023
CERF Life-Saving Criteria	Criteria Document	ENG (amend.) ESP , ARA , FRA	2024 2022
Mozambique – Protection in Emergencies is Lifesaving and Critical	Country Example	ENG	2024
Flash Appeal			
Flash Appeal: A Quick Guide (OCHA)	Guidance & Template	ENG	2017
Flash Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2024	Example Document	ENG	2024
Strategic Review of CBPF			
Example Peer Review Process	Example	<i>Upon request</i>	**
Example Peer Review Score Card	Example	<i>Upon Request</i>	**

Protection Field Coordination Toolkit – Overview of Chapters

Visit the [main toolkit landing page](#) or navigate directly to the chapters below to access more resources and information on the Protection Cluster's role in the following areas:

Protection Field Coordination Toolkit – Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1: Humanitarian Coordination Overview

- Coordination models for internal displacement, refugee response and mixed situations
- Cluster Activation Criteria and Processes

Chapter 2: Humanitarian Programme Cycle

- Elements / Principles of the HPC and the Role of the Cluster
- Flash Appeals and Pooled Funds
- Integration cross-cutting issues and the Centrality of Protection into the HPC

Chapter 3: Internal Displacement

- Internal displacement and the needs of IDPs.
- Legal frameworks and displacement

Chapter 4: Protection in Armed Conflict

- International Law/Principles
- Humanitarian protection and Protection of Civilians (PoC).
- Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination

Chapter 5: Centrality of Protection

- The Protection Cluster's responsibilities in CoP
- The difference between mainstreaming, integration and the centrality of protection.
- IASC processes and HCT benchmarks

Chapter 6: Climate, Disaster, and Sudden Onset Emergencies

- Terminology and definitions in climate and disasters.
- Responding to sudden onset emergencies
- Actions that can be taken after a sudden onset shock (day 1-5)
- Climate and disaster preparedness and response.

Chapter 7: Durable Solutions

- Global frameworks guiding Durable Solutions
- Supporting durable solutions at strategic and operational levels.
- The GPC Durable Solutions Guidance for Protection Clusters

Chapter 8: Cluster Transition, Deactivation and Reform

- Criteria for cluster deactivation and transition
- Transition processes
- Humanitarian reform initiatives
- Area-based coordination

Chapter 9: Advocacy and Communication

- Developing advocacy strategies and action plans
- Preparing briefings to ICCG/HCT and engaging donors
- Leveraging human rights mechanisms
- Communication products and media engagement

Chapter 10: Data Responsibility and Safe Information Management

- Principles of data safeguarding, management and sharing
- Data responsibility in humanitarian action
- Safe and effective data handling

Chapter 11: Cross-Cutting Issues

- Age, Gender, Diversity and Disability Inclusion
- MHPSS
- AAP
- PSEA
- Protection Mainstreaming

Chapter 12: Understanding Protection Programmatic Approaches and Interventions

- Locally Led Responses
- Community Based Protection
- Case Management
- Service Mapping and Referrals
- Legal Aid, Law and Policy
- Cash and Protection
- Humanitarian Negotiations
- Anti-Trafficking
- Mobile and Rapid Protection Responses