

Chapter 2


Developing the strategy

1. What is a Protection Strategy?

A strategy provides the over-arching vision for a collective and, therefore more comprehensive, protection response. A strategy provides a collective analysis of the protection concerns and a clear understanding of the operating environment; defines common objectives; identifies priorities; and puts forward a coherent and comprehensive plan of action, with clearly allocated roles and responsibilities, for achieving these objectives.

2. Why is a Protection Strategy Important?

A protection strategy, especially one that is developed with a broad range of partners, will help to strengthen their protection response, particularly that of national authorities and affected communities in a number of ways:


- **Effective response:** Working together in a planned and coordinated way, will result in a more coherent and, therefore, more effective and more comprehensive response to protection concerns, while helping to ensure that there are no gaps or duplications of efforts;
- **Innovative responses:** The process of developing the strategy, bringing all relevant actors together to identify shared objectives and mutual strengths, can also help find creative ways of overcoming obstacles;
- **Access to resources:** Raising funds for protection activities can be more effective when approaching donors together and presenting shared objectives. The strategy often forms part of the inter-agency planning or fund-raising process, such as the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) or Coordinated Appeal Process (CAP);
- **Measuring impact:** Measuring the impact of protection interventions is difficult, but setting benchmarks or indicators can help to evaluate how the protection response has improved the situation, and if the interventions are appropriate (*see Part III.3*);  and
- **Continuity:** A strategy can help to ensure continuity in an operation, especially in situations where there is a high turnover of staff.

3. Who should develop the protection strategy?

In order to ensure appropriate identification of needs, and the most effective and comprehensive response, all relevant protection actors in the country should be involved throughout the process of developing a protection strategy. It should be developed by the protection working group or similar protection coordination mechanism, in consultation with the Humanitarian Coordinator and the IASC Country Team.¹

The strategy-development exercise should involve and reflect the views of those whom it seeks to protect, such as displaced communities, non-displaced populations under threat, and among them older persons, women, men, children, and youth of diverse backgrounds. Throughout this process, it is also important to consult with national or local authorities, as appropriate, and other relevant stakeholders such as donors, or representatives of peace-keeping/peace-support/peace-building missions.

¹ The Humanitarian Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the “development of a comprehensive strategic plan for responding to the ... protection needs of IDPs” (Revised Terms of Reference of Humanitarian Coordinators, 2003, IASC).

Coordinating the development of a protection strategy with a large number of actors with different working styles and mandates can sometimes be difficult. Consultations must, therefore, encompass the different perspectives in order to secure a broad consensus. The resulting strategy document should be clear and concise to ensure a shared understanding of the strategy by all those involved in its implementation (see Part II). 

The absence of a protection strategy should not prevent humanitarian agencies from undertaking protection activities in the field, especially during an emergency phase and supporting the capacity of national authorities to protect IDPs and affected communities. However, it is important to ensure that a strategy is developed as soon as possible in any given context. The strategy should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.

4. What should the strategy include?


The strategy will be determined by the specific context, including the protection actors present. In a conflict situation, the strategy may be more focused on advocacy and mitigation of the impact of conflict on the affected populations. In a return or post-conflict setting, the strategy may be more specific to ensuring conditions for durable solutions. During natural disasters, the strategy may involve closer dialogue with the authorities on reconstruction and ensuring non-discrimination in access to services or assistance.





A protection strategy should respond to the following questions:

- Who needs protection and in relation to which right?
- What will the various actors do and how?
- How will they know if the strategy has been successful?

4.1 The Strategy Document

Strategies may differ in format, but there are a number of *standard* components to ensure that the strategy document is clear, action-oriented and practical. These include:

- I **Background:** An outline of the relevant facts that have led to the existing humanitarian crisis and have triggered the development of a protection strategy.
- II **Situation analysis:** This would include a summary of the findings of the document review, consultation with key stakeholders and the participatory assessment, and should include priorities on who should be protected and how. It should also include a list of stakeholders, both agencies and communities, involved in implementing a protection strategy and state their capacities and roles.
- III **Possible scenarios:** As with the CHAP, it is useful to elaborate on the best, worst and most likely scenarios in a given context. Humanitarian crises, particularly armed conflicts, are volatile. The protection response, like the broader humanitarian response, needs to remain flexible to respond to political developments as they arise. Protection actors should be well prepared for the different scenarios and foresee possible changes in the protection strategy as may be required by the circumstances.
- IV **Basic principles:** It might be necessary to emphasize the principles on which the protection strategy is based, (such as independence, impartiality, and neutrality; community participation, etc), as well as the general thrust of the humanitarian operation/response. The strategy paper should also affirm that the international community has been called upon to support the government in improving the protection of the displaced and other affected populations (see Part I.1). 

- V **Legal framework:** There should be a clear reference to the law applicable in the specific country context, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law, as well as relevant national law.
- VI **Objectives:** Based on the priorities identified and the legal framework applicable in the specific context, the strategy should outline key objectives that the protection actors are aiming at in the short, medium and long term.
- VII **Action plan:** The strategy should outline activities that will be undertaken, either collectively or by individual organizations, in order to address the identified needs and achieve the stated objectives. The list of activities must be based on what resources and capacities are currently available, humanitarian access and security. The strategy should be realistic, practical and appropriate to the country context. The Action Plan should include:
- **Activities:** listed in order of priority (*see Part IV of this Handbook*); 
 - **Geographic area:** where activities will be undertaken;
 - **Populations:** who will these activities be implemented for/with; and
 - **Responsibility for implementation:** assigning responsibilities for activities should take into account who is best placed to do what – who has the most expertise, experience and capacity to undertake particular activities. For the UN agencies, this should be in line with commitments made at the global level to provide particular technical expertise (*see Part I.3*). 
- VIII **Coordination:** Mechanisms for coordinating the implementation of the strategy need to be clearly defined. It is particularly important to designate a lead organization in each sector, to outline the structure and membership of the sector, (including national, regional and any local working groups), as well as to define how the sector reports to the Humanitarian Coordinator (*see Part I.3*). 
- IX **Key indicators:** Having set objectives for the strategy, it is necessary to measure to what extent they have been attained as well as what impact activities have had. Setting indicators to measure the impact of protection activities is generally difficult, but there are certain key outcomes that can be used to assess whether activities have improved protection (*see Part III.3*). 
- X **Constraints/Assumptions:** It is important to understand what may affect implementation of the strategy. Common constraints include insecurity, lack of access, and lack of resources.
- XI **Costs:** It may be necessary to include the total cost of implementing the strategy, particularly when additional funds need to be raised.

Format: The strategy can be written as a narrative text and/or tables with the priorities, activities, responsible organizations and indicators clearly indicated. The key is to ensure that the strategy is concise and easy to understand.²

Scope: A strategy usually establishes a countrywide protection response. However, it might be necessary to develop a response for a specific region/district in a country. If so, the region/district-specific response should be seen as part of the countrywide response and should share the broader objectives.

In operations where two or more countries have related protection issues, it might be helpful to develop a **regional protection strategy**. These strategies may address medium- and longer-term goals. A regional strategy does not preclude a country-specific response.

² No specific template is provided in this Handbook as it could limit the creativity of protection teams. However examples of various inter-agency strategies, such as those for Lebanon, Uganda, Somalia, and the Sudan, are included in the CD-ROM version of this Handbook.

The Timeline

Developing a protection strategy can be swift. It might take from a week to a month, depending on the operational context and urgency of needs. To avoid a protracted and cumbersome process, protection partners should set a clear deadline for each step and stick to it.

Once the situation analysis is completed, the development of the strategy paper can progress as follows:

1. Initial consultations agreement on process, lead, drafters, time frame for finalization
2. Collective brainstorming to identify the elements of the strategy
3. Drafting to be done by a small team or by the lead protection agency or organization
4. Review of first draft to be done by all relevant partners
5. Finalization of draft incorporating comments/suggestions from all partners
6. Endorsement by HC and IASC CT

Once the strategy is endorsed it can be shared, as appropriate, with state authorities, donors and other relevant stakeholders who did not take part in its development. Reviews should be conducted at regular intervals, perhaps in line with mid year reviews of the CAP, or more frequently, as necessary.