

SYRIA PROTECTION CLUSTER (TURKEY)

2019 Operational Strategy for the Syria Protection Cluster supported by cross-border operations from Turkey. Adopted May 2019.

2019 Strategy



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Protection Cluster Strategy 2019 Turkey Cross-Border Operation for Syria

A. Background and rationale

The scale, severity and complexity of humanitarian needs of people in Syria remain extensive. This is the result of continued hostilities in localized areas, new and protracted displacement, increased self-organized returns and the sustained erosion of communities' resilience during close to eight years of crisis. Across Syria, an estimated 11.7 million people are in need of various forms of humanitarian assistance, with certain population groups facing particularly high levels of vulnerability. Whilst there has been a reduction in violence in many parts of the country over the past year, the impact of present and past hostilities on civilians remains the principal driver of humanitarian needs in Syria.

Protection¹ of affected civilians, in each and all of its forms, is being hindered or denied throughout most of Syria. Massive population groups live in daily fear of mortar shells, airstrikes or bullets. While many access needed humanitarian assistance, in some locations accessing this assistance can be risky and is marked by reports of exploitation and discrimination in its provision. Protection issues and needs in Syria remain prevalent and continue to affect all population groups. The protracted nature of the crisis has led to the emergence of increasingly complex and inter-connected protection issues and needs, in a continuously evolving environment. While the overall protection situation remains dire, protection needs are varied across different areas of the country as the situation on the ground has evolved. In some areas of Syria, particularly the north-west and north-east, the civilian population is still exposed to hostilities, leading to civilian casualties and forced displacements as people seek safety. The prolonged and widespread use of a range of weaponry has left behind a range of explosive hazards, each posing their own risks. In a number of locations across the country, IDPs still live in sites or collective accommodations, sometimes subjected to security screening procedures and deprived of freedom of movement, while also facing obstacles in accessing services, livelihood opportunities and dignified living conditions. Numerous situations of protracted displacement are reported, with families living in sub-standard conditions and struggling to find resilience mechanisms. As a result, recourse to harmful coping mechanisms (including child labour, child recruitment, different forms of exploitation and child/early marriage) is a persisting trend. Finally, the current and constantly increasing scale of IDP returns, adds an additional layer of needs that should be taken into account, not least in the fields of civil documentation and HLP.

The lack of civil documentation continues to affect communities' freedom of movement, access to humanitarian assistance, employment, and basic services. Due to ongoing repeated displacements, IDPs especially in northwest Syria experience challenges in adapting to life in new locations, affecting social cohesion negatively.

Communities continue to experience restrictions to freedom of movement due to security concerns. Often, these restrictions are self-imposed by community members to prevent or mitigate harm. The inability to move freely has many negative consequences, such as challenges to obtaining documentation, or in accessing employment, education, markets and health care. This restrictions exacerbates the protection risks that communities already experience.

Housing, Land and Property (HLP) related disputes remain prevalent in communities. The increase in undocumented or unofficial HLP transactions will present growing challenges in the future.

¹ The Inter-Agency Standing Committee defines Protection as all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law, namely human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law. (IASC IDP Protection Policy 1999).



Access to basic services such as education, health, water, electricity, and humanitarian assistance shows variance based on locations. While access to these services are safe and sufficient in some communities, other communities continue to experience irregular, insufficient and unsafe access, which heightens protection risks.

Availability and access to services for persons with specific needs and disabilities continues to be severely insufficient, especially considering their growing numbers due to continued conflict conditions.

Challenges to the Protection Cluster remained largely consistent with previous years, with regular displacement and direct exposure to hostilities continuing to drive protection needs. Changes in territorial control over the course of 2018 may continue in 2019, with the cross-border operation serving a larger number of people in need in a smaller geographic space.

This has meant that the response from cross-border operation in 2018, and likely through 2019, will be geared towards emergency response, in addition to addressing the other unchanged protection issues which characterize much of the Syrian situation, particularly in locations ranked as most severe i.e. areas most affected by violence and with the largest number of displaced. The scale of the breakdown of social services in much of the country means that even in accessible areas, the quality and quantity of services is inadequate to meet the magnitude of needs. Humanitarian access, implementation capacity, and funding remain significant factors impeding the response.

B. 2018 Achievements

In 2018, the Protection Cluster and Sub-Clusters seek to build on their achievements of 2017. Key achievements of the Cluster and Sub-Clusters members include:

1. Provided 2,523,992 protection prevention and response interventions to persons in need in 95 sub-districts in 2018
2. Reached 269 communities through protection monitoring
3. Trained 20 protection organizations in Protection Information Management for data collection, analysis and assessments
4. Expanded Protection Monitoring Task Force to support standardization of tools, indicators and referrals
5. Enhanced emergency response coordination and collection of information through geographically-focused operational groups and an emergency response package
6. Trained humanitarian workers and community leaders, reaching 4,697 people with trainings on protection mainstreaming, community-based protection approaches and IDP guiding principles

C. Key activities

Considering the widespread protection needs and gaps in Syria, the fact that meaningful protection interventions require sustained institutions, NGOs, community and individual engagement, and the necessity for those in Syria to be better protected wherever it can be done, for 2019 the Protection Cluster and Sub-Clusters prioritized multiple categories of interventions across the different operational and access contexts in Syria.



Based on the priorities outlined in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Syria, the Protection Cluster and Sub-Clusters will focus on the following critical interventions:

Protection Cluster

PROTECTION OBJECTIVE 1: The protection of population affected by the crisis is improved through community-based and individually targeted protection interventions and through advocacy with duty bearers

The Protection Cluster will emphasize *providing and informing* lifesaving emergency response services to newly displaced and newly accessible populations and *expanding and enhancing protection* services through wider geographic coverage and outreach capacity, including through mobile teams. Activities include:

- (i) Provision of quality and integrated protection services with a focus on community-based approaches, including awareness raising, psychosocial assistance, targeted support to persons with specific protection needs and other community initiatives through community centres and outreach mechanisms .

In addition and in partnership with the Cluster's advisory body, the Protection Core Group, the Cluster plans to develop the following to support members provide quality services in line with the above activities:

1. Standards and definitions of community-based protection programming for the cross-border context
 2. Individually-targeted protection assistance standard operating procedures and toolkit for persons with specific protection needs
 3. Common understanding of vulnerability or at-risk-groups (based on Whole of Syria criteria) to support other clusters
 4. Increase collaboration with the MHPSS TWG through joint trainings and tools.
- (ii) Provision of legal advice/counselling and legal representation on civil status documentation /registration as well as on housing/land/property issues in accordance with national legislation.
 - a. Provision of legal counselling or assistance on civil documentation/registration, housing/land/property issues, and other legal concerns in community centers or through mobile outreach teams

In addition and in partnership with the Cluster's advisory body, the Protection Core Group, the Cluster plans to develop the following:

1. Develop SOPs on legal assistance/counselling (in line with humanitarian principles) for the XB operation, through the HLP Technical Working Group
- (iii) Advocacy with duty bearers and key stakeholders to inform and enhance the response to protection risks.

In addition and in partnership with the Cluster's advisory body, the Protection Core Group, the Cluster plans to continue its support the HLG and ICCG through operational guidance and advice as warranted, and on identified priorities in-line with the SSG Protection Strategy.



PROTECTION OBJECTIVE 2: Strengthen the capacity of humanitarian actors and duty bearers at national and community level to assess, analyse, prevent and address protection risks and needs

The Protection Cluster will coordinate and support capacity-building with humanitarian actors to support information and advocacy on protection concerns, and Do No Harm (DNH) efforts. Activities include:

- (iv) Capacity building activities targeting humanitarian actors and national/ local authorities to improve quality provision of protection services
Capacity building on risk mitigation and response interventions targeting humanitarian actors and national authorities implementing protection activities to mainstream protection and do no harm
- (v) Protection monitoring and protection needs / risks identification conducted by sector members
 - a. Protection Monitoring Protection monitoring and periodic needs identification conducted by Cluster members, including through the Protection Monitoring Task Force.

Improved ways of working

In addition to the activities outlined above, the Protection Cluster, the Core Group and relevant task forces will also work to increase donor outreach; strengthen engagement with human rights actors; improve the use of existing protection data as developing resources and guides supporting and enhancing the protection environment and response, as amending the information sharing protocol; and support sub-national coordination through operational working groups in order to obtain real-time information and support effective responses.