

Standard Operating Procedures for Protection Monitoring

March 2023

Introduction

These Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are developed for partners involved in Protection Monitoring coordinated by UNHCR. As of March 2023, those members include UNHCR, DRC, IOM, IRC, LCN, Heartland Alliance International, TDH- Italy, Justice Center, NRC, INTERSOS.

The purpose of these SOPs is to provide detailed instructions and guidelines that outline the steps and procedures to be followed by all partners while conducting protection monitoring. These SOPs aim to standardize the process, ensure consistency and efficiency in monitoring, and minimize the risk of security breaches.

Basic principles of protection monitoring

The following list contains some core principles that should inform all activities regulated by this SOPs.

People-centred and inclusive

Data and information activities must be guided by the interests, wellbeing, and rights of the affected population and their hosts, which must participate and be included in all relevant phases. The purpose must be clearly defined and proportional to both the identified risk and costs vis-à-vis the population of concern and those responding. Activities must be sensitive to age, gender, and other issues of diversity.

Do no harm

Data and information activities must include a risk assessment and take steps, if necessary, to mitigate identified risks. The risk assessment must look at negative consequences that may result from data collection and subsequent actions or service delivery for as long as the data and information activity is carried out.

Defined purpose

Given the sensitive and often personal nature of protection information, data and information activities must serve specific information needs and purposes. The purpose must be clearly defined and communicated; proportional to both the identified risk and costs vis-à-vis the expected response; and aimed at action for protection outcomes, including the sharing and coordination of protection data and information.

Informed consent and confidentiality

Personal information may be collected only after free and informed consent has been provided by the individual in question. As per UNHCR's Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR (DPP Guidance), for consent to constitute a viable legitimate basis, it needs to be freely given and informed. Freely given means that the individual has a genuine choice and is able to refuse or withdraw consent without adverse consequences. The Guidance also states that informed consent requires that the individual receives explanations, which allows for full appreciation and understanding of the circumstances, risks and benefits of processing. Factors such as age, gender, the level of education, health or disability may affect an individual's ability to understand the consequences of data processing and need to be considered in the way information is provided. The information needs to be provided in simple jargon-free language, yet complete, with a sufficient level of detail to enable the data subject to clearly appreciate the future data flows, including risks and consequences as much as known to UNHCR. In order to be complete, the information should cover all of the envisaged data processing activities to be carried out, especially what data sets or elements will be shared or transferred with the host Government, implementing partners or other third parties. The definition of consent in UNHCR's Data Protection Policy also clarifies that consent may be given either by a written or oral statement or by a clear affirmative action. Whatever the method for providing consent, UNHCR's Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR (DPG) encourages proper recording of consent, for instance in an interview transcript, as a note for the file or in audio recording. Further, confidentiality must be clearly explained to the individual before the information may be collected. The personal data of persons of concern to UNHCR is classified as confidential. The duty of confidentiality extends to all communications with persons of concern, and all data provided by them or obtained on their behalf by personnel and partners during UNHCR's activities.

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Impartiality

All steps of the data and information cycle must be undertaken in an objective, impartial, and transparent manner while identifying and minimizing bias.

Coordination and collaboration

All actors implementing data and information activities must adhere to the principles noted above and promote the broadest collaboration and coordination of data and information internally between humanitarian actors and externally, with and among other stakeholders. To the extent possible, data and information activities must avoid the duplication of other data and information activities and instead build upon existing efforts and mechanisms.

Data responsibility and data protection principles

Data responsibility goes beyond data privacy and data protection. It entails a set of principles, purposes, and processes that seek to guide humanitarian work and leverage data to improve the situation of affected populations and their hosts in a responsible manner while adhering to international standards of data protection. As described in UNHCR's DPP, when processing personal data, UNHCR personnel need to respect and apply the following principles: (i) Legitimate and fair processing, (ii) Purpose specification, (iii) Necessity and proportionality, (iv) Accuracy, (v) Respect for the rights of the data subject, (vi) Confidentiality, (vii) Security, and (viii) Accountability and supervision. Data protection principles require in particular that data is processed on a legitimate basis (e.g., free and informed consent obtained from the data subject), for a specific and legitimate purpose, is necessary and proportionate to the purpose for which it is processed. Personal data should also be recorded as accurately as possible, individuals' rights to information, access, correction, deletion, and objection of their data respected. UNHCR personnel also need to maintain the confidentiality of the personal data of persons of concern, even after a data subject is no longer of concern to UNHCR. To ensure the confidentiality and integrity of personal data, appropriate technical and organizational data security measures need to be put in place.

Where UNHCR undertakes protection monitoring together with or through partners, the operation needs to ensure that partners respect and apply these principles in practice. UNHCR and partners will ensure that the basic principles for personal data processing are respected and applied, and that personal data is accessible only to authorized personnel and transferred only through the use of secured means of communication.

As per the basic principles of data processing, UNHCR operations should process personal data of persons of concern only for the purpose of referral of individuals to relevant service providers and following these individuals' consent.

To ensure security and safety of data, in the processing steps, IMs will need to extract the personal data on referrals to a separate file and the file will need to be encrypted using 7zip corporate tool available on all UNHCR computers. When sharing the data with partners, the password will need to be shared separately. The same procedure will need to be applied to the original file, which contains the personal data and a different password will need to be used for encryption procedure. The file used for analysis will have no personal data inserted so that it can be used without encryption.

UNHCR and partners will implement the following technical and operational data protection and security measures:

- ✓ Ensure that the informed consent is obtained from the data subject by the monitor and the data subject is informed about data protection related rights.
- ✓ Ensure that partner organizations involved in data processing have access to the data they have collected in a regular manner and at country level, in line with UNHCR's DPP. As per UNHCR's DPP, the level of data protection afforded by a third party needs to be assessed before agreeing to transfer personal data. The best way to carry out this assessment is through a data protection

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impact assessment (DPIA). Where transfers of personal data to third parties are likely to be large, repeated or structural, i.e. where the same type(s) of data is shared with the same third party for the same purpose over a certain period of time, UNHCR should seek to sign a data transfer agreement. Thus, unless transfers are sporadic and unpredictable, data transfer agreements are the rule.

- ✓ Data sharing (anonymized and personal) with other operations for coordination purposes should be in line with UNHCR DPP.
- ✓ The Regional Bureau as well as the country operation's data protection focal points can be contacted for more information on UNHCR's Data Protection Policy.

Competency and capacity

All partners engaging in data and information activities are accountable for ensuring that they are carried out by those with the required skills and competencies, who have been trained appropriately on information management and protection.

Objective

The **objective of Protection Monitoring is three-fold:**

- 1) Generate reliable, evidence-based information to inform timely decisions and actions aimed at improving the protection environment over time. This information should include both qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring a well-rounded and informed understanding of the situation being monitored.
- 2) Ensure a common analysis of protection issues in order to provide early warnings and to devise common advocacy and programmatic measures to mitigate and address emerging protection risks based on evidence.
- 3) Identify priority areas and inform strategies for protection advocacy through evidence-based information. These priorities and strategies will inform advocacy efforts at the national, field, and global level, leading to an improved engagement with duty bearers, and ultimately better protection outcomes for all population groups covered in this protection monitoring system.

Protection Monitoring definition

Protection Monitoring is defined as a systematic and regular process of collecting and analyzing information on the protection environment, the risks faced by individuals and communities, and the actions taken to address those risks. The goal of protection monitoring is to identify protection concerns, inform more effective responses to address identified protection concerns, and support advocacy efforts aimed at improving the protection environment. Protection monitoring typically involves collecting information through various sources and methods, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, and document review. The information gathered through protection monitoring is used to inform decision-making and support advocacy efforts to improve the protection of vulnerable individuals and communities.

Guidance on Protection Monitoring : http://pim.guide/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/PIM-Training-Resource-Pack_full_compressed_English-1.pdf

Cooperation

The Protection Monitoring Core Group, that was developed in 2022, will serve as a pool of partners that will conduct the protection monitoring in Iraq.

Joint advocacy will be conducted through the Protection Platform to improve the protection environment and enhance the response to specific groups of people with heightened vulnerabilities or who are facing increased protection risks according to protection monitoring findings.

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Methodology for Protection Monitoring

The **methodology uses a mixed approach to Protection Monitoring** across Iraq, using different standardized data collection tools (including HH, KII and FGDs) are attached as annexes. The SOPs were developed in accordance with best practices considering specific lessons learnt within the Iraq context. The general design of the Protection Monitoring system in Iraq was determined by agreements reached by partners in the Protection Monitoring Core Group through coordinated workshops (in person and online) in 2022.

The protection monitoring system in Iraq has applied an age, gender, and diversity (AGD) approach to the development of the standardized tools. All data collected by the protection actors will be disaggregated by age, sex, and other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and possible.

What to monitor

At the core of Protection Monitoring is **actionable data that triggers a protection response** and can support the improvement of the protection environment for all population groups monitored in Iraq. Priorities of Protection Monitoring through include:

- Providing evidence on the protection situation as it changes over time to enable strategic decision-making by the Protection Platform
- Informing protection advocacy interventions at local, provincial, and national level by the Protection Platform and to the RC/HC and other relevant stakeholders
- Identifying individuals for referral to specialised service providers
- Identifying individuals and communities for inclusion in projects implemented by Protection Partners.
- Identifying areas to be prioritized by Protection Partners for provision of protection services.

How to monitor

To monitor and compare the protection environment of **girls, boys, men, and women, partners will collect data disaggregated by age and gender which identifies adolescents, youth, and elderly**, as well as specific population groups (i.e., refugees/asylum seekers, IDPs, IDP returnees, stateless persons, vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis, and migrants).

Protection monitors will conduct in person household interviews (HH), focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs) in accessible areas. Where access is denied, restricted, or limited, remote interviews with key informants and heads of household may take place by telephone.

The methodology for selecting key informants, focus group discussion participants, and/or households has been carefully considered and tailored to meet the specific needs and requirements of each thematic area being covered. This approach maximizes the potential for obtaining accurate, reliable, and usable information while minimizing the risk of harm to participants. Different sources may be used for different thematic areas, with some areas being covered by both KIIs and FGDs others by FGDs only, and still others by all three methods. The choice of methodology for each thematic area is driven by the local context and the nature of the thematic area, ensuring that the responses will be useful, meaningful, and free from harm.

HH level interviews: Questions can be close or open-ended, as well as /in-depth questions related to the topic of interest. Respondent speaks only on behalf of him/herself and/or his/her household. It is important to sample interview different members of the HH and not only the head of the household to ensure AGD are integrated.

FGDs: Questions are typically open-ended (although close ended are also utilized) and allow for/encourage discussion through which multiple points of view can be shared and explored. FGDs should be structures so that participants share certain characteristics relevant to the research question and which make them feel more comfortable speaking (e.g. gender segregation). Interactions between participants is what distinguishes FGDs from individual interviews (making the role of the moderator decisive for an FGDs' success), e.g.,

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understanding divergence on a topic collecting experiences, as well as making participants feel comfortable sharing. FGDs are often used to gain deeper insight in a specific issue that is uncovered by other data collection exercises/SDR. Noting here that FGDs tend to be the most complex/challenging to facilitate and gather quality data from. FGD allow for community-level issues to be shared while KI interviews and individual interviews allow for a better appreciation of threats as individuals are not intimidated by the presence of others or burden by cultural expectations. FGDs should be conducted in groups of maximum eight persons. FGDs can also help more accurately report on high-sensitivity needs experienced by communities and persons of concern. In order to ensure centralization of high-sensitivity questions, namely which questions are asked and how they are asked, all FGD facilitators should be trained by the same third-party actor. This in turn will partially unburden partners currently involved in data collection of the task of conducting high-sensitivity modules at a time when resources are increasingly strained. Additionally, targeted training on facilitation of high-sensitivity will create reliable qualitative data based on the firsthand experiences of communities and persons of concern in order to serve as more effective advocacy material.

To capture information through FGDs about risks, needs, capacities, and vulnerabilities of each group, men, women, boys, and girls should be divided into separate groups, and where practical divided by age. Where there are several population groups present in the community like IDPs, IDP returnees, refugees, and/or migrants separate discussions should take place with each of these sub-groups also separated by gender and age, so data is captured for male and female returnees, male and female IDPs, etc.

KI interviews: Questions can be close or open-ended and seek answers based on a certain authority or knowledge the respondent is assumed to have given their position in the community or employment (e.g., member of a directorate). When respondents speak on behalf of a certain group (e.g., perceived access to GBV services among women), who he/she is not a part of, all answers should be carefully interpreted. Male, female ratio – 25% male and 75% female depending on subjects and the impact of the subject.

KI selection

Key informant selection for protection monitoring should entail the following:

- Relevant expertise and knowledge of the area or population being monitored.
- Reliability and trustworthiness of the informant.
- Ability to provide accurate and timely information.
- Willingness and commitment to participate in the monitoring process.
- Representation of the diverse perspectives and experiences of the community or population being monitored.
- Consideration of potential conflicts of interest or biases of the informant.

It is essential to carefully select key informants to ensure that the protection monitoring process is thorough, accurate, and representative of the population's experiences and perspectives. The selection process should be systematic and transparent, considering the characteristics listed above and ensuring that the final pool of key informants is diverse and representative of the population. It is important that KIs represent all the population groups that have been identified to be monitored in this system including, refugees/asylum seekers, IDPs, IDP returnees, stateless persons, vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis, and migrants but also minority groups that fall within these different population groups such as people with disabilities, Yazidis, Christians, people belonging to the LGBTIQ+ communities etc. while being mindful of do no harm considerations.

In this protection monitoring tool, the following profiles may be interviewed as KIs:

- Legal: Lawyers, Judges, CAD/Court employees
- Education: Educators/Teachers/Principles/Academics/Researchers, PTA, students
- MHPSS: Doctor/Health professionals, Psychologists/Mental Health Specialists
- Aid workers/civil society members
- Child Protection: Child Specialists/Child Protection service providers
- Gender Based Violence: GBV service providers/GBV specialists

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- Governmental officials
- Community leader for all population groups
- Tribal Leader for all population groups
- Private sector worker
- Daily workers
- Outreach Volunteers
- Religious Leaders

Key Informants play important roles in protection monitoring, providing valuable insights and perspectives on the situation being monitored. The Expert Key Informants provide valuable technical information and a deeper understanding on the issues being monitored, while the General Key Informants provide a more general understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the population being monitored.

Kobo Toolbox

Data is entered into the Kobo Toolbox application on a tablet computer during interviews. Where a protection risk arises, or the security situation does not permit staff to do so –paper-based forms should be used and the data entered in the database immediately upon return to the office.

Data collection forms are available in English, Arabic, and Kurdish. The Protection Monitoring Core Group have agreed to use tailored, harmonized data collection forms that cover each of the following monitoring activities:

When to monitor

Monitoring visits should take place **whenever possible** and at least every three months for each community being monitored. Duplication of protection monitoring must be avoided at all costs to avoid assessment fatigue in communities, and a waste of limited financial and human resources. A mapping of communities to be interviewed commenced in January 2023. This mapping is a living document. All partners undertaking Protection Monitoring are expected to update the online map by the 7th of each month. The UNHCR IMO will reach out to concerned organisations where interviewing is planned with the communities in the same locations to determine which organisation will conduct the PM. The IMO will suggest other communities and locations as required.

Who to monitor

Protection Monitoring will cover the following population groups:

- **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. Including population marginalized as a result of the conflict or that continues to be exposed to high level of threats.
- **IDP returnees:** Internally displaced population who have returned to the area of origin within the last 12 months.
- **Refugees and asylum seekers:** A person holding UNHCR-issued documentation of various nationalities, including Syrian, Iranian, Turkish, and others.
- **Stateless persons/persons at risk of statelessness:** Someone who, under national laws, does not enjoy citizenship, the legal bond between a government and an individual – in any country.

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- **Vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis:** Iraqis that were not affected by the ISIL conflict but remain vulnerable¹.
- **Migrants:** A person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons (not refugees/asylum seekers).

Thematic areas to monitor

- Safety and Security
- Camp closure
- Freedom of movement
- Social Cohesion
- Civil Status and Documentation
- Access to Nationality
- House Land and Property
- Child Protection
- Education
- Gender-Based Violence
- Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
- Climate Change
- Border Area Monitoring
- Trafficking

Community based protection and Age Gender and Diversity have been integrated in all thematic areas. Minorities will also be captured through ensuring that KI, HH, and FGD representatives belong to the different minority groups present in Iraq as well as through integrate questions regarding minorities under the social cohesion section of the standardized tools.

Preparing for monitoring missions

When **planning monitoring missions**, the Protection Monitoring team will:

- Ensure the sites are accessible in terms of security, weather, etc.
- Engage with relevant actors working with the communities where possible and appropriate to limit any disruption to the community of monitoring missions.
- Communicate the date and the purpose of the visit to the community representative/focal point well in advance, ideally at least one week, when contact details are available.
- Consult previous Protection Monitoring findings to identify changes in the protection environment if previous monitoring visits have been conducted in the same community, and make sure the community has not been interviewed by another organisation (verify the online mapping document).
- Review the recommendations from previous visits to be able to provide feedback to the community on actions taken, this can be conducted by a different organization than the one that conducted the monitoring mission.

Conducting monitoring missions

Protection monitors will **use the agreed standardized data collection tools**. All Protection Monitoring visits will be conducted by a team of protection monitors comprising of both female and male members. This ensures

¹ Based on socio-economic vulnerabilities, age, gender, sex, religion, ethnicity, disability etc.

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that HHs, FGDs, and KIIs can take place simultaneously with men and women in the monitored communities. Protection monitors should interview both male and female key informants.

During each HH, FGD, or KII, protection monitors should:

- At the beginning of the visit clearly explain the purpose of protection monitoring to community leaders and other participants. Efforts should be made not to create any expectations. All participants should be informed that all data collected will be kept confidential and used only for the purpose of informing our response to the needs of the community or individual.
- Be alert to any potential or actual breach of the “do no harm” principle during all facets of protection monitoring.
- Accurately enter data into Kobo and include any additional comments made by members of the community outside the standard questionnaire.
- Make sure survivors witness, individuals exposed to violence and survivors who self-report during or at the end of the exercise are referred (based on informed consent discussed privately) to the specialised/qualified service/actor.
- Ensure interviews are conducted by persons of the same sex as the interviewee. A male protection monitor should only interview a female if she is comfortable with this. He should offer to conduct an interview by phone, especially if interviewing survivors or witnesses.ⁱ
- Obtain a signed consent form from all interviewees or oral consent if conducting a phone interview. Obtain separate consent for any referrals of their case.
- Advise all persons participating that they have the right to:
 - refuse to share information.
 - not participate at all; and,
 - not answer specific questions.

Feedback and complaint mechanisms

Protection monitors shall inform communities that all services provided by the protection actors are provided free of charge. Protection monitors have the **duty to inform the community about available complaint and feedback mechanisms**, some of which are agency or project based – e.g., a complaint or feedback telephone hotline, complaint/feedback boxes.

Any incidents of fraud, corruption, restricted or discriminatory access, security incidents, or sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) that come to the attention of staff undertaking Protection Monitoring should be duly and immediately reported, and responded to in line with relevant agency’s Codes of Conduct and humanitarian and PSEAⁱⁱ principles.

During Protection Monitoring missions, members of the protection team may carry out other activities, including awareness raising, information dissemination, case management, and monitoring of projects, etc.

Analysis and Reporting Results

Protection monitors input data into a Kobo form which is then exported to the interactive dashboard. The UNHCR IMO will review and validate the data submitted on the Kobo form.

The following steps will be taken:

- Compilation of data
- Validation of data
- Calculation of indicators
- Validation of indicators
- Narratives analysis from the core group looking at changes of indicators
- Compilation of indicators and narratives

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- Use of secondary data to feed the narratives
- Update of the dashboard using indicators and narratives

Protection Monitoring aims to produce two products using the collected data, namely:

- Monthly interactive dashboard
- A monthly snapshot on main protection trends

The interactive dashboard has key questions, agreed upon by Protection Core Group members, with a mix of text, bar graphs, and pie charts. As it is interactive, filters can be applied to any of the elements on the dashboard and only associated data will be displayed.

Protection Snapshot The analytical narrative report will then provide a basis for discussions and agreement on key protection findings, response recommendations, and identify issues for follow-up by the Protection Platform for advocacy.

Partner responsibilities

Protection Monitoring **partners are responsible for ensuring sufficient staffing** with relevant knowledge and skills carry out data collection and reporting.

The Protection Monitoring actors will collect the data and share with UNHCR for analysing. Data sharing agreement to be finalized and signed between all actors conducting the protection monitoring.

Protection Platform responsibilities

Protection Platform co-chairs are responsible for ensuring that recommendations and advocacy points from the PM analysis are disseminated and follow up actions are considered through Platform meetings and advocacy actions as relevant.

Protection Monitoring partners will contribute to the analysis of the dataset and the writing of a collective narrative produced each quarter by the Protection Platform members for circulation to HCT members. Analysis on the root causes of the protection issues will also be shared with DSTWG to be shared with ABC members.

On a monthly basis, the UNHCR Information Management Officer will carry out the following activities:

Update the interactive online protection monitoring dashboard, consolidating findings of the monitoring exercises from raw data against key indicators, through the following steps:

- Compilation of data
- Validation of data
- Calculation of indicators
- Validation of indicators
- Narratives analysis from the core group looking at changes of indicators
- Compilation of indicators and narratives
- Use of secondary data to feed the narratives
- Update of the dashboard using indicators and narratives

Support the Protection Platform members and the Protection Monitoring partners in analysis of the data and producing the Protection Brief.

- **Protection Monitoring**

HH form: <https://enketo.unhcr.org/x/KR47dz8r>

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KI form : <https://enketo.unhcr.org/x/fywDjz19>

FGDs form: <https://enketo.unhcr.org/x/ltCrIkra>

- **Referrals**

Inter-agency Referral Form (**Annex 1**)

Annexes to SOPs

Annex 1. Inter-agency Referral Form

Annex 2. PSEA form

Annex 3. Protection Monitoring Glossary of Terms

ⁱ KII should not contain sensitive question so can be done by male if female is comfortable, and depending on the representative being interviewed, should remain gender-sensitive.

ⁱⁱ Protection against Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (PSEA)