Terms of Reference
National Protection and Inclusion Working Group
Bulgaria

Structure

The national Protection and Inclusion Working Group is open to all humanitarian operational partners intervening in the Protection sector, be they Government (national, regional and local authorities), UN/inter-governmental organisations, or non-governmental organisations (both national and international) that are abiding by established humanitarian principles in the delivery of their humanitarian interventions (including commitments on Prevention Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)) and have particular expertise in the field of Protection and inclusion/integration. Other actors such as academia can join the Working Group.

Working Group aims at coordinating action and interventions in relevant areas. Its sessions can provide a platform for the Government stakeholders and non-Governmental partners to provide updates and exchange information, and adopt decisions, for instance to engage in joint assessments and recommendations as well as develop joint action.

The thematic coverage of the Protection sector includes:

- Access to territory, detention, and return
- Implementation of Temporary Protection
- Child Protection and support for children,
- Gender-based violence, including protection from trafficking in human beings,
- Accountability to Affected People (AAP) and communication with communities

Inclusion and integration sectors include:

- Accommodation and housing,
- Social protection,
- Inclusion of persons with disabilities,
- Socio-economic inclusion and employment

The Working Group is initiated by UNHCR as UN Country Refugee Coordinator, and is normally co-chaired with the main Government stakeholders or civil society actors. The Working Group can set up formal or informal task forces to, for instance, agree on findings and make recommendations to the Government in relevant areas with a view of promoting and supporting refugee protection and inclusion.

When the Working Group (WG) decides to select an NGO or UN/inter-governmental organization representative as co-chair, the representative must be selected through a participatory and transparent process, and by wide agreement of the WG partners. The NGO or UN/inter-governmental organization co-lead should be from an organization with (a) recognised technical expertise in the sector, (b) operational capacity in the sector in the geographic area covered by the WG, and (c) the willingness and capacity to commit time and resources to the co-lead responsibilities. The WG may decide to have the co-lead on a rotation basis following a forum discussion.

The Working convenes periodically and regularly, ideally one session on protection topics every month, and one session on inclusion topics every month. The WG convenes in Sofia, but WG members can decide

to convene in another region/city for specific themes that are regional-focused. The sessions will be hybrid, but in-person participation is encouraged to enhance interaction.

The working languages are Bulgarian and English, and translation should be provided, subject to available resources.

Accountabilities

Consistent with the overall objectives, priorities and targets in the Refugee Response Plan (RRP), sector strategy documents, and other relevant national and regional strategies, the Protection and Inclusion sector leads are accountable for:

- effective **coordinated approach** on protection and inclusion issues as well as programming and programme implementation, supported by common needs assessments, gaps and capacities analysis, programme design, evaluation and reporting to maximize impact, prevent overlap and minimize gaps;
- sector planning and **strategy development**/ refinement, also through participatory initiatives reflecting an age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach;
- ensuring that agreed in-country and **global humanitarian/ protection standards and guidelines** are met;
- **capacity building** in the field of protection and inclusion; and coordination of the capacity building initiatives;
- common **advocacy** and **resource mobilization** platforms through the RRP; and,
- **monitoring** progress against key indicators and targets for the protection and inclusion sectors sector as set out in the RRP and other guiding documents.

Responsibilities

Protection and Inclusion Sector leads share the following responsibilities:

1. Call regularly scheduled meetings to **set strategies and monitor progress** toward common targets, and share summary minutes and action points with all partners;
2. Strives to engage relevant stakeholders such as municipalities, local organisations;
3. Promotes participation of forcibly displaced populations, in particular refugee-led organisations and community-based initiatives;
4. Share information about the evolving protection and inclusion situations and trends, needs/gaps analysis to guarantee a **common understanding** by all partners of the sector's needs, to ensure that the strategy's objectives and targets are met;
5. Ensure that the sector has and **shares accurate information** about who is doing what where and when, to facilitate well-coordinated programme planning and implementation;
6. Encourage the use of **common needs assessment and monitoring tools**, and ensure timely and accurate reporting by all partners;
7. Promote the **regular review of the sector strategy**, and oversee that partners' strategies are in line with the overall sector strategy and global standards specific to the sector;
8. Provide **relevant inputs** to the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) and other relevant national and regional strategies and processes;
9. Provide **technical support** and guidance to coordination mechanisms in the field, as well as to partners, and promote and coordinate **capacity building initiatives** and support;
10. Support **national systems strengthening** so that they are inclusive and responsive to the needs of refugees;

11. Participate in inter-sectoral inter-agency meetings and other relevant inter-agency processes to ensure that appropriate **linkages** are made with other sectors' objectives and strategies and that protection is effectively **mainstreamed** in the work of the other sectors;
12. Maintain the **relationship** with relevant Government counterparts, the donor community, and other relevant humanitarian and development actors;
13. Identify common **advocacy** messages on core protection and inclusion concerns including legal and physical protection, especially for groups with specific needs and ensure that they are informing discussions in inter-sector meetings, the RRP Steering Committee, and the HCT;
14. Develop **communication/ outreach strategies** towards affected population; and support their effective implementation; and
15. Participate in **contingency planning** and preparedness processes.

Technical Task Forces

The WG may agree to form specific Technical Task forces, on a temporary or permanent basis, to provide a forum of experts to address certain thematic issues that require concerted action.

Principles of partnership

WG partners will commit to

- adhere to recognized protection standards;
- ensure predictable participation within the sector and engagement in its collective work including by nominating a focal point and alternate to participate to the WG meetings;
- ensure capacity and willingness to contribute to the strategic response plan and activities;
- mainstream key programmatic cross-cutting issues (including age, gender, diversity);
- work cooperatively with other partners and share information through the established mechanisms, including on organizational resources;
- be ready to facilitate participation, including from local organizations.

Partners are committed to highest ethical standards, and to encouraging professional and amicable interactions. This includes not preventing misinformation, including disseminating inaccurate or unverified information.

An option is given to organizations, activists and experts who wish to attend in an observer status.

Validity

There is no time limit for the validity of these TORs; the TORs can be revised when the members agree to revise the document.

7 February 2024