

**COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES /
ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS WORKING GROUP IRAQ
TERMS OF REFERENCE
ADOPTED ON 16 DECEMBER 2019**

A. Context

1. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), in its *Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action*, “has committed to a system-wide and comprehensive response to conflicts and disasters” and affirms that this “response is driven by the needs and perspectives of affected persons, with protection at its core”.
2. In accordance with this policy, the Iraq Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) affirms the Centrality of Protection¹ and *IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*² in the humanitarian response to Iraq’s complex post-conflict and transition context. The HCT, under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), has developed a post-conflict Protection Strategy for the Iraq context, which reflects the current operational landscape, as articulated in the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The purpose of the Protection Strategy is to support the HC/HCT and Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) to practically address key protection challenges.
3. Several initiatives contribute to Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) in Iraq. These include: (i) the Iraq Information Centre (IIC) – managed by UNOPS; (ii) the PSEA Network – co-chaired by UNFPA and UNHCR; (iii) the GBV hotline – managed by UNFPA; (iv) Community Resource Centers (CRC) – under the CCCM cluster and located in targeted areas of return; (v) IDP camp-based complaints and feedback mechanisms – managed by the camp management agency and the CCCM Cluster; and (vi) cluster/working group-specific feedback mechanisms.
4. Despite the multiplicity of activities, the absence of a coordination mechanism to address AAP interventions has led to inconsistent participation from clusters and other humanitarian actors, duplication of activities and uneven accountability outcomes in Iraq. **Consequently, the HCT strategy has mandated the creation of a Communication with Communities/Accountability to Affected Populations Working Group (CwC/AAP WG) to sit under the (ICCG).** The WG will be co-chaired by UNHCR and OCHA to serve as both a streamlined coordination mechanism and to function as an inter-agency knowledge-sharing and collaboration platform, with the IASC commitments, Core Humanitarian Standards and Grand Bargain commitments informing the WG’s approach.
5. The CwC/AAP WG will operate from four basic assumptions in line with IASC commitments to accountability³:
 - AAP is inextricably linked to CwC as both are rights-based, people-centred approaches that facilitate effective information sharing, including two-way communication pathways and promote the usage of feedback in humanitarian programming;
 - Asking for and utilising feedback from crisis-affected communities allows crisis-affected persons to become agents in their own recovery;
 - Access to timely and accurate information works to manage expectations, dispel rumours and promote social cohesion among communities.
 - Timely and verified information related to humanitarian programming will allow responding organisations to continuously align geographic and thematic response as required.

B. Organisational Structure

6. Leadership and Scope

¹ IASC Principals, “The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action,” statement endorsed on 17 December 2013.

² In 2011, the IASC principals agreed to five Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations as part of a framework for engagement with communities. The revised commitments, which were developed and endorsed by the IASC Principals on 20 November 2017, is included in the Annex.

- The CwC/AAP WG sits under the ICCG at the national level. Its area of responsibility includes persons across Iraq affected by crisis, including IDPs, returnees and members of the host community. The WG is co-led by UNHCR and OCHA.

7. Functions

- The WG will function as a *technical* body that works to coordinate, support and promote two-way communication pathways with information on services, assistance, rights and obligations for affected communities; overall, clusters, agencies and other humanitarian actors will maintain ownership of the content of their messages and activities to ensure ownership and area-based expertise;
- The WG will advocate for enhanced accountability on an inter-agency level by coordinating, supporting, and improving accountability mechanisms wherein feedback from communities is shared and promoted among clusters for reflection and inclusion in the response;
- Produce regular updates as required, summarizing progress, achievements and identifying gaps and challenges covering CwC/AAP-related activities with a view of further improving service delivery;
- Support service delivery through provision of technical guidance to clusters and partners on best practices regarding participation of communities, the design and implementation of Mass Information (MI), CwC and AAP activities.

8. Membership

- *Clusters and Key Stakeholders* – Each cluster coordinator should attend to ensure full cluster representation. Key stakeholders, including the Iraq Information Centre, the PSEA Network and the Community Resource Centre (CRC) Committee, should also nominate one focal point each.
- A. *Alternates* – If the cluster WG focal point is not available to participate, then a cluster co-coordinator should attend to ensure ICCG representation and quorum. If the cluster coordinator and/or co-coordinator is not available, then a third person from the cluster may be selected, but only in exceptional circumstances and with advance notice to the WG Co-Chairs.
- Other humanitarian actors, including CwC and AAP service providers, are welcome to participate in WG meetings on a thematic basis.

A. Frequency of meetings

- The CwC/AAP WG will meet once a month, with WebEx connections to Baghdad and/or Erbil to ensure the remote participation of participants across Iraq.

B. Revision of TOR

- The TORs may be revised as necessary one year following their adoption by members.
- The TORs should be reviewed at least once a year following their adoption by the HCT.

Annex

2017 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Commitments on Accountability to Affected People (AAP) and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)⁴

1. **Leadership.** Demonstrate their commitment to Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) by enforcing, institutionalising and integrating AAP approaches in the Humanitarian Program Cycle and strategic planning processes, at country level and by establishing appropriate management systems to solicit, hear and act upon the voices and priorities of affected people in a coordinated manner, including for SEA, before, during and after an emergency.
2. **Participation and Partnership.** Adopt agency mechanisms that feed into and support collective/coordinated people-centred approaches that enable women, girls, boys, men, including the most marginalised and at-risk people among affected communities, to participate in and play an active role in decisions that will impact their lives, well-being, dignity and protection.
3. **Information, Feedback and Action.** Adopt and sustain equitable partnerships with local actors to build upon their long-term relationships and trust with communities. Adopt agency mechanisms that feed into and support collective and participatory approaches that inform and listen to communities, address feedback and lead to corrective action. Establish and support the implementation of appropriate mechanisms for reporting and handling of SEA-related complaints. Plan, design and manage protection and assistance programmes that are responsive to the diversity and expressed views of affected communities.
4. **Results.** Measure AAP and PSEA related results at the agency and collective level, including through standards such as the Core Humanitarian Standard and the Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA; the Best Practice Guide to establish Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms (CBCM) and its accompanying Standard Operating Procedures.

³ Endorsed 20 November 2017, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-61>