



**PROTECTION MONITORING**

**LESSONS LEARNED PAPER**

**INTERS**  **S**

# Table of Contents

List of acronyms	4
Foreword	5
Executive Summary	6
Recommendations	8
1. Background	11
2. Purpose and objectives of the paper	11
Introduction to protection monitoring and its importance for humanitarian work	12
3.1 Who uses the protection monitoring information?	16
3.1.1 Case study - Protection monitoring permitted advocacy on guards recruitment at IDP site and led to safer environment for IDPs: Yemen	17
3.1.2 Case study - Preventing and responding to sexual violence via protection monitoring: Democratic Republic of Congo (Tanganyika)	17
4. Types of protection monitoring	18
5. Protection monitoring principles	18
6. Designing protection monitoring systems – issues to consider	19
6.1 Feasibility of protection monitoring – considerations	19
6.2 Planning the protection monitoring system – considerations highlighted by interviewees	20
6.3 Methods of protection monitoring	20
6.3.1 Identifying the subjects of protection monitoring	21
6.3.2 Protection monitoring tools	23
6.4 Data protection protocols	24
6.5 Human resources for protection monitoring	25
6.5.1 Case study - Border monitoring – an example of INTERSOS’ hybrid approach: Chad	27
6.6 Data- and information-sharing	27
6.7 Analysis of protection data	29
6.7.1 Case study - A positive move towards harmonisation of the system of protection monitoring and joint analysis: Afghanistan	29
7. Dissemination and use of protection monitoring information	30
7.1 Case study – Protection monitoring information used for advocacy to facilitate IDP return processes: Iraq	31
7.2 Linkages with services and assistance	32
7.2.1 Case study: Two examples of referrals as a result of protection monitoring that led to support for child survivors of violence: Chad	34
7.2.2 Case study - Referral as a result of protection monitoring leading to prevention of eviction: Lebanon	35
7.3 Feedback to affected communities	35
7.3.1 Case study - Community protection programme and radio programmes: Democratic Republic of Congo (Ituri)	37
8. Challenges and constraints	39
8.1 Lack of shared understanding of the purpose of protection monitoring	39
8.2 Lack of joint design of protection monitoring systems	39
8.3 Access and security issues	39
8.4 Lack of coordination	40
8.5 Lack of Resources	41
9. Mitigating and addressing the challenges and constraints	41
9.1 Community engagement and trust-building	41
9.2 Building relationships with national and local authorities	42
9.2.1 Case study - Engagement with local authorities on protection monitoring: Central African Republic	42
9.3 Assessing the landscape prior to deciding on protection monitoring	43
9.4 Joint protection monitoring system design	43
10. Methodology	45

# List of acronyms

<b>AGDM</b>	<b>Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming</b>
<b>CBO</b>	<b>Community-Based Organisation</b>
<b>DRC</b>	<b>Danish Refugee Council</b>
<b>DR-Congo</b>	<b>Democratic Republic of Congo</b>
<b>ECHO</b>	<b>European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid</b>
<b>FGD</b>	<b>Focus Group Discussion</b>
<b>HC</b>	<b>Humanitarian Coordinator</b>
<b>HCT</b>	<b>Humanitarian Country Team</b>
<b>HHA</b>	<b>Household Assessment</b>
<b>HNO</b>	<b>Humanitarian Needs Overview</b>
<b>HRP</b>	<b>Humanitarian Response Plan</b>
<b>IASC</b>	<b>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</b>
<b>IDP</b>	<b>Internally displaced person</b>
<b>IM</b>	<b>Information Management</b>
<b>IMO</b>	<b>Information Management Officer</b>
<b>IP</b>	<b>Implementing Partner</b>
<b>IRC</b>	<b>International Rescue Committee</b>
<b>KI</b>	<b>Key Informant</b>
<b>KII</b>	<b>Key Informant Interview</b>
<b>MPCA</b>	<b>Multipurpose Cash Assistance</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b>
<b>OCHA</b>	<b>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</b>
<b>PIM</b>	<b>Protection Information Management</b>
<b>SAR</b>	<b>System of Analysis and Response</b>
<b>SGBV</b>	<b>Sexual and Gender-Based Violence</b>
<b>SOPs</b>	<b>Standard Operating Procedures</b>
<b>UNHCR</b>	<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</b>
<b>WASH</b>	<b>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</b>
<b>WFP</b>	<b>World Food Programme</b>

# FOREWORD

INTEROS is proud to present the Protection Monitoring Lessons Learned report, the result of its second pledge made at the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019. Using INTEROS operational learning, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of protection monitoring activities and its methodology, the utility of information collected, outline of good operational practices, the need to have strong data protection protocols, as well as identification of challenges and recommendations to main stakeholders. The report was produced through a consultative process with INTEROS staff and external stakeholders from 11 operational contexts in Africa, Asia and the Middle East– from Afghanistan to Yemen.

From its inception in 1992, INTEROS has based its operations on providing protection services to forcibly displaced populations, including protection monitoring, case management, legal and psychosocial support, awareness-raising campaigns and capacity-building programmes on management and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV), and on child protection (CP) and children's rights.

Protection monitoring is the backbone of INTEROS protection work that aims to thoroughly understand the diversity of risks and needs of different groups and individuals in line with age, gender and diversity (AGD). It regularly and systematically collects, verify, and analyse information over an extended period of time to identify violations of rights and/or protection risks for populations of concern, covering essential issues, such as legal, material, psychological and physical protection needs, human rights violations, detention, durable solutions, housing land and property rights, population movements/border monitoring, child protection, as well as gender-based violence monitoring.

The report clearly confirms the relevance and importance of this activity, as its outputs generate essential evidence for local, national and international advocacy to protect the human rights of diverse vulnerable individuals and communities and prevent further violations, provide a safe avenue for reporting of violations of their rights, identify protection needs and gaps to inform effective programme design and review of humanitarian responses to fit the context, as well as provide essential referrals for provision of urgent assistance to the most vulnerable individuals and communities.

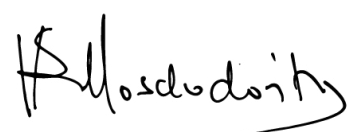
One of the greatest challenges identified by the research is the lack of defined and agreed global protection monitoring procedures and guidance. Addressing this challenge is of huge importance, given the delicate nature of this work, including in relation to data protection protocols, accountability and sharing of findings. We hope that the INTEROS research would be an important strong step towards addressing this gap.

Furthermore, we believe that this report will be a useful resource tool for humanitarian protection practitioners, and provide advice and guidance that will support all aspects of this work, from all the intricacies related to planning for principled and effective protection monitoring activities towards in-depth implementation, coordination and sharing of information issues.

The report also highlights the need for humanitarian coordination structures in each country to elevate the importance of protection monitoring as part of the broader humanitarian response, ensuring that its findings are regularly fed into the ongoing analysis of humanitarian priorities and needs.

Finally, we hope that this report will encourage donors to make further funding investments into Protection Monitoring activities, and enable more robust work that will further support effective humanitarian response, and support advocacy to protect human rights and prevent abuses.

**Kostas Moschochoritis,**  
Director General, INTEROS,  
Rome, 15 February 2022



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the first Global Refugee Forum INTERSOS pledged to conduct this lessons-learned research on protection monitoring based on operational experiences in various contexts – the information in this report derives from INTERSOS’ protection monitoring work in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen.

### Purposes of protection monitoring

Protection monitoring can cover different themes or focuses such as: legal, material and physical protection needs, human rights violations, detention, durable solutions, housing land and property rights, border monitoring, child protection monitoring, gender-based violence monitoring, etc.

Protection monitoring is essential:

- to generate evidence for local, national and international advocacy aimed at seeking responses that protect the human rights of vulnerable individuals and communities and prevent further violations;
- to provide a safe avenue for vulnerable individuals and communities to report violations of their rights.
- to highlight protection needs and gaps in order to inform effective programme design and review of humanitarian responses to fit the context.

Further, because protection monitoring work requires ongoing outreach to the community it leads to the identification of cases in need of support. Referrals for potential assistance or in some cases the ability to provide an immediate response are important consequences of protection monitoring.

One interviewee described protection monitoring as “the door through which passes all humanitarian activity”. Interviewees emphasised the importance of protection monitoring and proposed that protection monitoring should automatically be part of any protection programme in any country, regardless of size and scope, as it enables them to gain an understanding of the protection environment, looking into violations of rights, and risks of violence, abuse, and neglect, and enhances the understanding of affected communities’ priorities.

### Lack of global guidelines on protection monitoring:

Despite the fact that many humanitarian agencies undertake some form of protection monitoring, global guidance on protection monitoring is not yet available, leading to different understandings about the purposes of protection monitoring.

INTER SOS has adopted the definition of protection monitoring agreed by the Protection Information Management (PIM) initiative: “systematically and regularly collecting, verifying and analysing information over an extended period of time in order to identify violations of rights and/or protection risks for populations of concern for the purpose of informing effective responses.” INTERSOS has developed internal global guidelines on protection monitoring, based on the outputs of the PIM initiative, and requires that these global guidelines are adapted to national contexts in order to develop national-level Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

### How protection monitoring information is used:

Protection monitoring information is used for advocacy and dialogue with national and local authorities, with non-state actors, and with the humanitarian sector and other stakeholders. With time and with data, the regular tracking of protection incidents in a particular area enables an understanding of the systematic nature of the violations. Interviewees highlighted how vital protection monitoring information had proved to be, particularly with local-level advocacy, and often achieving life-saving results. In addition, protection monitoring information is used by humanitarian actors, donor agencies, governments, and affected communities - for designing, starting or adapting programmes based on the protection needs highlighted, as well as for fundraising for highlighted protection needs.

Protection monitoring has an important impact on age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM), through understanding the diversity of needs and different impacts on different groups of people on issues such as limits on freedom of movement. INTERSOS always aims for representativeness and inclusion, with focus on age and gender sensitivity, in addition to ensuring maximum inclusion of more vulnerable and marginalised groups in its protection monitoring exercises.

### **Protection monitoring methods:**

Common methods of protection monitoring include: direct observation, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, individual/household interviews/assessments. In most settings, INTERSOS uses all of these methods of protection monitoring whenever possible, unless access for certain methods is restricted by security or by refusal of access permission by authorities. In many contexts, INTERSOS also recruits community members to participate in relaying information, and has routinely been communicating with community focal points via SMS and phones.

### **Prerequisites for protection monitoring:**

Before there is any decision taken about protection monitoring, INTERSOS requires that its staff consider whether protection monitoring is in fact feasible and they consider the justification, risk, availability and reliability of the data that it is feasible to obtain. After secondary data review has been conducted, decisions on methodology are based on local circumstances and on the reasons for which the information is being collected.

The quality of information produced through protection monitoring is highly dependent on the capacity of the people engaged in its design, collection, analysis, and presentation, requiring continual training and capacity reinforcement.

If protection monitoring is appropriate and required in a humanitarian context, there is significant work involved in setting up the protection monitoring system that should be undertaken prior to jumping to the data-collection stage. Plans for data analysis (ideally conducted collectively), and Information-sharing networks should be established at the design stage, as well as consultations with end-users of the information. Interviewees from different humanitarian agencies noted that this preparatory planning work is often not undertaken adequately, and that it is rarely undertaken in a collaborative manner with input into the design of the system from those who will be undertaking the data-collection, or other relevant parties. Further, input from affected communities is rarely sought into the design of protection monitoring systems. Information-sharing networks are often not established at the design stage, and consultation with end-users of the information to ensure that it will be useful is rare. This can result in flawed protection monitoring systems that do not produce the intended results.

### **Protection monitoring coordination – harmonising tools, data-sharing protocols, collective analysis, dissemination plans:**

In order for protection monitoring information to be comparable across a country, it is preferable for harmonised tools to be agreed among all of the agencies conducting protection monitoring. Leadership and coordination, although not always in place, is required for harmonising protection monitoring tools, putting data-sharing protocols in place, engaging in some collective analysis of the information, and planning for its dissemination to achieve maximum impact.

INTER SOS requires that data protection protocols are developed and rolled out where protection monitoring is implemented. Interviewees emphasised the importance of data protection in the context of protection monitoring, and data protection protocols are taken very seriously and rigorously followed. Some suggested that amongst humanitarian agencies there is a lack of understanding about how to approach data and information sensitivity. Therefore, the PIM initiative produced a Framework for Data-Sharing in Practice that looks both at the risks of sharing and at the risks of not sharing. Leadership by protection clusters on promoting agreements on data-sharing between agencies would be welcomed by many of the interviewees.

In some countries, protection monitoring organisations do not have access to the database of information collected by different partners, sometimes leading to a lack of sharing of protection monitoring data and findings, and resulting in lack of advocacy or programming actions. It was noted that the lack of information-sharing has a negative impact on accountability to affected populations.

Apart from misunderstandings about the sensitivity of certain information, in some cases information is not shared because agencies lack the necessary resources for analysis or information management (IM) and have therefore not been able to use the information to finalise products that can be shared. Without the analysis, protection monitoring does not achieve its impact. Because of this concern, a Protection Analytical Framework (PAF) was endorsed by the Global Protection Cluster in April 2021 and is being rolled out in protection clusters. Most interviewees referred to the lack of adequate funding for analysis of protection monitoring. Concerns were expressed about the fact that collective analysis by more than one agency often does not take place, even though this would produce stronger analysis.

Many interviewees expressed frustration that protection monitoring information is not always used to full effect, often because of lack of planning for dissemination of the information to the people who could use it to take action to address the issues raised. Interviewees stressed that before embarking on any data-collection for protection monitoring, a data analysis plan and a dissemination plan should be in place, with information management staff accompanying protection staff from the outset in the protection management system design and planning the information products. Further, several interviewees noted that a lack of systematic feedback on protection monitoring to affected communities is a current weakness.

### Linkages with services and assistance:

In some settings, household assessments for protection monitoring are merged with vulnerability and eligibility assessments, for assistance programmes such as multipurpose cash. If people see protection monitoring as being focused on eligibility for cash assistance this can create false expectations and security problems and can skew the protection monitoring information. It can also negatively affect the relationship between protection monitors and affected communities, particularly when the criteria for assistance such as multipurpose cash is not clearly explained or understood, leading to some individuals or families feeling that they were unfairly excluded. However, interviewees also emphasised the importance of being able to make referrals for services and assistance as a result of protection monitoring, one of the more immediate life-saving and life-changing aspects of protection monitoring. They further highlighted the importance of being able to provide some immediate assistance for survivors of human rights violations whom they encountered during protection monitoring, particularly to support them with transport costs so that they can avail themselves of immediate assistance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Humanitarian agencies engaged in protection monitoring should:

1. Ensure that they have clear procedures and guidelines, including data protection protocols and accountability systems, in place for developing a safe and appropriate protection monitoring system, and require the development and roll-out of national SOPs;
2. Invest time and resources into building community engagement at all stages including during the protection monitoring design phase and emphasise their adherence to humanitarian principles;
3. Work on building relationships with national and local authorities in connection with the protection monitoring work;
4. Invest in all of the elements necessary to successful protection monitoring, including:
  - adequate resourcing of protection teams:
    - for staffing and community volunteers/focal points
    - for the necessary transport and communications resources;



- training of protection monitors and community volunteers and focal points
  - funds for immediate protection responses;
  - protection analysis capacity – to ensure that findings/conclusions are reached from the protection monitoring data that lead to timely recommendations for responses;
  - information management capacity – to ensure that protection monitoring data is robust and reliable, and that it is presented in ways that make it accessible to key audiences that can use it for the benefit of affected communities.
5. Ensure that their protection monitoring reporting makes clear recommendations for action:
    - to feed into advocacy efforts by different stakeholders/actors that will improve the protection environment for affected populations;
    - to draw attention to protection needs that require financial support;
    - to adapt and improve service provision in light of the protection situation.
  6. Ensure that information from protection monitoring is shared with communities – in whatever format is appropriate and without compromising data privacy - so that they can use this information to enhance their own protection and mitigate the levels of risks against identified protection issues.

**Humanitarian leadership (Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs), Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), inter-cluster coordination and Cluster Leads, and UNHCR) should:**

1. Ensure that there is a shared understanding of the nature of protection monitoring work, and make clear distinctions between protection monitoring (as an ongoing system with protection indicators monitored and analysed over time) and one-off assessments and household vulnerability and/or needs assessments, through the production and dissemination of global guidance on protection monitoring;
2. Ensure that protection clusters and protection working groups prioritise protection monitoring because of its vital information about the evolution of the protection situation, and provide leadership that brings partners to work together in designing the protection monitoring system including:
  - doing the necessary work prior to embarking on protection monitoring (assessing the information landscape and reviewing secondary data);
  - harmonising their protection monitoring tools and ensuring that data is comparable on at least a national basis;
  - putting data-sharing protocols in place;
  - engaging in collective analysis of the information; and
  - planning for its dissemination to achieve maximum impact.
3. Ensure that protection clusters and their subclusters and task forces and protection working groups are adequately staffed and that their members have a shared understanding of protection monitoring;
4. Undertake analysis of the risks of not sharing and of sharing information in contexts where requests for further information-sharing have been made, clarifying “red-lines” on data-sharing. Ensure timely responsible sharing of information with the relevant stakeholders which can provide humanitarian response. Produce protection-specific operational guidance on data- and information-sharing between agencies.
5. Engage relevant clusters/sectors (e.g., Livelihoods, WASH) and ensure that protection monitoring outputs are useful to them and used by them for the benefit of the affected communities;
6. Use the protection monitoring information to shape the humanitarian response, and ensure that it reaches decision-makers who can use it to improve the protection environment through strategies for prevention of abuses of rights and for humanitarian response.

## Donor agencies should:

1. Recognise the importance of protection monitoring to support effective humanitarian response, and provide evidence for advocacy to protect human rights and prevent abuses, and understand that effective protection monitoring requires time and investment;
2. Encourage Protection Cluster and Protection Working Group leadership to ensure that humanitarian agencies working in the same geographical areas to work together on designing protection monitoring systems, including doing the necessary work prior to embarking on protection monitoring, harmonising their protection monitoring methods, putting data-sharing protocols in place, engaging in collective analysis of the information, and planning for its dissemination to achieve maximum impact;
3. Provide funding for all of the elements necessary to successful protection monitoring, including adequate resourcing and training of protection teams, funds for immediate protection responses, as well as protection analysis and information-management support for humanitarian agencies engaging in protection monitoring, and for protection clusters;
4. Support international inter-agency efforts, such as those by the Protection Information Management (PIM) initiative, the Global Protection Cluster Information Analysis Working Group (GPC IAWG) and Project 21, in their efforts to improve the quality, and therefore the outcomes, of protection monitoring, including capacity to facilitate trainings on PIM.



Cameroon

# 1. BACKGROUND

INTER SOS is an international humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). Since 1992 it has carried out humanitarian aid projects in 45 countries and four continents. INTER SOS intervenes in emergency and crisis situations to help people, families, and communities whose lives are threatened by conflict, extreme poverty, natural or manmade disasters, and extreme exclusion, with particular attention to the protection of the most vulnerable people.

INTER SOS specialises in providing support in the field of protection, which is the backbone of all of its programming, but also works in Health and Nutrition, WASH, Education, Emergency Shelter and Food Security. INTER SOS provides protection monitoring, case management, and legal and psychosocial support to the most vulnerable sections of affected populations, with a focus on the particular needs of women and children. INTER SOS runs awareness-raising campaigns and capacity-building programmes focused on the management and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV), and on child protection (CP) and children's rights.

INTER SOS is engaged in protection monitoring in the following countries: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen.

The Global Compact on Refugees, affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, put in place a new comprehensive refugee response model. One principal mechanism for follow-up and review is the Global Refugee Forum where States and other actors come together every four years to share good practices and contribute with pledges of financial support, technical expertise and policy changes to help reach the goals of the Global Compact. The first Global Refugee Forum took place in December 2019, and INTER SOS pledged to conduct lessons learned research on protection monitoring based on operational experiences in various contexts.

# 2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

## **Purpose:**

This research paper will provide operational learning from INTER SOS work on protection monitoring with an in-depth review of monitoring activities, methods of data collection, the usage of information collected, and the benefits to target populations. The paper will consider INTER SOS Protection Monitoring work in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen. It will also make reference to Protection Monitoring work by other humanitarian actors and opinions from the Protection cluster and Donors.

## **Objectives:**

- Provide in-depth understanding of the protection monitoring process;
- Provide an analysis of how protection monitoring supports inclusiveness, and provides voice for marginalised and vulnerable communities considering age, gender, and diversity approaches;
- Provide learning from different operational contexts that could help inform protection monitoring activities;
- Provide an analysis of the importance of protection monitoring for vulnerable communities, especially forcibly displaced people;
- Provide comprehensive analysis of the main challenges to successful protection monitoring work, outlining key mitigation measures that could be employed to overcome them.

# INTRODUCTION TO PROTECTION MONITORING AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR HUMANITARIAN WORK

*“Protection monitoring is often not seen as a lifesaving activity. But we have to understand the trends in order to prevent and respond to life-threatening risks.”<sup>1</sup>*

INTERSOS engages in protection monitoring because the information which it generates promotes a more effective humanitarian response. Protection monitoring must be action-oriented – to provide evidence for action leading to protection outcomes.

## Protection monitoring is essential:

- to generate evidence for local, national and international advocacy aimed at seeking responses that protect the human rights of vulnerable individuals and communities and prevent further violations;
- to provide a safe avenue for vulnerable individuals and communities to report violations of their rights;
- to highlight protection needs and gaps in order to inform effective programme design and review of humanitarian responses to fit the context as well as to help provide sound analysis for fundraising to address humanitarian needs

Further, referrals for assistance or provision of immediate responses to survivors of human rights violations are essential consequences of protection monitoring.

*“Without Protection Monitoring data, we’re walking in the dark.”<sup>2</sup>*

Despite the fact that many humanitarian agencies undertake some form of protection monitoring, global guidance on protection monitoring is not yet available. Therefore, organisations undertaking protection monitoring have used their own definitions and approaches. This allows for flexibility and adaptation to the context, but it can also cause confusion about the purposes of protection monitoring, under-utilisation of the information that it produces, and duplication/repeated interviewing of communities by different organisations for similar purposes. Often there is a lack of a shared understanding of what protection monitoring is and is not.

*“Protection monitoring is the sector that is least understood in the humanitarian world, even by protection actors themselves.”<sup>3</sup>*

Therefore, in 2015 the Protection Information Management (PIM) initiative<sup>4</sup> brought together several humanitarian organisations to reach agreement on a common definition of protection monitoring. The definition that was agreed on by the PIM initiative – and that has been adopted by INTERSOS – is:

*“systematically and regularly collecting, verifying and analysing information over an extended period of time in order to identify violations of rights and/or protection risks for populations of concern for the purpose of informing effective responses.”<sup>5</sup>*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Interviewee for this research - INTERSOS Afghanistan

<sup>2</sup> Interviewee for this research - UNHCR Nigeria

<sup>3</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS DR Congo

<sup>4</sup> See Protection Information Management website <http://pim.guide/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/pim-principles-process-and-matrix-1-1.pdf>

Therefore, unlike protection needs assessments, protection monitoring is an ongoing routine system, designed to understand protection evolution through protection trends analysed over time, using a set of indicators, in order to inform actions taken in response.

The key questions a protection monitoring system should be designed to address can be simplified into the following essential points:

- **What?** What are the trends
- **Why?** What is causing these trends (not necessarily linking this to programming)
- **So what?** What impacts are these trends having
- **What now?** What can we do now to support positive trends and to mitigate negative trends

The PIM initiative has laid out a conceptual framework in the following one-page documents:

- PIM matrix, which both includes the definition of protection monitoring and shows how protection monitoring connects to other activities linked to protection information management<sup>6</sup>
- PIM principles<sup>7</sup>
- PIM process<sup>8</sup>

The PIM initiative also defined the competencies an organisation needs for protection monitoring<sup>9</sup>. In 2018, they held a working meeting on protection monitoring, bringing together UN agencies and NGOs. The outcome document sets out draft definitions of: protection monitoring modalities and programmatic response options, protection monitoring typology of information needs, core elements of a protection monitoring report, and data sources for protection monitoring and common units of analysis<sup>10</sup>.

To improve analysis of protection information, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) have led work on a Protection Analytical Framework, in close collaboration with the Global Protection Cluster Information Analysis Working Group (GPC IAWG)<sup>11</sup>. In April 2021, the Protection Analytical Framework (PAF)<sup>12</sup> was endorsed by the Global Protection Cluster.

With regards to data confidentiality, in February 2021 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) produced operational guidance on data responsibility in humanitarian action<sup>13</sup>, applicable to all humanitarian work, including protection activities. The PIM initiative also has developed a Framework for Data-sharing in Practice<sup>14</sup>.

## NOTES

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/pim-principles-process-and-matrix-1-1.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://pim.guide/essential/pim-resource-centre/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://pim.guide/essential/pim-resource-centre/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://pim.guide/essential/pim-resource-centre/>

<sup>10</sup> [http://pim.guide/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/PIM-Protection-Monitoring-meeting\\_Outcome-Documents\\_Dec-2018.pdf](http://pim.guide/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/PIM-Protection-Monitoring-meeting_Outcome-Documents_Dec-2018.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/tools-and-guidance/information-and-data-management/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/2021/08/11/protection-analytical-framework/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IASC%20Operational%20Guidance%20on%20Data%20Responsibility%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action-%20February%202021.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://pim.guide/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Framework-for-Data-Sharing-in-Practice.pdf>

INTER SOS has developed its own internal global guidelines on protection monitoring, based on the outputs of the PIM initiative, and requires its missions to adapt these global guidelines to their national contexts in order to develop national-level Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

*“The end-point of protection monitoring isn’t the dashboard or the report – it’s the development of strategy as a result, leading to action being taken, such as programming, fundraising, advocacy.”<sup>15</sup>*

Many interviewees for this research pointed to the difficulty that protection monitoring in itself does not provide concrete results and the fact that it is often hard to prove a direct link between protection monitoring and an eventual outcome. However, all of the interviewees were clear that – when properly planned, conducted, analysed, and disseminated – the information produced from protection monitoring provides the evidence base on which a great deal of humanitarian action is founded and provokes humanitarian responses that are informed by the protection context. Interviewees stated that whilst it is difficult to measure the direct impact of protection monitoring, they had numerous examples of its impact on identifying protection gaps, improving programming, and enabling more effective advocacy. They also highlighted the important impacts of enabling outreach to, and identification of, the cases in greatest need and the referrals for assistance that are a consequence in practice of protection monitoring.

*“There are so many layers of conflict. If we don’t understand the context and the linkages, we won’t be able to programme and do advocacy well.”<sup>16</sup>*

Interviewees stated that protection monitoring should automatically be part of any protection programme in any country, regardless of size and scope, as protection monitoring enables them to gain an understanding of the protection environment, looking into violations of rights, and risks of violence, abuse, and neglect. It also enhances the understanding of affected communities’ priorities.

*“We track similar incidents and underlying causes. For example, there is so much extortion on the road to Rutshuru, which fits with the underlying causes. It’s very interesting for the cluster, to see the causes and also the possible solutions.”<sup>17</sup>*

Protection monitoring information is important for advocacy and dialogue with national and local authorities, with non-state actors, and with the humanitarian sector and other stakeholders. With time and with data, the regular tracking of protection incidents in a particular area enables an understanding of the systematic nature of the violations. Many interviewees highlighted how vital protection monitoring information had proved to be, particularly with local-level advocacy, and often achieving life-saving results. Further, the successful use of information from border and return monitoring for advocating for more attention and resources to supporting the rights of returnees was highlighted, e.g. by INTER SOS staff in Iraq and in South Sudan.

*“The value of protection monitoring is in flagging new trends that have emerged. Then you need to go more in-depth – that might be done by other teams than the protection monitoring team. Protection monitoring gives a broad overview that paves the way for others to do the work.”<sup>18</sup>*

*“It is the door through which passes all humanitarian activity.”<sup>19</sup>*

Interviewees reported that protection monitoring enables them to consider new protection threats arising and how to respond to them. Protection monitoring reports will often lead to other actors starting projects based on the protection needs highlighted in the reports. Many interviewees for this research noted that without protection monitoring, communities’ problems would emerge in an ad-hoc way, rather than systematically,

## NOTES

<sup>15</sup> Interviewee for this research - UNHCR Global Data Service

<sup>16</sup> Interviewee for this research – UNHCR Yemen

<sup>17</sup> Interviewee for this research – UNHCR DR Congo

<sup>18</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTER SOS Lebanon

<sup>19</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTER SOS DR Congo

and many of the problems would never emerge and therefore would never receive a response. However, the reality of an under-resourced humanitarian system unfortunately means that a response is often not received even after protection monitoring has identified the need for that response.

*“It helps us to understand the diversity of needs and different impacts on different groups of people of issues such as limits on freedom of movement.”<sup>20</sup>*

Many interviewees noted that protection monitoring has an important impact on age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM). The information that comes out from protection monitoring may also highlight gaps in response for specific groups of people. For example, INTERSOS in Nigeria and in DR Congo (in North Kivu after the last volcano eruption) noted that protection monitoring had identified particular problems faced by people with disabilities and gaps in service-provision to cater for their needs, which led to new programmes being established or assistance provided to respond to these particular needs. In North Kivu, DR Congo, the fact that one of INTERSOS’ focal points in the community was a person with a disability may have been a factor in this. In Lebanon INTERSOS started a new legal assistance project for stateless people partly as a result of information that came out of protection monitoring.

*“Protection monitoring is at the heart of the protection system. We cannot protect without knowing what is broken or abused. So we monitor the vulnerability of the population, the types of threats, we map the situation according to which types of violations and which types of risks. Protection monitoring is the basis of all strategic planning, all proposals and preparations.”<sup>21</sup>*



Cameroon

## NOTES

<sup>20</sup> Interviewee for this research – UNHCR Nigeria

<sup>21</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS DR Congo

## 3.1 WHO USES THE PROTECTION MONITORING INFORMATION?

*“Protection monitoring is crucial in order to inform the actions of all humanitarian actors. But it is not only aimed at humanitarian actors; protection monitoring should inform the state and civil society, alert them to violations and risks.”<sup>22</sup>*

**HUMANITARIAN ACTORS:** In order to provide effective assistance to vulnerable communities and marginalised groups, protection monitoring information is needed by humanitarian agencies for developing and/or adapting strategies to improve their responses. If properly disseminated, the protection monitoring information is used by different actors in the humanitarian system, including the HCT, UNHCR, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), protection clusters and protection working groups, other clusters or sectors (e.g. food security, livelihoods, WASH), other UN agencies, and NGOs (including INTERSOS) – for advocacy, programming, and fundraising. **For example, in one area of Nigeria it was noted that the same children were being brought back again and again into the stabilisation centre with serious malnutrition. The families had food ration cards, but protection monitoring information revealed that the agency that was supposed to cover food distribution in this area was not going there due to security issues. This was raised in the protection cluster (which is attended by all the key agencies) and they found a way to resolve this.**

**DONORS:** Donor agencies will often use protection monitoring information to assist them in decision-making about funding allocations to respond to protection concerns/rights violations.

*“It enables the humanitarian community to provide evidence-based reports to donors, not anecdotal individual stories.”<sup>23</sup>*

**GOVERNMENTS:** Depending on the context, local and national government authorities may also use protection monitoring information to address and respond to protection concerns, including human rights violations.

**AFFECTED COMMUNITIES:** Through protection monitoring, the voices and concerns of the most marginalised can be heard. Protection monitoring information can also be used by affected communities to improve their own protection. **For example, in some settings community protection committees have been established, and the protection monitoring information is used by them. Protection monitoring can enhance community participation and engagement, including that of marginalised groups within the community.**

*“It allows individuals and communities to become actors in their own protection. When we work with communities, or with focal points in villages, they aren’t necessarily the community leaders, then they have a voice that can be heard.”<sup>24</sup>*

Further, the fact that protection monitoring work requires ongoing outreach to the community means that it leads to the identification of cases in need of support.

### NOTES

<sup>22</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS Chad

<sup>23</sup> Interviewee for this research – UNHCR Nigeria

<sup>24</sup> Interviewee for this research – UNHCR DR Congo



### 3.1.1 CASE STUDY - PROTECTION MONITORING PERMITTED ADVOCACY ON GUARDS RECRUITMENT AT IDP SITE AND LED TO SAFER ENVIRONMENT FOR IDPS: YEMEN

*Through INTERSOS protection monitoring work, it came to light that internally displaced persons (IDPs) were reporting violations of their rights committed by guards in an IDP site in South Yemen. Therefore, INTERSOS decided to conduct a thematic protection assessment in order to generate a deeper understanding of the alleged violations committed by site guards, and how the guards' exercising of their role and responsibilities was impacting the protection environment in IDP sites. This assessment was necessary to enable evidence-based advocacy with duty-bearers and humanitarian actors to create an environment that prevented guards from committing any violations against the IDP population.*

*Since this was a very sensitive topic, which might put IDPs at the respective sites at risk if the guards became aware that information on their actions was being collected, INTERSOS did not conduct focus group discussions but relied on key informant interviews with individuals from sites who felt comfortable discussing the topic with INTERSOS. Measures to ensure their safety were taken, including meeting key informants outside of the site (and reimbursing any travel costs) and the interviews were only conducted by the Protection Monitoring Coordinator.*

*The resulting information facilitated advocacy with the local authorities/the Executive for IDPs. This advocacy led to establishment of selection criteria for guards at the IDP site, and the requirement for security guards to sign a code of conduct.*

### 3.1.2 CASE STUDY - PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE VIA PROTECTION MONITORING: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (TANGANYIKA)

*Through its protection monitoring work INTERSOS systematically collects information about cases of protection incidents, including incidents of sexual violence, in the communities where they are working – with IDPs (internally-displaced people) or with the host population. The monitoring is able to pick up trends in the type of violations, e.g. according to where they took place, the age of the victim/survivor etc, and analyses the causes of these trends. This can help with prevention by highlighting particular dangers in the current context and through an early warning network which they have established.*

*The protection monitoring can also lead to a humanitarian response to support survivors. For example, at one border-point between provinces, the protection monitoring started reporting cases of sexual violence, including collective rape cases. Therefore, INTERSOS in Tanganyika sent out an alert about the rape cases, which pushed the actors to carry out a joint evaluation mission. The joint evaluation mission confirmed those cases and revealed that there had been a much higher number of cases than originally reported. As a result, UNFPA started to position PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) kits and psycho-social support in the zone in order to assist the survivors, providing potentially life-saving assistance.*

## 4. TYPES OF PROTECTION MONITORING

Protection monitoring can take different shapes and focus on specific issues, such as: legal, material and physical protection needs and/or violations monitoring; detention monitoring; durable solutions monitoring; housing land and property rights monitoring; return monitoring; border monitoring; child protection monitoring; gender-based violence monitoring, etc.

INTER SOS tends to work in contexts with forcibly-displaced communities, and often works in remote and fragile settings. Depending on contexts, INTER SOS currently engages in the following primary types of protection monitoring: legal, material and physical protection needs and/or human rights violations monitoring, return monitoring, border monitoring, child protection monitoring, and gender-based violence monitoring.

## 5. PROTECTION MONITORING PRINCIPLES

Protection monitoring involves very sensitive information and is conducted closely with individuals and groups from extremely vulnerable communities. Therefore, it needs well-trained staff, supported by appropriate supervision and surrounded by technical capacities that can translate into sound analysis from the data gathered.

INTER SOS requires that its protection monitors be able to explain the nature and scope of protection monitoring, in full respect of the humanitarian principles, as stated below, in order to realistically manage participants' expectations, especially as protection monitoring may not lead to immediate actions, except for referrals. INTER SOS has developed internal global guidelines on protection monitoring, based on the outputs of the PIM initiative, which includes these principles.

**“NEED-TO-KNOW”** - The term “need-to-know” describes the limiting of information that is considered sensitive and sharing it only with those individuals for whom the information will enable further protection. Confidentiality - Confidentiality requires that service providers protect information gathered about individuals they serve and agree only to share information with their explicit permission (consent) recognising the limits of confidentiality when there is a serious situation such as a threat to life and when working with children and adults deemed to lack decision-making capacity.

**NON-DISCRIMINATION** - Protection monitors must ensure that all persons of concern are heard and receive appropriate support, regardless of nationality, sex, gender, age, socio-economic background, race, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, legal status, health/HIV status, and political or other opinion.

**ACCOUNTABILITY** - Agencies and staff involved in protection monitoring are accountable to persons of concern, their families, and their communities. They must comply with the national legal and policy frameworks, with professional codes of conduct and internal accountability policies. Agencies introducing protection monitoring activities, must take responsibility for the initial training, on-going capacity-building, and regular supervision of staff, as well as the responsibility of establishing mechanisms that communities can use to give feedback and place complaints if these arise.

**MAINTAIN PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES** - Protection monitors and agencies should act with integrity and respect professional boundaries by not abusing the power or the trust of the client. Steps should be taken to address conflicts of interest as soon as they arise. It is the duty of the agency to ensure that all staff are aware and trained on Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Child Protection (CP) policies and that reporting mechanisms are in place and effective.

The PIM initiative set out 8 principles of protection information management: to be people-centred and inclusive; do no harm; have a defined purpose; and to require Informed consent and confidentiality; data responsibility; competency and capacity; impartiality; coordination and collaboration<sup>25</sup>.

## 6. DESIGNING PROTECTION MONITORING SYSTEMS ISSUES TO CONSIDER

*“We’re drowning in information, but we don’t have the information that we need. That’s because it’s not systematised.”*<sup>26</sup>

The PIM initiative process<sup>27</sup> highlights the fact that protection monitoring is not always the appropriate system to meet the information needs. Not all information needs are about trends or about the protection environment. If protection monitoring is appropriate and required in a humanitarian context, there is significant work involved in setting up the protection monitoring system that should be undertaken prior to jumping to the data-collection stage.

### 6.1 FEASIBILITY OF PROTECTION MONITORING – CONSIDERATIONS

Before there is any decision taken about protection monitoring, INTERSOS requires that its staff consider whether protection monitoring is in fact feasible and make sure that it does not expose stakeholders to unacceptable risks.

This consideration can be based on the following questions – taken from INTERSOS’ internal global guidelines on protection monitoring - which might not be exhaustive and might vary according to the context:

**A. JUSTIFICATION.** Would this data be used to improve programming or support advocacy? Is this data relevant to the protection programming in the specific context?

**B. RISK.** Would collecting, storing, and publishing such data put the organisation, the protection monitors, key informants, or community at unacceptable risk?

**C. AVAILABILITY:** Is such data already collected by other actors/methodologies?

If yes, instead of developing a protection monitoring system, they should explore possibilities of entering into data-sharing agreements and use data which is already available. Relevant data-sharing agreements can be signed to boost the sharing process.<sup>28</sup>

**D. RELIABILITY:** Is it feasible to obtain reliable data on such violations/abuses/issues?

In the PIM process this preparatory phase is referred to as “assessing the information landscape”<sup>29</sup>.

### NOTES

<sup>25</sup> [http://pim.guide/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PIM-Principles\\_one-pager\\_2018-1-1.pdf](http://pim.guide/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PIM-Principles_one-pager_2018-1-1.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Interviewee for this research – UNHCR Global Data Service

<sup>27</sup> <http://pim.guide/essential/pim-resource-centre/>

<sup>28</sup> See sections 8.4 and 9.5 on issues relating to data-sharing

<sup>29</sup> <http://pim.guide/essential/pim-resource-centre/>

## 6.2 PLANNING THE PROTECTION MONITORING SYSTEM – CONSIDERATIONS HIGHLIGHTED BY INTERVIEWEES

Once the considerations in section 6.1 have been taken into account, designing an effective protection monitoring system involves many elements, including the following:

- Collectively reaching shared understanding of the purpose of the protection monitoring system that is being designed
- Consulting with relevant actors about the best methodology for protection monitoring in the context. Consultations with the field teams is crucial, as well as engaging affected communities in the design of the protection monitoring system
- Planning the protection monitoring system jointly with information management staff
- Seeking input into the design from the intended end-users of the information, e.g. relevant clusters/sectors, HCT, donors, affected community, local and national authorities
- Planning the coordination of the system and, if possible, harmonising the data-collection system nationally and potentially cross-border (see case study from Afghanistan in section 6.6.1 for an example of a protection monitoring system that has moved towards harmonisation)
- Making necessary data-sharing agreements
- Planning how the analysis will be conducted – collectively with those who can enhance its accuracy and usefulness
- Finding ways to include verification by the affected community, if possible,
- Planning how the information will be presented and to whom it will be disseminated, with support from Information Management (IM) staff
- Planning how it will be disseminated to affected communities

## 6.3 METHODS OF PROTECTION MONITORING

There is no rule about protection monitoring methodology. After secondary data review has been conducted, decisions on methodology need to be based on local circumstances and on the reasons for which the information is being collected. Common methods of protection monitoring include: Direct Observation, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Individual/Household Interviews/Assessments.

Depending on the context, it is usually best for a protection monitoring system to use a mixed methodology approach combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, to monitor and compare trends over time of protection-specific risks/human rights violations and abuses, using multiple methods in a single geographical area (e.g. FGDs, KIIs and household assessments - HHAs) in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of a particular situation.

In many contexts, INTERSOS also recruits community members to participate in relaying information when INTERSOS staff are not present making visits and conducting interviews or FGDs or direct observations. INTERSOS also ensures that different sectors of the population, e.g. women and youth, are included. INTERSOS staff also make monitoring visits to talk with community members and to ascertain whether the community are satisfied with the protection monitoring system and with the people who have been selected to relay the information from within the community. In most cases protection monitoring data will include a mix of the qualitative and the quantitative, to provide a more holistic picture of community needs.

### 6.3.1 IDENTIFYING THE SUBJECTS OF PROTECTION MONITORING

*“We target very turbulent zones, where there are conflicts, population movements, many armed groups, and with weak state structures.”<sup>30</sup>*

The locations of a protection monitoring exercise are identified depending on the protection indicators that are to be monitored and might include IDP or refugee camps, hosting community sites, border areas etc. Other classifications based on different criteria can be added, e.g. relating to humanitarian access, areas of recent return, conflict zones, mine-affected areas etc.



Nigeria

#### NOTES

<sup>30</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS DR Congo

Based on the needs, INTERSOS selects the geographic areas where it focuses its protection monitoring according to population movements, recent levels of protection incidents/human rights violations reported. In DR Congo, INTERSOS reported that they selected areas/communities for protection monitoring according to military/paramilitary activity + population movements + high incidence of protection violations.

*“The needs vary among communities...Good protection monitoring takes into account all this diversity. In fact, the communities themselves insist that we take into account all these aspects.”<sup>31</sup>*

INTER SOS always aims for representativeness and inclusion of marginalised groups in its protection monitoring methods. They aim to always include people from ethnic and religious minorities, people with disabilities, other socially excluded groups, and men and women of different age-groups in FGDs and as key informants (KIs). Depending on the topic, in some cases INTERSOS will conduct FGDs with children, when they have consent from each child’s parent or caregiver. INTERSOS in Iraq reported that they conduct FGDs with different age groups – under-15s, 15s – 18s, adults, elders – for both sexes, mostly separately. In Lebanon INTERSOS noted that if there are reports of harassment or abuse of children, they set up a FGD for children.

The fact that through its work in many communities INTERSOS has pre-existing relationships with community structures, some of which INTERSOS has been involved in training, assists in ensuring that all categories of the population are represented. In settings where INTERSOS conducts case management, their engagement with the communities tends to result in good opportunities to select representative focus groups and key informants. Further, in Iraq it was noted that because INTERSOS’ field teams are mostly recruited from the local areas where they are conducting protection monitoring, they are able to select key informants in a way that is representative because they know where to go and who to target and they select the key informants with advice from the community. They noted that since community leaders tend to be male, they also include female teachers, doctors etc. INTERSOS always tries to include members of marginalised groups.

For household assessments, these may be conducted for all households in an area. For example, in South Sudan INTERSOS select an area and interview all people in that area, moving from border-point to water-point to village. In situations where INTERSOS is conducting HHAs as an implementing partner for UNHCR, UNHCR sometimes provides lists of households to interview, with contacts of heads of household provided. In Lebanon it was noted that this has made it difficult to reach equal numbers of women, as the head of household, whose contact details are provided, is usually a man. This has proved to be a particular challenge with remote monitoring necessitated during the Covid pandemic, as men tend to keep the phone with them and are therefore the ones answering the protection monitors’ calls. INTERSOS’ protection monitors do their best to ask to speak to women but often husbands are reluctant for their wives to take the phone calls, and on other occasions, the male head of household is at work or away from the house when receiving the phone call. So, collecting data at household rather than individual level can affect the age, gender, diversity analysis; UNHCR suggested that this could potentially be offset with key informant interviews and FGDs.

In most contexts, INTERSOS selects the FGD members and the key informants. In certain countries, such as Afghanistan, the protection cluster has identified specific profiles of people to be included as key informants, e.g., elders, teachers, high school principals, religious leaders, government authorities, members of shura (community council). The aim is to include people who have a proper understanding of the community.

In Burkina Faso INTERSOS staff noted that despite working in areas where traditional mores prevail, they observe that women have a voice through protection monitoring, that they are engaged and take initiative, and that men understand and accept women speaking out. INTERSOS aims that key informants should be representative of the community make-up: e.g. IDPs, refugees, host population. For FGDs, they meet each

## NOTES

<sup>31</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS Burkina Faso

community and ensure that each segment of the population is represented, e.g., by age, sex, social status, ensuring that the collected information is more reliable. In the Central African Republic INTERSOS staff noted the importance of having female staff to enable women to participate in the protection monitoring, and also their effort to involve religious minorities. In DR Congo INTERSOS staff reported that they aim to include stigmatised minorities within protection monitoring, while taking care that their participation does not itself lead to a protection risk. They often also conduct round-table discussions on peaceful cohabitation with communities to try to reduce the problems faced by minority populations, which they have found to be generally successful. In South Sudan INTERSOS mixes returnees and host community for FGDs.

If there is a particular issue in certain countries with a minority community, e.g. a specific stateless minority group, they would make sure to have a representation of such groups among the informants. If there are significant problems with a specific issue like child labour, they would select a school director or school teacher as a key informant. They would set up a FGD if a particular issue came up.

In some settings it may be best to return to the same households for HHAs and the same people as key informants in order to ensure continuity and comparability of information. In other settings, perhaps due to population movements or due to the need to get as wide a sampling as possible, or due to beneficiary fatigue with surveys, it may be better to vary the respondents.

## 6.3.2 PROTECTION MONITORING TOOLS

*“Protection monitoring is not just Household Assessments, but there is a tendency for the Household Assessment tool to be seen as THE protection monitoring activity. The danger of too much focus on Household Assessments is that you see the trees, but you don’t see the forest.”<sup>32</sup>*

For each of the (non-exhaustive) list of protection monitoring methods listed in section 6.3 above, existing tools need to be adapted in each context to ensure that relevant and usable information is collected, e.g. questionnaires for HHAs and for KIs. For example, FGDs are a data-collection method for protection monitoring, but they need to be properly designed and executed, using tools with limited questions and with systematised forms for structuring the information received. In INTERSOS, protection monitoring tools are developed by the Protection Monitoring Officer and Protection Coordinator, in collaboration with the field team.

In some countries, INTERSOS participates in protection monitoring systems where the tools have been developed collectively by the Protection Cluster and all organisations including INTERSOS use these tools. In the Afghanistan Protection Cluster, member agencies brainstorm together to produce the tools and make them relevant to the context, and ensure that they comply with protection monitoring principles (especially “do no harm”) and that they address the protection-related questions that are important for the protection monitoring system.

In order for protection monitoring information to be comparable across a country, it is preferable for harmonised tools to be agreed among all of the agencies conducting protection monitoring. As this reduces flexibility, it is important to have processes in place for agreeing on additions or amendments to the tools when specific issues arise. In Lebanon INTERSOS uses standardised protection monitoring tools (e.g., for HHAs, KIs) that have been harmonised with all UNHCR Protection Monitoring partners and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), although not with all agencies that are conducting protection monitoring in Lebanon. The tools are

## NOTES

<sup>32</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS Yemen

designed by UNHCR, but they have sought input from their protection monitoring implementing partners, including INTERSOS. The harmonised tools have 10 fixed topics, but also include a general question about other protection issues to be raised. There is the potential to add sections as needed, e.g., UNHCR added a section on debts at INTERSOS' request. Further questions were recently added on COVID-19 and vaccine take up.

In Yemen, UNHCR has a number of protection monitoring tools used by its implementing partners and adopted by the clusters, to provide structured data-sets. INTERSOS uses these, but also drafts questionnaires on a monthly basis, which are more flexible. INTERSOS uses inputs into FGD tools from its field team. Interviewees called for collaborative processes for developing protection monitoring tools.

In the Central Sahel, DRC and UNHCR are co-leading an initiative to harmonise the tools for regional protection monitoring, called Project 21.<sup>33</sup> (See section 9.4 for more detail on this initiative.)

There are also tools used by the people selected from the community to be focal points/relays/animators. They are trained to send flash alerts, initially by SMS. For more details see case study re Chad – section 6.5.1. These flash alerts are tools designed by UNHCR.

## 6.4 DATA PROTECTION PROTOCOLS

INTERSOS requires that safe and efficient data management systems, databases and data protection protocols are developed and rolled out where protection monitoring is implemented. As per the PIM Definition, data management is the process of collecting, validating, storing and retrieving data in a way to meet the requirements of all stakeholders and inform their decisions taken to improve the protection response and advocacy. Any protection monitoring system produces different sets of information, which should always be gathered based on the need-to-know principle and only if it is information that is going to be used. This information should be stored and kept in tailored databases that are managed by specialised staff.

Keeping data confidential promotes beneficiaries' safety and security because it prevents the misuse of information about them for purposes beyond their control, including for their exploitation, stigmatisation and abuse, either intentionally or unintentionally. For a correct implementation of protection monitoring, INTERSOS requires that each of its missions develop protocols for sharing data. It is also important that in each protocol, there is a determination of what information can be sensitive and should be subject to heightened protection measures in its use and processing. Staff, including data clerks, must be trained on data protection protocols.

The data shared within protection monitoring is often limited, anonymised, and aggregated. Personal Identifying data is only shared when absolutely necessary for immediate protection response and it is done with informed consent. Confidentiality is the main condition on which sensitive data is protected and disclosed only to authorised persons. Referrals have to be made in line with local SOPs on inter-agency and internal referrals, which also require confidentiality and data protection.

### NOTES

<sup>33</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/project-21-regional-protection-monitoring-central-sahel-burkina-faso-mali-and>



## 6.5 HUMAN RESOURCES FOR PROTECTION MONITORING

*“It’s the subject where each and every person thinks s/he has something to say, when in fact one needs a certain level of knowledge of protection overall.”<sup>34</sup>*

The quality of information produced through protection monitoring is highly dependent on the capacity of the people engaged in its design, collection, analysis, and presentation. The PIM initiative has produced a one-pager on competency domains for PIM.<sup>35</sup> Interviewees highlighted the need to ensure attention to specific skill-sets (e.g. analytical, protection/legal/human rights, communications skills, writing abilities, etc.). Concern was expressed by several interviewees that often protection monitors do not have a shared understanding of the purpose of protection monitoring and that they do not focus enough on the protection environment and trends and often confuse protection monitoring with needs assessments.

In INTERSOS Protection Monitors are the staff who collect data using the different tools provided and are enabled to refer cases whenever needed. They are consulted in the phase of methodology development and during the analysis phase. Protection monitors are usually supervised by a Protection Monitors Team Leader, who is accountable for the quality and the accuracy of the data collected, as well as for the security of the teams in the field. The analysis and the tools are developed by the Protection Monitoring Officer and Protection Coordinator, in collaboration with the field team. The Protection Monitoring Officer provides technical guidance and support to protection monitoring staff, ensuring quality in the implementation of activities and services as well as adherence to protection standards. S/he assists in the development and review of national SOPs on protection monitoring and trains staff.

*“Training is a real need.”<sup>36</sup>*

For INTERSOS it is a requirement that Protection Monitors are trained on safe identification and referral and that they are provided with updated maps of services available, including for emergency and contact lists for referrals, in case they encounter a protection incident while collecting data.

Interviewees described that continuous training of protection monitoring staff is needed, which covers at least the following topics:

- Protection principles and basic human rights
- Safe identification and referrals
- Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
- Gender-based violence prevention and response
- Child Protection
- Understanding the protection monitoring tools
- Data protection and confidentiality

### NOTES

<sup>34</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS DR Congo

<sup>35</sup> <http://pim.guide/essential/pim-resource-centre/>

<sup>36</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS DR Congo

Some of the areas on which interviewees thought that more training would enhance the quality of protection monitoring are as follows:

- Report-writing and editing
- Understanding the purpose of protection monitoring
- Analysis
- Communications skills
- Remote monitoring
- Refreshers on the work of other sectors, e.g. legal, case management
- Human rights law, IDP Guiding Principles, refugee rights, migrants' rights

In some countries, such as Lebanon, INTERSOS arranges for its new Protection Monitors to shadow other Protection Monitors, and this on-the-job training has been considered useful.

Although a lack of sufficient funding can be a challenge, INTERSOS provides training for community focal points/relays/animations, including training on human rights, protection issues, data confidentiality and on the tools they should use. For example, in Central African Republic, INTERSOS trains the community relays, and also the site managers, the community leaders, the local associations and committees and national NGOs, and the police and gendarmes so that there is an understanding about protection monitoring and the need to share information.

There is also the important issue of supporting localisation through training for local community-based organisations (CBOs), not only in protection monitoring, but also in overall management and project management.



Chad

## 6.5.1 CASE STUDY - BORDER MONITORING – AN EXAMPLE OF INTERSOS' HYBRID APPROACH: CHAD

*INTER SOS conducts protection monitoring of the borders at various entry points (official and unofficial) in Chad, where people from Nigeria, Niger, or Cameroon cross to seek asylum, but also through where Chadians return to their country of origin. The entry points are spread over a large area with very porous borders and many of the entry points are not controlled by border police or security forces. Asylum seekers tend to settle in reception sites near borders. The border area is very unstable, which means that few humanitarian agencies are present there, and therefore little information is available on the protection risks faced by the populations concerned.*

*INTER SOS's methodology in Chad is partly community-based. INTER SOS staff establishes and maintains contact with communities over time, and the communities themselves are involved in collecting information for protection monitoring. A protection committee is set up in each prefecture to ensure respect for human rights and share alerts with INTER SOS staff.*

*In border areas, INTER SOS has focal points - community members who have been trained by INTER SOS to collect and share basic information on protection issues and on cross-border forced displacement of populations. They are equipped with mobile phones and receive communication credits and a small monthly allowance, which allows them to share the first alerts on protection problems in the event of an incident occurring in their community, as well as population movements. When a focal point sends an alert (by SMS) on an incident, the protection monitor (INTER SOS staff) triangulates the information, verifies its reliability, harmonises it, and confirms the alleged perpetrators of the human rights violation. S/He then sends the data, the story of the incidents, to the project manager, who shares them after analysis with the head of the UNHCR protection section. The case can be referred to the head of the protection cluster or another actor for appropriate management. This sharing of information on protection cases respects the principle of confidentiality and security of the survivor and other resource persons in the identification of the incident. This is why for any referral of the case to other service providers, the informed consent signed by the survivor is required.*

*The use of focal points and their flash alerts is part of the methodology used in monitoring incidents and violations of human rights.*

## 6.6 DATA- AND INFORMATION-SHARING

*“Delayed information-sharing means someone suffering.”<sup>37</sup>*

One of the concerns expressed by many interviewees related to a lack of, or delays in, sharing of data and information. Some suggested that amongst humanitarian agencies there is a lack of understanding about how to approach data and information sensitivity. In some operations there is an over-reaction and nothing is shared or published because of fears that everything is sensitive. It is necessary to be able to assess the level of sensitivity in a way that finds a balance and leads to information being shared that people need to know in order to respond. It is for this reason that in 2018 the PIM initiative produced a Framework for

### NOTES

<sup>37</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTER SOS Nigeria

Data-Sharing in Practice<sup>38</sup> that looks both at the risks of sharing and at the risks of not sharing. There is a need for enhanced capacity to assess sensitivity of information, and more emphasis on the risks of not sharing information. The IASC-endorsed operational guidance on data responsibility in humanitarian action <sup>39</sup> (for all sectors and clusters) includes a template for data-sharing agreements. This could be built upon to develop protection-specific operational guidance.

Apart from misunderstandings about the sensitivity of certain information, in some cases information is not shared because agencies lack the necessary resources for analysis or IM and have therefore not been able to use the information to finalise products that they feel confident in sharing. Some interviewees noted that at times the lack of sharing is due to territoriality.

Leadership by Protection Clusters on promoting agreements on data-sharing between agencies would be welcomed by many of the interviewees, as it is often difficult to get information shared due to their security and confidentiality protocols. Interviewees noted that if all of the information were used in real time, the advocacy would get results more quickly. But unfortunately, there is a gap between the data collection and the sharing with other humanitarian actors. So, for example, in an urgent situation there can be a gap of a week before the information is shared, during which time displaced people are facing all sorts of risks.

Many interviewees – both UNHCR implementing partners and other agencies - highlighted concerns about the frequency and depth of information-sharing by UNHCR. For example, in Lebanon, INTERSONS (a UNHCR IP in Lebanon) and other UNHCR IPs input their data into UNHCR’s Kobo system. UNHCR produces quarterly reports from this information and provides monthly updates at sector working group level but whilst these reports are very useful to highlight protection issues, they lack much of the granular information that would be useful to operational agencies for humanitarian response planning, e.g, the information does not break down where the worst affected by a particular issue are located beyond district level. As a result, other agencies also conduct protection monitoring and this leads to some duplication of efforts, and causes fatigue for communities that become the subjects of questioning by multiple agencies.

There are good reasons to not share certain sensitive information publicly, but several interviewees from various agencies in Lebanon and other countries, took the view that all stakeholders involved should conduct a joint analysis of what information they can share, and have a discussion with partners about what information they need, to clarify their “red-lines” on data-sharing. In some settings concerns were expressed by interviewees about protection monitoring data not being shared (by UNHCR or by other actors) with the Protection Cluster; or - in settings where the protection monitoring data is shared in the protection cluster it is not shared bilaterally before a protection cluster meeting, even when it is needed urgently to provide immediate response.

## NOTES

<sup>38</sup> <http://pim.guide/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Framework-for-Data-Sharing-in-Practice.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IASC%20Operational%20Guidance%20on%20Data%20Responsibility%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action-%20February%202021.pdf>

## 6.7 ANALYSIS OF PROTECTION DATA

*“For conflict-sensitivity work, it’s usual for analysts to be recruited; but that doesn’t usually happen for protection monitoring work, even though we need that analytical capacity.”<sup>40</sup>*

Many interviewees expressed concern about the level of analysis of the protection data. Without the analysis, protection monitoring does not achieve its impact. Information management is required to properly analyse the data and produce findings and there is a need for staff to be trained on this and for analysis systems to be established.

Following on from the previous section 6.6 about data-sharing issues, in some countries when INTERSOS is an IP for UNHCR, it is UNHCR alone that conducts the analysis of the data collected through protection monitoring. Ideally joint analysis would be undertaken by agencies that are members of the protection cluster in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Further, some interviewees would recommend that when the protection monitoring system is designed, there should be some mechanism agreed upon for seeking input from affected communities into the analysis, at least a few points during a year.

Several INTERSOS missions were concerned that they had insufficient staffing and technical support for the analytical element of protection monitoring, mainly due to lack of funding. Some INTERSOS staff were frustrated that their lack of staffing for analysis sometimes led them to delays in providing reports, which could lead to delays in responses. Many interviewees also called for more training for frontline protection monitoring staff on information analysis, since the insights that they have gained from direct contact with the communities are often lost.

### 6.7.1 CASE STUDY - A POSITIVE MOVE TOWARDS HARMONISATION OF THE SYSTEM OF PROTECTION MONITORING AND JOINT ANALYSIS: AFGHANISTAN

*In Afghanistan some humanitarian agencies were doing protection monitoring, but there was still a lack of joint analysis of the protection situation. In 2019 the protection cluster leadership brought all who were doing protection monitoring together to agree on harmonising the system - using the same tools and conducting joint analysis. It took some partners, for various reasons, some time to change their own individual agency protection monitoring systems, but they were persuaded of the benefits of the harmonised system.*

*In mid-2020 this went forward; there was a very collaborative process between the participating agencies for agreeing on the joint tools, and the protection cluster offered training to organisations’ staff. An agreement was reached on joint data-collection methodologies and a joint system into which organisations input their data and collaborate in doing the analysis of the data and producing the narrative report. The protection cluster then publishes this as a snapshot every month. The agencies in the protection cluster come together to do analysis on a quarterly basis, and they also make any necessary revisions to the protection monitoring questionnaires. The protection cluster leadership aims to bring in more partners to join this protection monitoring system, on the basis that the more who join, the better the analysis that is obtained. The protection cluster managed to provide some funds from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund to some partners to do protection monitoring. The Protection Cluster has a full-time Information Management Officer (IMO) who liaises with the IMOs of partner organisations. This is essential for ensuring that the data are accurate and that the information is well-presented.*

## NOTES

<sup>40</sup> Interviewee for this research - Danish Refugee Council

*The first quarterly protection monitoring report using this new harmonised system came out in May 2021. The protection monitoring reports are well-received by partners, and are presented to the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and to the donors. Donors use them to fund certain humanitarian activities and they are useful for the work of the HCT. The protection monitoring information is used for the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).*

## 7. DISSEMINATION AND USE OF PROTECTION MONITORING INFORMATION

*“We should be consulting targets of the protection monitoring information/stakeholders to find out what data is useful for them and in what format it is useful for them.”<sup>41</sup>*

All of the interviewees reported positive impacts of protection monitoring, but many also expressed frustration that the information it produced was not always used to full effect. This was often linked to a lack of adequate staffing for analysis and for IM. It was also linked to a lack of planning for dissemination of the information to the people who could use it in order to take action to address the issues raised. Interviewees stressed that before embarking on any data-collection for protection monitoring, a data analysis plan and a dissemination plan should be in place – with clarity about for whom you are conducting this protection monitoring, and why and how you will use the information.

SOPs for the protection system should include the production of regular protection monitoring reports. However, it is important to consult with information users about the type and the format of information they need in order to take action.

Sometimes the information is more impactful for a face-to-face meeting with a policymaker, rather than for a report. In DR Congo and Nigeria, INTERSOS’ protection monitoring information has been used for dialogue with the military, and, for example, they have removed unauthorised “checkpoints” that were extorting money from the community as a result. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or UN peacekeeping missions may also raise protection monitoring findings in dialogue with non-state armed groups, or with the military, to try to reduce human rights violations, or they may impact peacekeeping missions’ decisions about prioritised areas for deploying forces.

Many interviewees highlighted the need to better connect protection monitoring and other sectors (e.g., food security, livelihoods, shelter, WASH). Protection clusters and protection working groups play an important role in disseminating the information through inter cluster coordination. For example, in Afghanistan, the protection cluster presents protection monitoring reports to the ICCT (Inter Cluster Coordination Team).

In some settings, protection monitoring reports are shared with the protection cluster and its subclusters, but not with other clusters, resulting in responses that may not be comprehensive. However, there are positive examples, e.g. in Cameroon INTERSOS reports that they use protection monitoring information to approach the health cluster or shelter cluster to advocate for their interventions when necessary.

Protection monitoring information tends to be used for humanitarian planning and is included in HNOs and HRPs. With the humanitarian-development nexus, it also serves medium and long-term planning in terms of sustainable solutions, e.g, how to orient local development or integration of IDPs into the host community.

### NOTES

<sup>41</sup> Interviewee for this research – Danish Refugee Council

Dissemination strategies to state actors are also very important. In Burkina Faso, INTERSOS reports that they are in contact with state actors at different levels and their protection monitoring findings support the planning of activities, and coordination with other actors. In Chad, they share protection monitoring findings with the mayor and the prefect, for them to share onwards along the chain of responsibility.

In Chad, INTERSOS uses protection monitoring information for the provincial civ-mil meeting, where UNHCR draws the attention of civilian and military authorities to its findings. If unsuccessful, they can then be raised at the national level, with the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the HCT.

Protection monitoring information has also proved useful for uncovering malpractice and abuses by humanitarian agencies.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, protection monitoring has often played an important role in monitoring trends such as marginalised communities' attitude towards and access to vaccines. In Lebanon, COVID-related questions were added to protection monitoring, which has helped to identify problems that refugees have had registering for vaccination, which has led to follow-up and resolution of some of the problems.

Protection monitoring information is of particular use to donor agencies, so that they can adapt funding allocations to the current context. For example, ECHO (European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid) in Lebanon has used information from protection monitoring to help determine how to support vaccination campaigns through programming, and the information has supported how vaccination is dealt with by the sectors beyond Health and WASH.

CBOs and NGO Forums have an interest in using the protection monitoring information for advocacy purposes. For example, the information that protection monitoring often produces about increased tensions between communities has been used for advocacy or programming about ways to address these tensions. In Yemen, protection monitoring revealed a rise in social tensions and divisions between the host community and IDPs in one area, and this led an NGO to select this area for a project proposal for a community centre/ space.

There are numerous examples of protection monitoring information being used for advocacy to improve the situation of communities. For example, in Yemen information from protection monitoring about refugees' registration problems is used to recommend the setting up of a mobile registration team for refugees as refugees without valid documents cannot move to the urban centres where the registration offices are located. Protection monitoring information about refugee children not attending school due to lack of birth certificates led to advocacy that persuaded the local authorities to make an exception for refugee children so that they could attend school without birth certificates.

## 7.1 CASE STUDY – PROTECTION MONITORING INFORMATION USED FOR ADVOCACY TO FACILITATE IDP RETURN PROCESSES: IRAQ

*In Iraq, at a time when some IDP camps were closing, many IDPs were planning a return to their areas of origin. However, a high percentage of IDPs moved to areas that were not their original areas; most of them moved to big cities like Mosul. INTERSOS was conducting protection monitoring activities at both household and community levels with communities that were leaving and with communities that arrived. Mainly they used household assessments, key informant interviews, and the protection monitoring team's direct observations in order to collect information about the common protection trends and needs among the targeted population. FGDs were not possible at the time due to Covid-19 restrictions.*

*INTER SOS monitored for human rights violations during the return process and reported any incidents, and identified vulnerable cases and referred them to specialised services. INTER SOS alerted actors in the areas of return, especially when specific concerns were identified. For example, when IDPs reported that their village was not yet cleared of mines, INTER SOS reported to the mine action sub-cluster in order to collect information and inform the IDPs before their return trip. INTER SOS shared information and a list of key informants with humanitarian actors (sometimes the local INTER SOS protection monitoring team) in the areas of return in order to track the return trip and report any concerns immediately.*

*INTER SOS' protection monitoring work highlighted the following problems:*

- *Lack of livelihood and job opportunities in the areas of origin*
- *Denial of access to some by the community in the area of origin because they have been perceived by the community there as having an Islamic State affiliation or because they are from a marginalised group*
- *Continued insecurity in the areas of origin*
- *Lack of services in the areas of origin*

*INTER SOS shared its findings with the National Protection Cluster and relevant working groups, and donors. This led to joint advocacy together with other actors. The advocacy is ongoing, but INTER SOS observed that there is better collaboration now between humanitarian actors and the government in order to facilitate the return for people after they registered for return. Moreover, actors – including INTER SOS - mobilised their response to cover some areas of return.*

## 7.2 LINKAGES WITH SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

*“If I’m informing you of a problem, the least I can expect is to receive information about where to get help for that problem.”<sup>42</sup>*

One of the important consequences of protection monitoring is the identification of people who are facing a protection risk, and their referral to services and assistance. INTER SOS requires its monitors to be trained on safe identification and referral and to have up-to-date information on local services and referral pathways. Many interviewees argued that if protection monitoring is a stand-alone activity with no sector support around it, community fatigue and frustration at being asked the same questions without seeing direct responses makes protection monitoring impossible. It is also very problematic for protection monitors if they cannot provide any possibility of direct assistance or immediate responses to the problems they encounter in the communities. Most interviewees took the view that protection monitoring cannot be separated from referrals, as it has to have a direct impact on beneficiaries as well as longer-term impacts via informing humanitarian interventions and advocacy. This element of referrals for services and assistance is one of the more immediate life-saving and life-changing aspects of protection monitoring.

The question of whether protection monitoring should or should not be directly linked with cash assistance provoked some strong opinions among interviewees. Most interviewees who had worked on protection monitoring in a variety of contexts thought that any direct linkage of multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) to protection monitoring is more problematic than a direct linkage of protection monitoring with cash-for-protection or Emergency cash assistance to survivors of human rights violations. INTER SOS requires its missions to always consider the possibility, and evaluate the pros and cons, of delivering cash assistance within protection monitoring activities, and it has clear monitoring and accountability procedures for cash distributions. Interviewees noted that for cash assistance it is always very important how you communicate to the community, and this is even more complex in the context of protection monitoring.

### NOTES

<sup>42</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTER SOS Iraq



***“If people see protection monitoring as being just about accessing cash this creates false expectations and security problems and skews the protection monitoring information.”***<sup>43</sup>

In some humanitarian operations UNHCR requires its IPs that are engaged in protection monitoring to conduct household assessments (HHAs) for cash or returnee assistance programmes, effectively making it a vulnerability and eligibility assessment, rather than to monitor protection environment and inform responses. When conducted in this manner, the communities inevitably come to equate the HHAs with cash assistance, which may influence the information provided for protection monitoring.

This has also created reputational and acceptance risks for INTERSOS. This issue has also created physical and access risks for INTERSOS staff, in both Iraq and Yemen, where intimidation by community members related to selection for assistance has required INTERSOS to temporarily withdraw from areas, despite INTERSOS’ attempts to explain and counter the misperceptions. For these reasons, some INTERSOS operations favour a de-linking of protection monitoring activities from eligibility decisions about MPCA. They would propose that their teams still engage in safe referrals for services and assistance, and this could potentially lead to MPCA.

Some interviewees from UNHCR pointed to the element of the protection monitoring definition of being “for the purpose of informing effective responses” and argued that using the HHAs in this way was simply a means of achieving an effective response in some cases, which could be appropriate depending on the circumstances. Other UNHCR interviewees acknowledged that using the HHAs in this way was problematic, but pointed to the fact that UNHCR is only able to finance protection monitoring through linkage to its cash assistance programme, and they took the view that donors would not fund protection monitoring activities unless they were linked to cash distribution. Another disadvantage of this direct linkage of protection monitoring to a cash assistance programme is that it brings pressure to address certain geographical areas or to carry it out within a certain timeframe that is about the cash assistance programme rather than about protection monitoring.

***“Referrals and cash assistance help us with protection monitoring. They are our entry point with communities.”***<sup>44</sup>

In other countries, the concern of INTERSOS staff is to have access to some immediate assistance for survivors of human rights violations, particularly to support them with transport costs so that they can reach urgent assistance. Many INTERSOS operations do provide transport money for survivors of human rights violations to be able to reach a hospital or one of INTERSOS’ “listening centres”, or to purchase first aid items, or for other follow-up. For them it is problematic to do protection monitoring work without access to at least this small-scale assistance for affected communities. When meeting a survivor of a human rights violation, such as a rape survivor, through protection monitoring activities INTERSOS protection monitoring staff in most missions consider it to be their duty to be able to provide at least some minimal immediate support. This is of course a very different proposition than large-scale assessments for eligibility for a multi-purpose cash assistance programme.

***“Providing services and giving assistance can affect the information we receive. But also not providing services and giving assistance can affect the information we receive.”***<sup>45</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>43</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS Yemen

<sup>44</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS DR Congo

<sup>45</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS South Sudan

## 7.2.1 CASE STUDY: TWO EXAMPLES OF REFERRALS AS A RESULT OF PROTECTION MONITORING THAT LED TO SUPPORT FOR CHILD SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE: CHAD

In March 2021, during border monitoring activities in Lake Chad province, INTERSOS' protection monitoring team identified a 14-year-old girl from an IDP family who had been the victim of kidnapping and rape. The protection monitoring team documented her case and referred her to the health centre where she had access to medical treatment including a PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) kit. In addition, INTERSOS protection monitoring team were able to provide her with one-off cash support which enabled her to cover urgent basic needs in nutrition and clothing. She was also referred to INTERSOS' protection team for psychological treatment for the trauma she had suffered, in order to reduce the long-term consequences. For two months, this team continued the follow-up and the care of the survivor and the young girl is gradually beginning to return to a normal life through the help she has received in child- and women-friendly spaces where she participates in life skills activities with her peers for her psychosocial recovery.

In September 2021 in Lake Chad province the INTERSOS protection monitoring team was alerted by their community focal points about a mass kidnapping of 11 children by a non-state armed group. The children were released a day later by the defence and security forces, after having been stripped of everything they had and in a situation of advanced trauma. The protection monitors then referred these children to the case manager and the psychologist for documentation and psychological care. A psychological risk assessment was carried out to lead to support for the psychological recovery of the children and their parents.



Chad

## 7.2.2 CASE STUDY - REFERRAL AS A RESULT OF PROTECTION MONITORING LEADING TO PREVENTION OF EVICTION: LEBANON

*Lebanon: Example of referral as a result of protection monitoring leading to prevention of eviction*  
While conducting protection monitoring to document protection trends, INTERSOS staff also identify individuals facing protection risks. This frequently leads to rapid responses to refer individuals for support for the identified concerns and vital assistance for the affected families. This case study exemplifies the importance of protection monitoring being action-oriented.

*This work of ensuring referrals of cases that come to light through protection monitoring is demonstrated in Lebanon where many families are facing risks of eviction and homelessness due to the economic crisis. For example, in March 2021 INTERSOS was conducting protection monitoring through Household Assessments in Bekaa in Lebanon. The INTERSOS Protection Monitors identified a refugee family in need of urgent assistance, as the family had received a verbal eviction notice because of non-payment of rent. The family had no means of supporting themselves other than incurring more debts. The Protection Monitors referred the family to INTERSOS' legal and case management teams for their intervention. As a result of the referral to the legal team, INTERSOS' lawyer negotiated with the family's landlord and reached an agreement to postpone the eviction deadline and to make a schedule of back-payments of rent. As a result of the referral for case management, INTERSOS' case management team conducted its own separate in-depth assessment of the family's situation. This resulted in the family's enrolment into a multi-purpose cash programme, which would enable them to pay their monthly instalments to cover the back-payments of rent and the provision of emergency cash assistance as a bridge for the period until the multi-purpose cash payments began. Accordingly, as a result of the fast response and holistic approach that was started by the protection monitoring assessment and the prompt follow-up from the legal and case management sectors the family could overcome the situation and the eviction notice was cancelled.*

*Many such cases are referred for similar household-level support, preventing evictions in individual cases. Further, the trends information that is collected through protection monitoring about the increasing problem of evictions has led to collective advocacy by the humanitarian community in Lebanon to highlight the issue and seek donor attention and support for prevention of evictions.*

## 7.3 FEEDBACK TO AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

***“We should include communities in the analysis process – check back with the community before the report is finalised. We should also feed back to the community once the report is out in whatever form that feedback is most appropriate to take. This should be part of the system.”***<sup>46</sup>

Several interviewees noted that there has not been much focus on setting up systematic feedback on protection monitoring to affected communities, and that this is a current weakness. When designing a protection monitoring system the decision can be taken to build in feedback to affected communities. Ideally communities would be involved at several stages:

- Getting community input into and advice on how the protection monitoring will be undertaken
- Engaging communities in the analysis of the protection monitoring data
- Involving communities in designing how the protection monitoring information can best be disseminated in a way that communities can access it

### NOTES

<sup>46</sup> Interviewee for this research – Danish Refugee Council

Several interviewees pointed out that there are no clear guidelines on how to communicate protection monitoring information back to communities, and suggested that this could be useful. Some noted that this is important for accountability and for explaining about protection monitoring to communities.

In some cases, it may be possible to disseminate information through existing Communicating with Communities programmes. For example, in South Sudan in the UNMISS Protection of Civilians (PoC) there is Internews' Boda Boda Talk Talk programme<sup>47</sup>.

In Nigeria, INTERSOS relays information from protection monitoring back to affected communities in community engagement meetings. INTERSOS takes minutes in these meetings, and in the next meeting updates the community on what has happened since the last meeting in relation to issues raised in the last meeting. INTERSOS shares information raised in FGDs about areas of heightened security threats – to help communities to protect themselves and reduce risks. INTERSOS also informs of new services available.

Although systematic feedback mechanisms to affected communities are rare, some information from protection monitoring is often shared with the communities during other meetings. Sometimes it comes up in meetings with the community and is discussed, but it is not usually explained directly as coming from protection monitoring. For example, while INTERSOS Lebanon does not have systematic feedback meetings with communities about protection monitoring information, they have community meetings in the context of other projects, such as the Collective Site Management and Coordination (CSMC) project, and feedback often happens of at least some of the protection monitoring information in this context. In Yemen, INTERSOS reports back informally to the community, not through the protection monitoring process, but through community engagement coordinators who provide informal feedback to community leaders, volunteers, and through the youth and community initiative.

Organisations do follow up on referrals that come through protection monitoring and inform of the outcomes of these. Also, if an issue has been raised through protection monitoring and it has resulted in action, this will usually be fed back in one forum or another.

*“Even if we can't close the border, we have to warn about particularly dangerous areas.”<sup>48</sup>*

Many of INTERSOS' protection monitoring systems depend on information being passed on from community focal points/relays/animations, and many of these communities have their own community structures and community protection committees, so protection monitoring information often finds its way to the communities in any event.

In some cases, projects have been developed to work with community protection committees to use the protection monitoring information to enhance community protection – see case study re DR Congo Ituri below – section 7.3.1.

Even if there is no such project in place, INTERSOS staff are involved in a lot of community sensitisation about protection and human rights, and whenever they have a new entry point they try to sensitise the population.

Further, INTERSOS in DR Congo noted that when they undertake a FGD, at the end they read out the summary of what was discussed. They read out the various points and the specific priorities that were highlighted by the group one by one, and people from the group make corrections, notably in the order of priorities, for example.

## NOTES

<sup>47</sup> <https://internews.org/bbttlearningcollection/>

<sup>48</sup> Interviewee for this research - Chad

UNHCR in Iraq noted that when they provide feedback to local authorities, community representatives are often present.

However, some interviewees pointed out that in many organisations their own protection monitors do not see the protection monitoring reports, let alone the community, and that this can lead to disjointedness over the information chain.

### 7.3.1 CASE STUDY - COMMUNITY PROTECTION PROGRAMME AND RADIO PROGRAMMES: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (ITURI)

*With the continued presence of multiple armed groups in Ituri Province, more than 1 million people have fled their homes to seek refuge. INTERSOS' protection monitoring seeks to reduce the effects of conflict on affected populations by improving their protection environment, with a community-based approach. The approach involves community members becoming actively engaged in the programmes that concern them, such that the chosen protection measures reduce the risks to which they are exposed.*

*INTER SOS recruits its staff locally in the zones where civilians are exposed to human rights violations, as they know their area very well, which contributes to the success of activities and reinforces transparency.*

*Further, INTERSOS works with community protection structures, which strengthens local ownership of protection activities. INTERSOS supports the establishment of these structures and reinforces the capacities of their members – 50% of whom are women – by training them on aspects of protection monitoring such as human rights, sexual violence, child protection, etc. In the long-term, these local protection committees will be able to continue measuring threats to the community and taking countermeasures even after the departure of INTERSOS.*

*Committee members develop protection plans specific to the threats faced by the community: They identify the human rights violations that are committed, the types of perpetrators who commit them, and the times and places where they occur most frequently. This mapping of risks is communicated to the rest of the population so that people can take steps to mitigate the level of risk, e.g., by avoiding the places and/or times of day for certain activities.*

*Committee members advocate the need to respect human rights and to denounce abuses; they track services available to the community and orient SGBV survivors and other human rights victims appropriately; and they represent the community vis-à-vis local and provincial authorities so as to improve the security of the population.*

*The protection committee also tracks protection incidents and transmits this information to INTERSOS protection animators. INTERSOS provides technical support and guidance to the committees, the members of which work on a voluntary basis.*

*INTER SOS also uses radio interventions to speak about protection issues to a wide audience by airing both short announcements and 30-minute radio programmes via community radio stations that cover its intervention zones. They can be about general protection issues or more specific to, for example, SGBV, child abuse, or other human rights violations. Through its announcements, INTERSOS airs key messages about protection issues that last one minute and either precede or follow a news bulletin or another programme with a mass audience.*

The INTERSON radio programmes run for 30 minutes, again focusing on a specific protection topic, with the animator clearly explaining the link to the protection concerns of the population. INTERSON invites special guests influential in the community to share their viewpoints. For example, a programme on international women's day will have representatives of women's groups as well as religious leaders who support women's rights. Meanwhile, audience members are encouraged to ask questions on the topic, either by telephone or in writing, which will be answered during the next airing of the programme. (Live interaction is not allowed so as to ensure that the messages are well thought out and do not lead to conflict within or among communities.)



Yemen

## 8. CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

### 8.1 LACK OF SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE OF PROTECTION MONITORING

*“Often people see protection monitoring as monitoring of the protection activity, rather than the monitoring of protection itself.”<sup>49</sup>*

There is a lot of confusion about what protection monitoring is and is not, and over its purpose. Protection monitoring often gets confused with one-off needs assessments, and this confusion is exacerbated by household assessments that are described as protection monitoring being used for vulnerability/eligibility assessments for assistance programmes, rather than for collective analysis of protection risks to inform protection programming and advocacy - see section 6.8. Protection monitoring also often gets confused with case management and with monitoring and evaluating protection response activities. Without shared understanding of protection monitoring it is difficult to achieve its aims.

### 8.2 LACK OF JOINT DESIGN OF PROTECTION MONITORING SYSTEMS

Many interviewees expressed concerns about the lack of collective joint planning of protection monitoring systems, as noted throughout section 6. This lack of joint design impacts the effectiveness of the systems. The concerns were expressed about insufficient consultation with protection cluster or protection working group members to input into the systems. Concern was also expressed about not obtaining enough input at the design stage of protection monitoring from key audiences, e.g. shelter or economic recovery actors, to find out the key indicators that they need to be included. Nor is it common to consult affected communities about the design of protection monitoring systems.

Many interviewees noted that prior to the joint design stage, it is rare for adequate assessment of the information landscape to have taken place in order to determine whether protection monitoring is the system required.

### 8.3 ACCESS AND SECURITY ISSUES

Operating in fragile and conflict-affected areas and focusing on the protection environment, access and security issues are inevitable challenges and constraints for protection monitoring. Access issues may relate to authorities refusing permission for an agency to enter particular areas or sites. For example, INTERSOS has been unable to access detention centres in a number of countries to conduct detention monitoring. There are areas where the authorities refuse permission for mobile teams or for household assessments. Access issues may be caused by environmental factors, such as floods, or impassable roads, making it impossible to reach certain areas for in-person protection monitoring. Armed conflict or the presence of armed groups may prevent protection monitoring in certain areas during particular periods of time, and may require moving staff, or focal points, around or pulling them out temporarily. Health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, may also restrict access.

#### NOTES

<sup>49</sup> Interviewee for this research – INTERSOS Lebanon

COVID-19 restrictions have led to more attempts at remote protection monitoring by phone or internet, at least for KIs and sometimes for other methods of protection monitoring, such as FGDs or HHAs, and communications with focal points and community protection committees. In some countries this has been feasible, although it is reported by many interviewees to have reduced the quality of the monitoring because of the lack of direct observation and of non-verbal communication. In other countries or regions, it is not feasible due to lack of phone or internet coverage, and/or security issues. In many countries, remote monitoring has a negative impact on gender equity, since women are less likely to have access to phones in these settings.

However, INTERSOS has routinely been using elements of remote protection monitoring in any event prior to the pandemic, for communication with community focal points via SMS and phones – since there are many areas that they cannot reach at times due to security problems, and also because they are simply covering large areas and cannot be physically present all of the time and may not have the funds to cover the necessary transport costs, which in some cases might involve flight costs. Experience has shown that remote protection monitoring can help in these circumstances, leading to alerts being sent out, at least when there is phone coverage. There are risks of receiving biased information if it is sent only remotely. In terms of reliability, they consider who the source of information is, and also the fact that the remote alert has not been verified, and the alert reflects that in its wording, e.g., “according to a source” and without too many details.

In some settings, the fact that protection monitoring is carried out by local staff reduces the need for travel in and out of areas of heightened security risk. Sometimes, in conflict settings, if the army completely surrounds a community, they may have a monitor on the inside who can continue reporting, but it involves risk to local staff.

Key informants’ and focal points’ identities are never relayed in the protection monitoring. Their identities do not appear in any of these documents, e.g. – alerts, evaluations, reports. They use identification codes according to type of protection risk and no names appear in the reports. They never quote the person or the structure who/which gave the information, as they have to protect their identities. They always try to keep the team within the community, and have them be very discreet in the use of communication tools.

## 8.4 LACK OF COORDINATION

When there is strong and effective protection cluster leadership, this can facilitate a protection monitoring system working effectively. Unfortunately, in many cases, protection clusters lack capacity, with gaps in dedicated leadership. As a result, in many countries there is no coordination of protection monitoring.

For example, many interviewees in Yemen expressed concern that the protection cluster was lacking strategy, and that protection monitoring has never been high on its agenda, with little focus on analysis to see how to work on prevention and building the protection environment. There has been a lot of turnover and gaps in the leadership of the protection cluster and its subclusters. As a result, there is very limited coordination of protection monitoring activities in Yemen, and very limited harmonisation of the approach or of the tools (apart from the Rapid Protection Assessment tool), with different agencies using different methodologies which means that the data is not comparable. There is almost no sharing of information between protection cluster members. Because of the lack of resourcing of the protection cluster, it has not been in a position to facilitate joint analysis of the protection monitoring information or to use the information for advocacy. It was further raised by interviewees that the National Protection Cluster should pay more attention to the regional differences in Yemen and enable protection analysis in regional contexts.

NGO interviewees in Lebanon (in a non-cluster setting) were concerned about duplication on protection monitoring between agencies and thought that the Inter-Agency mechanism through the Protection Sector could drive coordination on this and set up a task force in Lebanon to reach agreement on harmonised tools and on joint analysis of information.



In DR Congo, interviewees highlighted the fact that there should be coordination and harmonisation of protection monitoring at the national level. But in fact, there are different practices observed in different provinces. Concerns were also expressed about the division of protection work by province, and protection work not looking beyond provincial borders, and thereby weakening the collective national advocacy messages that are needed on protection. Some good practices were reported at provincial levels, but several interviewees felt the need for a national protection monitoring system coordinated by the National Protection Cluster. However, concerns were also expressed by some that imposing a harmonised national system does bring with it the risk of inflexibility and lack of adaptation to the needs at provincial levels, and could be worse than what currently exists in some provinces.

## 8.5 LACK OF RESOURCES

Interviewees noted that protection monitoring is very resource-intensive and is mostly made up of staff costs, which makes it difficult to secure adequate funding. The lack of funding has a negative effect on the quality and the speed of the work that can be achieved – with limited staffing and the inability to cover all of the zones that need to be covered. Further, when there are gaps between contracts with a donor agency – often at the end of the calendar year – this results in breaks in staffing until the next contract is signed, meaning there is no coverage of protection monitoring. As noted by INTERSOS in DR Congo, in these circumstances: “The protection monitoring staffing reverts to zero while waiting for the new contract. Meanwhile the armed groups and the crisis don’t stop.”

Concerns were expressed about lack of communications equipment for the monitors and also for the community focal points. Even small-scale costs, such as phone credits for community focal points, are sometimes not available, making the passing of information impossible. Transport costs are often not available.

Aside from resourcing of protection monitoring staff, the lack of resources for responses to many of the issues raised in protection monitoring is a central problem.

# 9. MITIGATING AND ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

## 9.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND TRUST-BUILDING

Interviewees emphasised how important community engagement and trust-building is to overcoming difficulties related to protection monitoring, particularly those related to security and access issues, and they noted that this takes time to build. Without this, they would be blocked by the security situation for long periods of time. In DR Congo, INTERSOS noted that: “You have to gain the trust of people in order to open doors. INTERSOS visit the communities, they know the zone, they have very good relations.”

People in conflict-affected communities are often scared to give sensitive information. INTERSOS tries to address this by building relationships with the community over time, and by adhering strictly to confidentiality and emphasising and demonstrating to the community that confidentiality will always be adhered to. Community engagement and trust-building also assists INTERSOS in its work of verification and triangulation of information, and also in ensuring that they can achieve representativeness and inclusion of marginalised groups in the protection monitoring.

Some interviewees stated that they thought it would enhance community engagement further if there were more work on building two-way communication between communities and organisations conducting protection monitoring, and finding ways to communicate protection monitoring outcomes to the community. This could reduce suspicion if they understood better how the protection monitoring data is used.

## 9.2 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH NATIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Interviewees saw relationship-building with authorities and explaining protection monitoring to them and engaging them in the process as being key to successful protection monitoring. NGOs tended to expend a lot of energy on this, particularly at local level. Some interviewees called for more high-level HC and HCT engagement in explaining the importance of protection monitoring with national and local authorities.

In many settings, INTERSOS has seen national and local authorities become engaged in protection monitoring systems and in following up recommendations that came out of protection monitoring. In DR Congo INTERSOS has had good collaboration from representatives of local chiefs or authorities, as they have participated in the data collection. They often have meetings with authorities, and they are informed officially of their reports. In South Sudan INTERSOS discusses the protection monitoring information with the local authorities and discusses improvements needed as a result. This has led to, for example, local authorities advocating at capital-level for the importance of addressing returnees' needs.

### 9.2.1 CASE STUDY - ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON PROTECTION MONITORING: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

*In the Central African Republic (CAR), INTERSOS conducts protection monitoring through an approach that focuses on thematic community monitoring to measure the protection environment, including border monitoring. INTERSOS is also involved in ensuring the management and coordination of the services provided by the actors involved in the IDP sites, including Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM). Thus, the protection monitoring implemented through a mobile strategy, makes it possible to capture the different movements of populations (internal displacements, returns of formerly displaced persons, spontaneous repatriation of refugees from the neighbouring countries) in the intervention area. It also allows assessment of the protection needs posed by this displacement situation and to provide a response or referral.*

*INTER SOS has invested a lot of time in building relationships with local authorities and ensuring that they understand the objectives of protection monitoring. While taking into account data protection protocols, INTERSOS in the Central African Republic shares its protection monitoring reports with local authorities, such as prefects and mayors, in order to engage and include them, and to ensure their support to the INTERSOS protection monitoring work and follow-up of this work. For INTERSOS, this community strategy commits local authorities to facilitate work and access to affected communities, but it also allows the community to take ownership and actively participate in activities.*

*Sometimes INTERSOS receives information from the prefecture through community relays and/or community leaders about protection problems in an area, and INTERSOS is able to ensure follow-up by advocating on protection, for example with UNHCR and the Peacekeeping Force (MINUSCA). In addition, local authorities have responsibilities for case management and response. On INTERSOS forms, the authorities sign to confirm cases. In some places, the gendarmes have a division that works on gender-based violence and they refer cases to INTERSOS since they are trained for this purpose. INTERSOS ensures follow-up to the cases.*

## 9.3 ASSESSING THE LANDSCAPE PRIOR TO DECIDING ON PROTECTION MONITORING

*See section 6.1*

Sometimes only secondary data may be needed, or sometimes secondary data is all that can be obtained, due to security or other issues. In such cases, the protection monitoring system is how these secondary sources are systematised, potentially relying on information that others are gathering, e.g. on protection of civilians, and proxy indicators.

## 9.4 JOINT PROTECTION MONITORING SYSTEM DESIGN

*See sections 6 and 8.2*

There are some current promising projects relating to joint protection monitoring system design that could serve as examples in other countries or regions.

Project 21 is an example of regional harmonisation of a protection monitoring system. In 2020 UNHCR and Danish Refugee Council initiated this process in central Sahel, aiming for a harmonised framework and tools for regular protection monitoring, given that it was impossible to get protection information/data based on the same type of questions and the same system at regional level. Protection information was skewed by the number of staff available at different times, and the thematic interests of the staff, rather than the situation itself.

The pilot phase established a monitoring and follow-up system to enable the collection and analysis of key protection data. Each protection cluster agreed to confirm their responsibility to set up a working group, to bring coherence among different protection monitoring systems among stakeholders, not only UNHCR and its implementing partners, but also other NGOs conducting protection monitoring. The aim was to have a system to measure trends and focus on protection risk analysis. Two sets of questions were developed – one for key informant interviews and one for households.

Following the pilot phase, the Project 21 coordination team adapted the tools and methodology for extension of the project beyond the Central Sahel to other countries in West and Central Africa. Between October and December 2020, a qualitative review was conducted during which protection actors, coordinators, and members of protection activities coordination groups, as well as donors, provided inputs and recommendations aimed at improving the current system.

The initial strategic objectives of Project 21 were to:

- Generate coherent analysis (qualitative and quantitative) of the protection situation at the regional level in order to understand and document the main needs, gaps, and risks;
- Support protection actors on strategic planning and programming based on evidence and shared analysis for better operational and cross-border coordination;
- Contribute to the mobilisation of resources for the protection response in the Sahel;
- Promote joint advocacy for better regional and global awareness of the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel to better take into account the protection needs of displaced populations and host communities during planning and resources allocation exercises by all stakeholders operating in the Sahel;
- Contribute to the regional inter-agency sectoral analysis<sup>50</sup>.

The system is still fairly new, and its first report covered the period May – November 2020<sup>51</sup>. The advantage of the system is that it captures cross-border and regional dynamics, improves the protection risk analysis, and enables a harmonised narrative on protection risks.

The initial results from Project 21 are promising. Some countries have pushed the agenda, with harmonisation of data and reducing duplication. But inevitably in some others Project 21 itself has acted as a duplication of their system.

The Somalia Protection Monitoring System was piloted by DRC and UNHCR in 2019 and is an area-based, trends monitoring system that seeks to provide evidence for advocacy, analysis for adaptive humanitarian programming, as well as the identification of gaps in protection knowledge and response. The system has rolled out joint analysis workshops that seek to improve humanitarian responders' collective understanding of the protection trends and risks in Somalia and seek common solutions and advocacy messaging.

*See also the case study in section 6.7.1 on harmonisation of the protection management system in Afghanistan.*

## NOTES

<sup>50</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/project-21-regional-protection-monitoring-central-sahel-burkina-faso-mali-and>

<sup>51</sup> [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/projet\\_21\\_-\\_analyse\\_semestriel\\_1\\_mai\\_-\\_novembre\\_2020.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/projet_21_-_analyse_semestriel_1_mai_-_novembre_2020.pdf)

## 10. METHODOLOGY

This research and the resulting report were undertaken in September and October 2021 by an independent consultant contracted by INTERSON, Melanie Teff. She undertook a desk review of INTERSON’s protection monitoring materials and other international resources on protection monitoring. Melanie Teff and another independent consultant, Peter Orr, undertook 43 key informant interviews – with INTERSON protection staff working in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen, as well as with Protection Cluster co-leads, and with staff of the Danish Refugee Council, ECHO, Global Protection Cluster, International Rescue Committee, Nigeria INGO Forum, Norwegian Refugee Council, and UNHCR. The report was drafted by Melanie Teff, and was reviewed by INTERSON Heads of Mission in the countries covered, and by INTERSON Geneva Representative and Policy Advisor, and INTERSON Protection Unit.



Yemen



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