Chapter 2
Skills

A skill is a **talent or ability that is acquired and developed through training or experience.** Refining a skill and adapting it to an ever changing humanitarian operation can often be difficult. While various learning opportunities and courses can be useful in developing and refining some of these skills, the right attitude and approach, a good supervisor and a supportive environment also help.

1. Analysis and problem-solving

Analysis refers to a detailed study of an issue in order to find new information or reach a better understanding. Situational analysis is one type of analysis undertaken by humanitarian agencies. Analysis is also necessary when monitoring human rights and IDP operations, planning a negotiation or when designing a protection intervention. **Problem-solving** is often a natural consequence of analysis and an essential aspect of every humanitarian worker's function *(see Part III.2)*.

Approaches to effective analysis and problem-solving

- **Collect Data:** Collecting relevant information from a variety of sources and compiling it in a systematic manner is the first step to proper analysis and problem-solving. Sources can be **primary sources** (including first-hand accounts, such as interviews with persons of concern or government officials, policy documents and/or legislation) or **secondary sources** (which can include the media, human rights reports, and reports by other humanitarian agencies).

  Since the quality and quantity of data collected affects the analysis, the data has to be credible, relevant, sufficient and verifiable. From the outset, attention must be paid to the methodology of information gathering, the ethics of interviewing, confidentiality of information, and the safety of the interlocutors and staff. It is also useful to determine how the data will be processed before collecting it, and to ensure that humanitarian agencies do not duplicate efforts when collecting data.

- **Think critically:** Critical thinking is the ability to interpret and evaluate information, observations and arguments with the aim of determining what to believe and what action to take. Critical thinking ensures that the data collected is properly interpreted so that the conclusions reached most accurately reflect the reality of the situation and the actions agreed are the most appropriate.
- **Be solutions-oriented:** Humanitarian workers undertake analyses with the view of responding appropriately to a problem. This requires that they be creative and think of possible solutions to problems at all times. Being solutions-oriented is also an important leadership quality. Pre-conceived notions, lack of effective analyses as well as unclear and orthodox thinking often results in ineffective solutions.

2. Communication

Communication is the basis of all our work and is used extensively during interviews, assessments, negotiations, when coordinating or demonstrating leadership, advocating for a position, and building trust with persons of concern, the authorities and humanitarian partners. Refining our communication skills is therefore of vital importance.

Approaches to effective communication

There are various types of communication, including active listening, oral, non-verbal, written and visual communication. The guide below should be read bearing in mind:

- **The cultural context:** Different cultures and communities frequently communicate differently. To avoid misunderstandings, it is important to keep an open mind and spend time understanding how people communicate in their culture and the meaning of specific words, expressions, mannerisms, tones and approaches.
- **Gender differences:** Working with men and women of different ages and in various cultures might require different approaches and different ways of speaking.
- **Age differences:** A child's developmental stage must be considered when working with children. Effective and ethical communication with children requires age-appropriate communication skills and methodologies.

> **Note:** Avoid intimidating, condescending or otherwise inappropriate communication styles. Special care must be taken when working with children or persons with specific concerns, including victims/survivors of torture or sexual violence. A specialist may be required for highly sensitive cases.

2.1 Active Listening	**What is it and why is it important?** Active listening refers to the ability to listen and understand people without any pre-conceived notions. Active listening helps in obtaining information, broadening our horizons, and building trust with, and respect for, other people. It can also help in "reading between the lines." Listening does not indicate that you necessarily agree with the person; rather, it shows that you understand, and are willing to consider, what the person is saying. **Barriers to active listening** The lack of interest in a subject, pre-conceived notions about an issue or subject, focusing on the speaker rather than the issue, physical distractions, time constraints and cultural differences, beliefs and attitudes are some reasons why we don't listen actively. This is demonstrated by negative body language, by a willingness to be distracted by other people or things, and/or by not responding appropriately. **Tips for active listening** • Be physically attentive: Face the speaker, nod, maintain eye contact, if appropriate, and maintain an open posture (for example, avoid crossing arms). Do not be distracted by the environment. • Remain interested yet neutral in the discussion to let the speaker feel more relaxed. • Understand what is being said, including how it is being said, what is *not* being said, the tone of voice, and the emotions expressed by the speaker. • Ask open questions and seek clarifications when necessary. Rephrase what the speaker says occasionally to clarify your own understanding of what was said. • Do not interrupt or express your views until the speaker has completed his/her point.
2.2 Oral communication	**Why is it important?** Oral communication refers not only to **what** is being said, but also **how** it is being said (paralanguage). It is important to ensure that oral communication is effective largely because the listening and retention capacity of most recipients is extremely limited. **Barriers to oral communication** Speaking to people about issues in which they have no interest, not addressing their primary concerns, not getting to the point, culturally different approaches to conversations, the tone of voice or rate of speech, and simple language barriers may all adversely affect oral communication.

	Tips for effective oral communication • Determine the audience that you are speaking to. Ensure that what is said is appropriate to the environment (work or pleasure), culturally appropriate, relevant and spoken in a language that the audience understands. • Encourage a discussion rather than a speech (unless a speech is being delivered), and ensure that active listening and proper body language is part of every discussion. **Think before speaking. If necessary, write down what you would like to say.** • Speak on issues with which you are comfortable. Admit you do not know something or will check something to ensure that what you say is credible. • Speaking clearly and in short sentences helps communicate complex ideas. Ensure that key messages, such as action points and main findings, are highlighted in a presentation. Summarize the main points at the beginning or end of a discussion. • Determine what feelings you would like to communicate by controlling the tone, volume and speed of what is said. Pauses, silences and emphasis on specific words also can communicate a feeling.
2.3 Non-verbal communication	**What is it and why is it important?** Non-verbal communication includes body language and facial expressions that reveal what a person feels or would like to say, but cannot or prefers not to. Is helps to convey messages and underscore what is being said, but can also be misinterpreted, for instance owing to cultural or linguistic differences. **Barriers to non-verbal communication** Body language may be interpreted differently in different cultures. For instance, looking a person in the eyes can be interpreted as a sign of honesty, but also hostility, depending on the context. Individuals who are particularly expressive or emotional may inadvertently display their feelings when it might not be appropriate to do so. **Tips for effective non-verbal communication** • Be aware of natural facial expressions and body expressions that may be misinterpreted. • Understand cultural differences that may be expressed through non-verbal communication. • When listening, adopt a posture that ensures that you are seen to be listening. Maintain a neutral face when appropriate. • Practice in teams, with other colleagues and friends, or film each other to see how you perform. Practice in front of a mirror to ensure that your body language communicates the same message as what is being said, including *how* it is said, through tone and emphasis.
2.4 Written communication	**What is it and why is it important?** Unlike oral or non-verbal communication, written communication is more permanent and cannot be retracted with ease. It is thus the most official manner of communication at work. Indeed, verbal agreements are often written down to mitigate the possibility of misunderstandings in the future. Written communication also provides fewer opportunities for error or mistakes. **Barriers to written communication** E-mails and letters cannot communicate a tone or feeling as easily as speaking. Written messages can sound overly formal, be circulated to a wider audience than initially anticipated, and be misinterpreted or misunderstood, in particular in a multi-cultural environment where people have different working language skills. Details such as spelling, punctuation and grammar can also affect the reader.

Tips for effective written communication

- Write keeping the primary audience in mind at all times. To the extent possible, avoid writing for a variety of audiences in the same communication.
- Use short and simple sentences and avoid complex words or long paragraphs (6-8 lines maximum). Remember to date the document and include filing or reference numbers if needed.
- Explain, at the beginning, what a letter or memoranda is about, how it concerns the reader and what is being requested of him/her. This can be followed by more detailed background information.
- Summarize the main findings/recommendations/highlights of reports and other longer documents at the beginning to ensure that the main messages are effectively communicated to the reader.
- Pay attention to detail and ensure that the document does not transmit inaccurate or inappropriate tone to the reader: poor choice of words, bad grammar and misspellings reflect badly on the writer. Always proofread a document before it is shared publicly. It can sometimes help to read the document again, after a short break, to verify its accuracy and content, or ask a colleague to review it.
- Ensure that official letters and communications are formal in vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and tone at all times.

The approach to a situation will determine the type of communication used. For example:

Advocacy	Inquiry
Where we express our own perspective, opinions and reasoning more frequently and share what we think. • State assumptions • Explain your reasoning • Describe the context • Provide examples • Invite testing of your assertions • Reveal where you are least clear or least sure of your assumptions • Refrain from being defensive ***Examples:*** *"Here's what I think, and this is how I got to this conclusion…"* *"I assumed that…"* *"Does my thinking make sense to you?"* *"Is there anything that I said that does not make sense?"* *"I'm unclear about this aspect and maybe you can help me think this through."*	**Where we seek to understand fully the perspective, opinions and reasoning of others and look into what we do not know yet.** • Gently probe to understand • Draw out other people's reasoning • Explain the reason for inquiring • Ask for examples • Check your understanding • Listen with an open mind • Refrain from preparing to destroy the other person's agenda or promote a separate own agenda ***Examples:*** *"What is it that leads you to say that?"* *"What are you basing your conclusions on?"* *"Can you help me understand your thinking here?"* *"Can you provide me with an example of …?"* *Have I correctly understood you when you say….?"*

3. Negotiations

A negotiation is a discussion between two or more parties with the aim of reaching an agreement on specific issues. It is a process through which you determine what you want and how you will achieve it, and through which you learn what the other party wants and how to satisfy them enough to reach an agreement.

Negotiations take place several times a day in a humanitarian operation among a variety of actors: Governments, civil society, the IDP and affected communities, humanitarian agencies and non-State actors. Humanitarian agencies regularly negotiate on issues as diverse as gaining physical access to displaced persons in situations of armed conflict – also known as "humanitarian negotiations" *(see Part IV.2)* – ensuring that communities send girls to schools, or determining how to raise public awareness about gender-based violence.

Myths and misconceptions regarding negotiations:

a. **Negotiation is a natural ability:** ***False!*** While some people are able to demonstrate negotiating skills better than others, most negotiators have developed their skills through learning and experience.

b. **Experience is enough:** ***False!*** Many people keep making the same mistakes despite negotiating frequently. Analyzing and learning from experience take a lot of effort, but it is essential. A good mentor, courses and books on negotiation can also help.

c. **Good negotiators often improvise:** ***False!*** Successful negotiations require good preparation that anticipates various scenarios and factor in some degree of flexibility. Planning a negotiation is often the most critical, yet underrated, phase of any negotiation process. Poor planning is often cited as the most common reason for a failed negotiation.

d. **Negotiators rely on intuition:** ***False!*** Critical to a good negotiation is the ability to understand yourself and the people you are negotiating with, and to respond to their concerns.

Simple negotiations can involve two individuals discussing an issue face-to-face and reaching an agreement in a single meeting. More complex negotiations, such as those that precede peace agreements, may require a phased approach, detailed preparations and a series of discussions (face-to-face, exchange of letters and/or phone calls) over a period of time among a range of parties representing a variety of interests. Despite the varied nature of negotiations, there are some common approaches that may help reach a successful outcome:

Approaches to effective negotiations

3.1. Prepare: Preparing for a negotiation is crucial. Steps include:

- **Understand the issue:** Understand the issue and how best to achieve your objective. This will help determine whether a negotiation is needed, whether the issue at hand is negotiable, and, if so, what needs to be negotiated, how and with whom.
- **Establish a "bottom line":** Decide on what issues you are not willing to compromise (the "bottom line"). The human rights standards and principles of humanitarianism that form the basis for our work, such as neutrality, must not be compromised and should thus form the broad "bottom line" of any negotiation.
- **Decide on a BATNA:** "The best alternative to a negotiated agreement" (or BATNA) refers to the action that needs to be taken if the negotiation will not succeed in meeting the bottom line. It not only provides a safety-net but, when carefully planned, can also be used as leverage in a negotiation. For example, if a negotiation to access IDP areas has failed been denied, it may be necessary to make members of the international community aware of this problem; the other party may wish to avoid this. This must be carefully planned, as the tactic can backfire if it is perceived as a threat by the counterpart.
- **Determine your representative, counterpart and communication channel:** The parties involved in the negotiation should have a stake in the issue or be legitimate representatives of those that do. Respect government and agency protocol at all times. When necessary, work through or with **intermediaries**, such as national NGOs or former government officials, who may have better access and credibility with the counterparts. The Humanitarian Coordinator may help in resolving issues of a sensitive

nature and can represent organisations that wish to address common concerns (collective bargaining). Determine what channels of communication will be used, whether face-to-face meetings, an exchange of letters or both.

- **Understand the other perspectives:** Analyze, understand and **anticipate the views** of the other parties prior to the negotiation. A proper understanding of other parties is often achieved through direct contact over time. Focus on **common areas of concern** and understand how **differences** can be narrowed or eliminated.
- **Understand power relations:** Power relations are often determined by the bargaining power of each party to a negotiation. Humanitarian actors can be perceived to be in a weaker position than government counterparts, IDP communities and even non-State actors if they do not have anything to offer that is of interest to the other party. Being "right" or doing "the right thing" will not necessarily place a party in a strong negotiating position. When in a weaker position, it might be helpful to resort to **collective negotiations**, which are undertaken by a group of agencies rather than individual agencies. Do not abuse a situation in which you are in a stronger position, as that might undermine your ability to establish trust and long-term relationships.
- **The approach:** Determine whether the negotiation approach will be **soft** (between parties that trust each other), **hard** (in adversarial situations), or **principled** (focusing on the issues rather than the people).
- **The time and location:** Select a location and time where the parties are not distracted by other issues. Negotiations should be reasonably time-bound so that the parties do not loose track of their objective. It also places some pressure on parties to reach an agreement.

3.2. Communicate effectively

Follow up: Negotiations often require that parties either implement a final agreement or undertake various activities in preparation for the next meeting. These activities and preparations should be undertaken in a timely manner to maintain credibility and ensure that the agreement is not breached by any party for lack of follow-up. Provide feedback on these follow-up actions to all parties to keep the negotiated agreement intact and continue to build trust between the parties.

Prepare for a breakdown of negotiations: In the event of a breakdown of negotiations, you should not only analyze why the negotiation was unsuccessful, but also take the next steps to achieve your objective through a BATNA. Given the issues at stake, humanitarian workers may find that it is imperative to return to the negotiating table to resolve all outstanding issues and reach a final agreement.

Improvised negotiations may occur during a security incident, such as an unexpected roadblock or an ambush. These are not discussed in this chapter. It is best to refer to security guidelines for information on these kinds of negotiations.

Checklist for effective negotiations

a) Pre-negotiations

Issue	Activity	Check
1. The Issue	**There is a clear reason why a negotiation is necessary on a particular issue.** ***Tips:*** • Review all documentation relevant to the issue. Speak to persons who may be more familiar with the issue. Consider how the matter might have been addressed on other occasions, including success and failures.	[ ]

2. My Position	**The objectives, bottom-line and BATNA have been prepared.** **Tips:** • Ensure that your objective is realistic and can be accepted by all parties. • Be willing to consider options that may be tabled by other parties. • Determine what issues cannot be compromised ("bottom-line") • Prepare a BATNA and use it to measure the success of the negotiation, as leverage during the negotiation, and/or to determine the next steps if the negotiation fails. • Consider collective bargaining on behalf of other parties as well if it strengthens your position and does not adversely affect the outcome.	[ ]
3. The Parties	**The parties to the negotiation have been determined.** **Tips:** • The persons who will be negotiating are authorized to act on behalf of the agency, either as a messenger or as a decision-maker. • Consider using an intermediary before or during the negotiation if he/she is better placed to further my position or better understand the other party's position. • Complex negotiations may involve a range of individuals and/or parties, and may require the intervention of the Humanitarian Coordinator.	[ ]
4. Their Position	**The other parties/concerns have been anticipated.** **Tips:** • Determine the possible common areas of interest shared by all parties prior to the negotiation. • Understand the potential differences among all parties prior to the negotiation, understand the reasoning behind them and determine how best to bridge these differences.	[ ]
5. Power Relations	**The power relations between the parties and the source of this authority are understood.** **Tips:** Sources of power can vary and must be understood: • Organizational power refers to the authority one has to represent a well-respected or credible organization. • Reward power relates to what an agency or individual can provide the other party. Financial resources, food, shelter and other items that humanitarian agencies can provide can serve as sources of power. • Coercive power relates to the ability of a party to levy sanctions, bring shame or withdraw support, such as when a humanitarian agency informs the international community that it is being denied access. • Information power is essential for anticipating and addressing the other party's interests with the aim of reaching an agreement. This power is often denied to humanitarian agencies by preventing them from accessing displaced persons. Humanitarian agencies that prepare their BATNA effectively can often overcome this obstacle. • Legitimate power is the authority vested in a person by the organization or society to represent its interests. • Referent power refers to the power an individual derives from his/her community due to the respect, admiration or prestige s/he enjoys with them. Natural leaders in a community often possess this power and are in a stronger position to represent their community. • Expert power is derived from a special knowledge, skill or expertise that others may not possess.	[ ]

	• Connection power refers to the perception or reality that an individual is well known and can influence other allies. Intermediaries to a negotiation often possess this power. • Avoid abusing a strong position as it can undermine trust and a long-term relationship.	
6. The Approach	**The approach to use during the negotiation has been determined (hard, soft, and principled).** **Tips:** • A **soft approach** is often used between those who work well together and trust each other. The goal is to reach an agreement, and concessions are made on both sides to cultivate the relationship. Both parties are fully transparent and conflict is generally avoided. • A **hard approach** is often adapted between adversaries where one party wins at the other's expense. There is often no trust between the parties. This approach does not strengthen long-term relations and might even place IDPs at risk. This is not an approach that humanitarian workers are encouraged to use with regard to protection issues, but it might be necessary in extreme cases. • A **principled approach** is used when all parties want to focus on the issue and solve a problem, rather than take opposing positions. Parties do not focus on the people but on the issue at hand, try to understand all positions, and find common ground. This helps to develop a trusting and long-term relationship among parties and identify solutions. Both parties must agree to use this approach, which doesn't always happen. Over time, however, it might be possible for one party who remains principled to gain the trust of another party and use this approach in subsequent negotiations.	[ ]
7. Location and Time	**The location and time suits all parties and will not adversely affect the negotiations.** **Tips:** • Ensure that the location and time is convenient to all parties and that it does not distract them from the issues at hand. • An agreement may not always be forthcoming at the first meeting; other interactions might be necessary.	[ ]

b) During Negotiations

Issue	Activity	Check
8. Communication	**Appropriate communication skills, especially listening skills, are used to ensure that the position of the other parties is better understood and that the issue at hand is appropriately addressed.** **Tips:** • See section on communication skills.	[ ]
9. Building Trust	**Efforts have been made to build trust with the other parties involved.** **Tips:** • Share information, be transparent with all parties, follow-up on issues you are responsible for, and remain committed to finding a solution that is acceptable to all parties.	[ ]

10. The Issue and Positions	**The positions of the other parties are clearly understood during the negotiations.** **Tips** During difficult negotiations, it is important to look out for and address specific approaches. In particular: • **Intimidating environment:** Negotiators can create an intimidating environment, either through the physical layout of the room or by the tone and nature of their comments. Acting confidently or even asking for a break may help dispel that atmosphere. • **"Good-guy/bad-guy" routine:** At times, a negotiator could try to get an agreement by convincing his/her counterparts that he/she is "easier" to deal with than her/his colleagues. It might be best to confront the person on this issue with the aim of agreeing to focus on the issue and its merits. • **Threats and anger:** When people threaten others or display their anger, it can sometimes force others to compromise their position. This is best countered by either ignoring the anger or by defusing the situation by taking a break or talking to the person about what is really upsetting him/her. • **"Take it or leave it":** There may be pressure to accept what is offered or nothing at all. This can be resolved by testing their commitment, temporarily breaking off negotiations, appealing to a sense of fairness and comparing their offer to the BATNA. • **Claiming limited authority:** The negotiator may claim that he/she has limited power to change the situation. This can be resolved by speaking directly to the decision-maker or treating the negotiator as a messenger. • **Forcing deadlines (real or artificial):** While negotiating within a limited period of time is useful, it can sometimes be forced and artificial. This can be addressed by questioning the reasoning behind the deadline and proposing alternative deadlines. If the deadline is real, determine whether the negotiation will bring any benefits within the limited time period.	[ ]

c) Post-negotiations

Issue	Activity	Check
13. Follow-up	**Follow up on issues that have been agreed upon.** **Tips:** • Remain in contact with all parties and provide updates on the progress • If the negotiation has failed, follow up on the fall-back options (BATNA). • Analyze why the negotiation has succeeded or failed to understand how to improve subsequent negotiations.	[ ]

4. Leadership

Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the team in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. Leadership is also required at an inter-agency level in humanitarian operations to ensure that agencies and cluster members coordinate efficiently to address the concerns of IDPs and other affected communities.

While a manager or supervisor is entrusted with the authority to accomplish certain tasks and objectives in the organization, leadership can be exercised from any position in an organization by using the right skills and attitudes. Like other skills and attitudes, they can be developed and enhanced with experience and training.

Approaches to effective leadership

- **Know your leadership style:** A key attitude required of all humanitarian workers is that of self-awareness (*see Chapter 1, Attitudes, above*). Being aware of your personal leadership style will help improve it.

Leadership styles

There are six basic leadership styles. Many can be used simultaneously:

- **Coercive:** The leader demands immediate compliance ("Do what I tell you"). The leader is driven to achieve, has initiative and wants to remain in control. This leadership style is occasionally suitable in a crisis to kick start or to fix a problem, but generally has adverse effects on the atmosphere.
- **Authoritative:** The leader mobilizes people towards a vision ("Come with me"). The leader is self confident, empathetic and a catalyst for change. This is suitable when change and a new vision are required. It has a mostly positive effect on the atmosphere.
- **Pace-setting:** The leader sets high standards for performance ("Do as I do, now"). The leader is conscientious, driven and takes initiative. This style is helpful in getting quick results from a highly motivated and competent team, but can result in a negative atmosphere.
- **Affiliative:** The leader creates harmony and builds emotional bonds ("People come first"). The leader is empathetic, builds relationships and is an excellent communicator. This is a suitable style when trying to build teams and motivate people during stressful times. It has a positive effect on the atmosphere.
- **Democratic:** The leader forges consensus through participation ("What do you think?). The manager is good at building partnerships and teams and is a good communicator. This approach is most useful to build consensus among staff. It frequent results in a positive atmosphere.
- **Coaching:** The leader aims to develop people for the future ("Try this"). The leader is empathetic, self aware and concerned about others. This is a useful style when helping staff improve performance and strengths. This often creates a positive atmosphere.

- **Know your team:** Be empathetic and aware of the strengths and weaknesses of individuals working with you and use these strengths to support the humanitarian operation. Be aware of the responsibilities of individuals and understand how they can best work together. Try to develop a team whose members can complement each other's skills and personalities rather than duplicate them.
- **Support your team:** Look out for the personal and professional **well-being** of colleagues, help them **develop positive character traits** and **keep the team informed** of various developments so that they have a sense of ownership. This means that a leader must invest considerable time and effort to support a team, have **excellent communication skills**, and ensure that all members of the team are aware of what needs to be done and how. Building a team can often be a challenge and occasionally may require regular **team-building activities** or **training** before embarking on a project.
- **Be responsible and take responsibility:** Find ways to improve the way your organization works. Do not blame others for failures; rather, try to solve the problem. A leader needs to take **sound and timely decisions** in order to move ahead at work, rather than shift responsibility, and **prioritize activities** when the workload exceeds the financial and human resources available.

- **Be technically proficient:** Be aware of the technical aspects of the work that needs to be undertaken, the mandates of your agency and other agencies and governments, and the work of civil society. It facilitates effective coordination within the team and with partners.
- **Manage resources effectively:** Proper allocation and prioritization of often limited resources is important. Understanding and using additional resources effectively, such as additional funding or staff, technical expertise and support, will benefit the agency and the broader humanitarian community on the ground.

5. Coordination

Humanitarian coordination is "the systematic use of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include strategic planning, gathering data and managing information, mobilizing resources and ensuring accountability, orchestrating a functional division of labour, negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities and providing leadership.

5.1 Approaches to effective coordination

- **Determine what needs coordination:** It is not necessary to set up a sophisticated coordination mechanism when individuals and agencies are working well together. However, given the complexities of humanitarian operations, especially on protection issues, coordination is often required to develop a common understanding and response to an operation. Coordination involves sharing assessments and other information, agreeing upon and using common standards, tools and policies, ensuring that protection is mainstreamed in other clusters/sectors, prioritizing activities and allocating resources to further these priorities, reducing or eliminating overlaps in activities, representing a common position to governments, the media or other parties, and addressing cross-cutting issues, such as staff security.
- **Determine who needs to coordinate:** Coordination needs to take place within agencies, between agencies, and with governments, civil society and the IDPs themselves. All stakeholders should be included. In situations where there are a number of groups representing similar positions, representatives of those groups can meet, rather than every stakeholder. For example, inter-cluster coordination can take place primarily through the cluster leads. However, this does not preclude members of each cluster from working together on specific issues.
- **Determine coordination mechanism:** Coordination mechanisms may be formal, such as in a cluster-coordination mechanism, or informal, such as *ad hoc* communication between parties when necessary. The concerned parties might communicate through meetings, telephone conversations, e-mail exchanges or during joint activities. Any coordination mechanism should be agreed jointly by the parties involved.

  In some cases, existing coordination mechanisms might not be effective or productive, or they might address issues that are not a priority. These may require a simple **realignment of the existing mechanisms**, not a new layer of coordination.

  The best coordination mechanisms are those that **do not place significant time, human or other resource constraints** on the various agencies or individuals. This is particularly important for smaller agencies that may not be able to attend meetings or exchange e-mails regularly.
- **Coordinate, do not control:** A designated coordinator is not always necessary; various parties can agree to work together and build consensus. In some situations, especially in complex emergencies, where a specific coordinator is designated, he/she helps facilitate a process that ensures that various parties work together to achieve a common

objective. In such situations, a coordinator may also be authorized to take certain decisions on behalf of a group or represent the interest of the group with others. The coordinator needs to have negotiation, meeting-management and leadership skills; must remain neutral, objective and impartial; build consensus rather than dictate, and provide support to the various parties working together.

- **Demonstrate the value of coordination:** Frequently, stakeholders will only coordinate with each other if there is a tangible benefit in doing so. Some benefits of coordination include streamlining operations; raising and sharing human and financial resources; sharing information; raising the public profile of an agency; reducing workloads; resolving outstanding problems that an agency might not be able to address alone, and providing an umbrella under which smaller agencies can operate safely.

5.2 Checklist for effective coordination

1. The Need	**Better coordination is needed in order to improve the operation.** **Tips:** • Protection coordination mechanisms are essential in complex emergencies. • The institutional framework is outlined in Part I.3 of this Handbook.	[ ]
2. The Purpose	**The purpose and terms of reference for the coordination mechanism are agreed upon by the protection agencies and other partners.** **Tips:** Activities that often require coordination include: • developing a collective protection response, including through joint assessments, planning, and programming; • agreeing on common standards, tools and policies and sharing of information; • ensuring that protection is mainstreamed in other clusters/sectors • raising and channelling funds together; • sharing human, financial and other resources (office space, Internet access, vehicles) where necessary; • prioritizing activities, reducing overlaps and ensuring that gaps are filled in a timely and appropriate manner; • representing a common position to governments, the media or other parties; • addressing cross-cutting issues, such as staff security.	[ ]
3. The Parties	**Key humanitarian partners that will participate have been identified.** **The potential role and participation of the government has been defined.** **The potential role and participation of representatives of civil society, including IDPs and other affected communities, has been determined.** **Tips:** The government, UN agencies, international and national NGOs and other international agencies, such as ICRC and IOM, frequently need to work together. • Obtain contact details of key UN and NGO partners from the country office or from OCHA, which in emergencies may have the most recent contact list. • Members of **other clusters/sectors** should be encouraged to participate in protection-related activities.	[ ]

	• The participation of **representatives of civil society**, including organizations of IDPs and other affected communities, can be valuable and should be considered, weighing the potential benefits against the risk they may face. The representatives should include both men and women and reflect a cross-section of the community. Participatory assessment and planning processes should be used in developing and implementing a protection strategy and other activities • **The potential role and participation of the government** may be best determined after the protection mechanism is formed and its objectives have been agreed upon, and in consultation with the Humanitarian Coordinator. • Different coordination structures may be necessary in different regions of a country or for different thematic issues. Care must be taken to avoid overlaps.	
4. The Structure	**An existing coordination structure is enhanced / A new coordination mechanism has been established.** **Tips:** • Ensure that the coordination structure is as simple as possible. • Ensure that all parties have agreed upon the **structure**, **membership**, **scope** and **function** of the coordination mechanism. The agreement should be outlined in the terms of reference, which should broadly be in line with the generic terms of reference agreed upon by the IASC (see Part I.3). These can be revised regularly to suit the requirements of the operation. • The institutional framework and the different coordination structures, including the cluster approach, are discussed in Part I.3 of this handbook. • Guidelines and tools agreed upon by the IASC and other fora should be used and implemented (which will also obviate the need to develop new tools and will ensure standardization).	[ ]
5. The Coordinator	**An appropriate and effective coordinator/facilitator has been identified.** **Tips:** • An organization can take responsibility for the coordination of protection activities in an operation but must have the capacity to do so. If need be, an individual should be designated to lead this process. • The coordinating organization must be prepared to coordinate activities beyond those stated in its mandate. For instance, UNICEF will need to address issues beyond child protection and UNHCR issues beyond refugee/IDP protection. • Avoid changing the facilitator to ensure consistency in the operation. • The coordinator should have knowledge and understanding of protection and human rights. Knowledge of the local language is also useful. The profile and job description of a cluster coordinator is noted in Part 1.3 below. It can be used for non-cluster operations as well. **Tips for coordinator:** • Make yourself available to the partners and provide guidance when required. • Be familiar with the mandate, expertise and experience of different partners, understand their concerns and determine how they can best be addressed.	[ ]

	• Have a clear work plan, terms of reference and ground rules to ensure that the coordination mechanism is used effectively. • Encourage and support joint activities, such as assessments, planning and implementation. • Be inclusive and try building a team whose members support and complement each other's work. Reach out and create links with other sectors/clusters • Be credible by demonstrating commitment, professionalism, sound technical knowledge and understanding of the situation. • Acknowledge the value and contribution of all parties and ensure they can all contribute to and benefit from joint activities.
6. The outcome	**6. With coordination, humanitarian agencies are more effective.** [ ] **Tips:** • Continually and jointly evaluate the manner in which coordination is taking place to determine how it can produce more effective results. Determine how it can be simplified, and, where necessary, change the terms of reference, manner of working and division of responsibilities among the members.

6. Facilitating Meetings

If managed well, meetings can be a useful tool to ensure that protection activities are well coordinated. If poorly managed, meetings waste time and undermine the credibility of a protection operation.

6.1 Approaches to organizing and facilitating a meeting

- **Meet for a purpose:** Meetings require a significant investment of time and effort from both the facilitator and participants and should only be convened if and when needed. Instead of convening a large meeting, you can use e-mail correspondence, phone calls or even smaller meetings with partners that have an interest in a particular matter.
- **Prepare, Prepare, Prepare:** To ensure maximum results, all participants should prepare for the meeting. Providing relevant information to participants in a timely manner, outlining what is expected of them, preparing for contingencies, such as having translations and copies of background documents available, are some ways to prepare for a meeting.
- **Keep it short and simple:** Meetings do not have to be lengthy to be useful. The facilitator should set the tone and pace of the meeting and ensure that participants remain focused on the issues at hand. Seek agreement on ground rules to ensure meetings run smoothly.
- **Facilitate rather than dictate:** A facilitator (derived from the Latin term *facere*, which means "to do" or "to make easy") should create an environment that allows participants to work on an equal basis and take joint ownership. Encouraging participation, listening actively, focusing on common ground rather than differences, summarizing long and complex discussions, remaining neutral (see below), and taking decisions when necessary are some essential skills of a facilitator. The facilitator can often contribute the most by speaking the least.
- **Remain neutral:** A facilitator may need to remain neutral during coordination meetings, especially as the facilitating agency will need to address issues beyond the mandate and operational capacity of that specific agency. For example, if UNICEF is facilitating a meeting, it will need to ensure that other issues besides child protection are equally addressed.

- **Address differences:** Differences in opinion can be resolved by remaining neutral and addressing the issue on its merits rather than personalizing them. Some issues may require bilateral discussions or a series of meetings to reach a common understanding.
- **Address difficult group dynamics:** Difficulties may arise when some participants are overly vocal, repetitive, speak for a long time without focus, resist all suggestions and ideas, disrupt meetings through side conversations, or simply have difficulties in articulating their ideas. The facilitator can resolve many of these problems in a non-threatening manner by remaining neutral and adhering to pre-determined guidelines, such time-limits for each speaker or a particular topic. In extreme cases, the facilitator can discuss the matter with the participant before or after the meeting to address the issue.
- **Be inclusive:** Meetings provide a forum where diverse views can be presented and debated. Individuals whose opinions are different than those of the majority should not be excluded as they have a valuable contribution to make. In some cases, discussions may need to be translated. ICRC/IFRC observers should be welcomed as should coordinators of other sector/cluster working groups, given the cross-cutting nature of protection.
- **Build trust, build a team:** As the participants meet more regularly, they should be able to forge trust and create effective working mechanisms. The facilitator can be a catalyst in this process by remaining neutral and facilitating dialogue among partners with diverse viewpoints.
- **Follow-up to meetings:** A meeting is not an end in itself; rather, it provides the basis for taking action. It is essential to summarize the action points agreed upon (who is responsible for doing what and by when) and, when necessary, work with participants to achieve their objectives. This also helps make subsequent meetings more productive and focused.

6.2 Checklist for facilitating meetings

Time	Issue	Check
1. Pre-meeting	**Invitation to attend the meeting** A meeting invitation is sent out in a timely manner to all relevant parties. **Tips:** • Have a clear and relevant objective and expected outcome for the meeting. Holding a meeting must never be an end in itself. In emergencies, OCHA often has the most updated contact list for humanitarian actors. • All correspondence should be clearly and consistently marked in the "subject" line of an e-mail to ensure effective follow-up by all participants. • The meeting invitation can include the following issues: – Information about the **purpose** of the meeting; – **Who** should attend, **why** and **what** is expected of them; – The **date**, **time**, **duration** and **location** of the meeting (see 2 below); – A tentative **agenda** (see 6 below); – Any necessary **documentation,** such as background documents, evaluations, or minutes of last meeting (see 3 below); – A request or offer to invitees to **share any further information** that may be helpful and a request for confirmation of attendance.	[ ]
2. Meeting arrangements	**Date, time and location** The date, time and location has been arranged and communicated to invitees. **Tips:** The date and time of the meeting should **not coincide** with other meetings (OCHA may have a master calendar of meetings). • In a field location, meetings may be preferred either as the **first or last activity** of the day, as staff may be in the field during the day.	[ ]

	• **The meeting location is accessible** to all and can **accommodate** all participants. Basic amenities (bathrooms, sufficient number of chairs) must be available and other amenities (e.g. flip-charts, an overhead projector) may need to be provided. Beverages (water, coffee, tea) may be appreciated. • Regular meeting hours (same time and location) may be useful. • The facilitator should be present at the venue **before** the meeting begins to prepare the room and welcome the participants as they arrive **Documents** Necessary documents have been prepared and shared with the participants. **Tips:** • For cluster meetings, the first invitation may include the **background documents** that introduce the cluster approach and decisions made by the PCWG affecting the coordination mechanism, such as division of responsibilities among agencies, the standard terms of reference for a protection-coordination team, etc. • In subsequent invitations, the **minutes of the last meeting**, which were circulated earlier, should also be included. • It may be necessary to provide copies of the documents at the meeting in the event the participants have not brought their own copies. • Avoid sending bulky or numerous documents by e-mail: It might discourage participants from reading the documents before the meeting.	
3. Opening of the Meeting	**Basic "housekeeping"** • Participants introduce themselves. • Facilitator collects information about attendance at the meeting (name, organization, contact details), which will be reflected in the minutes of the meeting. • All participants understand and agree on the purpose/procedures of the meeting. • A colleague (perhaps the facilitator) is designated to take the minutes of the meeting. **Tip:** • Determine the language to be used. It may be necessary to make arrangements for translations for certain individuals and groups.	[ ]
4. Agreement on Agenda, and minutes from previous meetings	**The Agenda** The agenda has been reviewed, changed, if necessary, and agreed upon by all parties. **Tips:** An agenda can take different forms, but common elements include: • The **date, time and place** for the meeting (as a reminder) **Adoption of the agenda** • Adoption of the minutes from the last meeting. The minutes need not be corrected at the meeting but agreed over e-mail to save time Update on action points from the last meeting • **Discussion** on new activities and plans • Any **other business** • **Wrap-up** To ensure that time is managed effectively, set a time period to discuss each agenda item **Adoption of minutes from previous meetings** All participants have agreed on the minutes of the previous meeting.	[ ]

5. Update on follow-up activities previously agreed	**Update on follow-up actions decided at previous meeting** The participants provide an update on the various actions points agreed at the last meeting. ***Tips:*** • It may be useful to reflect follow-up actions in the form of a matrix. Parts of this information also could be integrated into the “who is doing what and where” tool or be incorporated as part of the protection-strategy document.	[ ]
6. Substantive discussions	**Discussions on substantive issues and future action-points** Issues of a substantive nature are discussed in order of priority at the meeting. ***Tips:*** • A range of substantive issues may need to be discussed (although not all issues can or need to be discussed at all meetings). The facilitator should ensure that most of the meeting in spent on addressing such substantive issues in a structured manner and in order of priority. The discussion should lead to clear and agreed upon action points. • Specific thematic issues can be discussed in bilateral or smaller meetings. In general, however, the protection working group should be the primary forum and issues should not be compartmentalized or confined to sub-group discussions on a regular basis. **Any other business** Participants are able to raise and discuss other issues	[ ]
7. Closing of the meeting	**Wrap-up** A summary of decisions and follow-up action points is provided verbally; decision for next meeting is taken.	[ ]
8. Post-meeting	**Drafting the minutes** The minutes have been drafted and circulated in a timely manner. ***Tips:*** • The minutes should be short but include all main issues and actions points. They do not need to be a verbatim documentation of the discussion. Care must be taken with confidential information. • Follow-up action (who is expected to do what by when) should be clearly stated at the beginning or the end of the minutes for ease of reference. • The minutes should be circulated to all relevant stakeholders within 1–2 days of the meeting. This may include, in addition to the participants, the Humanitarian Coordinator and other important protection actors. • Comments and corrections should be invited over e-mail within a reasonable deadline and a final version circulated in advance of the next meeting.	
	Follow-up actions Follow-up actions have been undertaken in time for the next meeting. ***Tips:*** The facilitator may need to follow-up on a number of actions points or assist other actors in doing so.	[ ]