

Chapter 1

Situational analysis

1. Introduction

Situational analysis refers to the collective assessment and analysis of a given operational context: **Assessment** is a process through which all relevant baseline information is collected, using a variety of methods and sources. **Analysis** examines the data collected during the assessment to identify the protection risks and concerns to be addressed, their impact and urgency.

The aim of a situational analysis is to ensure that a humanitarian response is based on accurate and up-to-date information, and that the urgency or gravity of issues is taken into account. Undertaking a situational analysis is therefore the first step and precondition to a sound protection strategy.


Key considerations before initiating a situational analysis include:


Who will do it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A team of representatives of key protection partners and non-protection actors. Ensuring a joint exercise is critical to avoid duplication of efforts and repeated assessments of the same population by different humanitarian actors, as well as for promoting a shared understanding of the protection gaps. • In close coordination with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Humanitarian Coordinator, who oversees the whole humanitarian response; – Relevant authorities to the extent possible, or at least in close consultation.¹
When to do it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a sudden crisis or in the face of an emerging situation, for the humanitarian community to understand quickly the situation to plan for an effective protection strategy. • In post-emergency operations, to get a more thorough understanding of thematic or geographic issues and strengthen or reorient efforts towards durable solutions. • On an ongoing basis, to gain continuous information on the direction of the protection strategy and determine the need for changes.
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine which geographical areas will be covered by the assessment. • The assessment should focus on communities in the broad sense, to understand the situations of groups of different ages, gender or backgrounds, and to identify the various concerns and perceptions of displaced persons, other affected populations and the public at large.
Resources available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work out an estimated budget to ensure sufficient resources, including staff and transportation, until the end of the assessment.
How to do it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A situational analysis exercise includes four sets of activities, each with a specific methodology: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a documentary review of existing information 2) a participatory assessment with IDPs and affected communities 3) consultations with government and other stakeholders 4) systematizing and analyzing information • The inter-agency tool for assessment and analysis, <i>Protection for Conflict-induced IDPs: Assessment for Action</i>,² provides detailed guidance to go through these steps. In addition, the Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC), if there is one in the operation, can help process the information in a user-friendly manner.


¹ For more information on working with non-state actors, see Part I, Chapter 1, *The fundamentals of protection work*. Consult the Humanitarian Coordinator concerning their involvement.

² *Protection for Conflict-induced IDPs: Assessment for Action*, Inter Agency Standing Committee Protection Cluster Working Group, Early Recovery Cluster Working Group, pilot version for field testing, November 2007.

2. Steps for Assessment and Analysis

There are various methods for assessing and analyzing the protection situation of a specific population or group. These include Rapid Assessments, Standard Assessments, or Profiling. The choice will often be guided by circumstantial factors, such as the urgency of the situation and the level of access to affected areas (see Part IV.8). 

All methods, however, include a documentary review, participatory assessments and consultations with key stakeholders. Equally, all protection assessments and subsequent analyses need to be based on human rights standards and should capture the protection concerns of persons of different ages, sex and backgrounds (see Part I, Chapter 1). 

A number of standard templates have been developed to guide the information-gathering and analysis. The Inter-agency Standing Committee is developing a template for a joint rapid assessment tool that can be customized to suit most operations. The Global Protection Cluster has developed a protection-assessment framework, **Protection for Conflict-induced IDPs: Assessment for Action**.³ The tool provides a general structure and list of essential questions to be answered during all phases of a situation (see Part IV.1). 

2.1 Documentary review

(Timeline: This should not take more than a week and can be done in parallel to the participatory assessment and other consultations below)

A documentary review should be used to compile available documentary information, such as annual reports, surveys, the resulting information of profiling and monitoring reports, and previous needs assessments and evaluations. The documentary review is not meant to be a statistics-gathering process, nor is it a substitute for agency-specific, protection-related or sectoral gathering of standards and indicators.

Based on that background information, a draft analysis should be prepared using the *Protection Analysis Framework for Action*³ or, if time is limited, the broad themes in its chapter headings, as a guide. This draft can be validated and completed later through the Participatory Assessment and separate interviews with national authorities and other actors.

2.2 Field-based Participatory Assessment

(Timeline: can be carried out in one week or less in various locations simultaneously)


IDPs and affected populations have a right to participate in making decisions that affect them. They generally can provide the most accurate data on which to base a protection strategy, and their participation is essential for ensuring that programmes and interventions effectively address their needs and protect their rights.

The process of including affected communities in identifying who they are, what problems they are facing, what capacities they have, and what they can do to create a more protective environment is known as “**Participatory Assessment**”⁴. The main phases, which can be shortened to suit operational requirements are:

- **Identifying leadership** in the community (both *official* representatives or authorities and *de-facto* leaders or influential members of the community), and help identify power relations.
- **Mapping diversity** to identify which groups of a specific age, sex or background with common protection concerns.
- **Selecting themes** of particular interest to discuss with the community.

³ *Ibid.* footnote 2.

⁴ The methodology for Participatory Assessment is attached to the *Protection for Conflict-induced IDPs: Assessment for Action* (see footnote 2).

- **Facilitating discussions** on these themes to understand specific protection concerns and to identify possible solutions (see Part IV.10). 

Discussions with communities should not stop after the assessment. Rather, the dialogue and trust established through this process should be kept alive throughout the operation. These discussions will determine to a great extent whether or not the protection strategy should be adjusted to better serve the interests of the community.

2.2.1 Ethical considerations in undertaking participatory assessment:

The rights, dignity, and well being of IDPs and hosting communities must be safeguarded during the participatory assessment. One challenge in conducting a participatory assessment is identifying ways of establishing regular contact with IDPs and hosting communities, particularly where IDPs have integrated into the rest of the population, such as is often the case in urban settings.

Singling out IDPs could expose them to heightened security risks. In some cases it could lead to tensions with the rest of the community, particularly if IDPs are perceived as receiving preferential treatment. It may be advisable to work through existing structures, and faith, and/or community-based groups. Another option could be to first hold joint group discussions including both displaced and non-displaced persons, and to speak to IDPs separately during a second stage.


When undertaking a participatory assessment, participants from the community should:

- Be warned of any potential risks or inconveniences associated with participation in the assessment, such as time away from family or job, or reminders of traumatic experiences;
- Be informed of the objectives, purpose and process of the assessment and be informed of its limitations, so that expectations are not raised (such as a specific response, or receiving any direct financial or other personal gain from participating);
- Participants should be informed, however, of the potential benefits possibly arising from the assessment, including improving certain conditions for other IDPs or affected communities;
- Be reassured that they do not have to participate in the assessment or to give personal information that embarrasses them, makes them feel uncomfortable or revives traumatic experiences in public;
- Not be asked questions, particularly related to protection, in front of armed personnel, security personnel and officials, or other persons when this presents a risk; equally, they will not be photographed or recorded without their informed consent;
- Know that the confidentiality of information sources will be respected and names and identities of participants will not be disclosed. This may be especially difficult when local authorities participate in the process. Internally displaced persons must not be exposed to protection risks because of their participation;
- Be permitted to express themselves freely without interruption and without having the information they provide “challenged” negatively (e.g., questioning lack of initiative or credibility);
- Be given the names of contact staff or partners with whom they can follow up in case they have personal questions or concerns; and
- Representatives of the different groups should be identified to ensure the continued involvement of the community. At the very least, they should be kept informed of how their information is being used and of any follow up actions taken.

2.3 Consultations with relevant authorities, NGOs and other actors

(Timeline: several days)

Efforts to enhance the protection of IDP communities and to strengthen local and national protection capacities depend upon the **participation and engagement of relevant local and national authorities, as well as NGOs and other actors. Protecting IDPs is the responsibility of the national authorities.** Their participation from the earliest stages will **help build ownership and ensure the necessary collaboration as the strategy is defined and implemented.**

Depending on the consultations with the Humanitarian Coordinator, **non-state actors** who are in *de facto* control of territory where IDPs and other affected populations reside might also be included in the discussions to enable a better understanding of their approach to the humanitarian crisis and their perception of the humanitarian community and affected populations. While they do not represent a State, international law places certain obligations on their conduct towards civilians. During such consultations, humanitarian agencies must maintain their neutrality and impartiality (see Part I.1). 

2.4 Systematizing and analyzing information

(Timeline: concurrent with the data collection and one to two days upon completion of the assessment)

The analytical phase requires a reflection on the information to understand which are the main protection gaps – or human rights concerns – in a given situation as well as their causes and the capacity of local communities, authorities and other actors to bridge those gaps. The analysis should be represented in a final document, which can be drafted with the guidance of the *Protection for Conflict induced IDP's: Assessment for Action*⁵.

The findings should be **validated by the various stakeholders.** A meeting or workshop with the community might be necessary to prioritize the findings, modify them if necessary, based on other facts, and receive a final endorsement. Equally, the final analysis should be discussed, to the extent possible, with national authorities to reach a shared understanding of the protection gaps. This should contribute to strengthening partnership between the national authorities and humanitarian actors in the implementation of the protection strategy.

⁵ *Ibid.* footnote 2