

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)MENA Community Protection Network Terms of References (ToRs)

Revised in November 2025 by the Network Coordination Team- UNHCR MENA RB CBP- Protection Service

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Background:

The protection situation in the MENA region remains complex, multifaceted, and challenging due to ongoing conflicts, political instability, and climate-related crises. These factors have resulted in significant displacement of populations and increased humanitarian needs across the region. Forcibly displaced populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), face vulnerabilities such as food insecurity, limited access to healthcare, gender-based violence, child rights violations, and inadequate shelter. Many forcibly displaced persons are survivors of violence, trafficking, smuggling, or other serious protection risks, and yet they do not have clear information on how to better protect themselves and access urgent care or other services. At-risk and vulnerable groups such as women, girls, unaccompanied and separated children (UASCs), LGBTIQ+¹ persons, people with disabilities, and individuals with other specific needs face barriers to accessing much-needed protection and assistance services due to their unique needs and access constraints.

Current efforts by international organizations are geared towards providing emergency protection and assistance, promoting sustainable solutions, peacebuilding, and enhancing resilience among affected communities with an emphasis on solutions from the outset of the emergency. However, continued violence and resource constraints hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives, requiring sustained international support and cooperation to address both immediate needs and medium- to long-term stability in the region.

To address **existing information gaps**² and **needs** of forcibly displaced populations across the region, UNHCR, in collaboration with partners, has established the MENA Community Protection Network. This platform aims to strengthen coordination and bring together different actors to improve the provision of basic protection and assistance services to vulnerable forcibly displaced populations and individuals affected by serious human rights violations. UNHCR, other UN agencies, local entities, community, and grassroots organizations are currently engaged in regional efforts to enhance communication and participation from the communities through Community-Led Initiatives³.

[The MENA Community Protection Network](#) facilitates the disclosure and identification of international protection needs, specific needs, protection incidents, and serious human rights violations. It aims to ensure access to protection and multisectoral support to the most vulnerable populations by increasing outreach at any particular location, or through activities such as awareness-raising. Such provisions of services must be guaranteed in a manner that underscores **the Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) policy**, **human rights**, and **Community-based approaches** in order to foster an environment **free of discrimination and persecution**, and one that promotes **inclusion and access** to specialized protection.

¹ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons (LGBTIQ+), or persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

² Community-Led Initiatives refer to organizations that are either entirely established and led by refugees/asylum seekers, IDPs, returnees, or others of concern to UNHCR, or have more than 50% of such populations in positions of leadership and decision making. A community-led organization (CLO) primarily provides advocacy, protection and assistance for communities affected by displacement and/or statelessness. Some, but not all CLOs are officially registered.

³ There are several critical gaps in the current protection framework for displaced individuals. **Information and awareness gaps** make it difficult for displaced individuals to access necessary support. **Coordination and resource challenges** hinder the effectiveness of protection efforts. **Access barriers** disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, and **misinformation** can discourage asylum-seekers from disclosing their true reasons for seeking protection. Finally, **service providers' knowledge gaps** result in missed opportunities for disclosure and identification.

³ [UNHCR / Regional Safe Spaces Network \(RSSN\)](#): This initiative established safe spaces across multiple countries in the MENA region, providing essential services such as psychosocial support, legal aid, and healthcare to survivors of gender-based violence. The network facilitated cross-border referrals and ensured that vulnerable individuals received continuous support regardless of their location.

Objectives

The MENA Community Protection Network aspires to:

- **Identify organizations:** Locate organizations within geographic areas that promote access to protection and support services, including:
 - Protection referrals and case management for people with specific needs, ensuring access to safety through shelters or Community-based solutions.
 - Health care, including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).
 - Legal assistance for accessing justice and other legal procedures.
 - Outreach and advocacy with both communities and service providers.
 - General accommodation or lodging for displaced persons.
 - Livelihoods and cash-based interventions.
 - Other support services, such as family tracing and reunification.
- **Implement services and activities:** Promote the disclosure and identification of specific needs, protection incidents, and human rights violations in forced displacement contexts, fostering an environment of safety and well-being.
- **Support empowerment and resilience:** Empower and build the resilience of communities and vulnerable populations as a key element of the recovery process through the re-establishment of community networks and access to support services.
- **Establish and maintain referral pathways:** Develop and uphold referral pathways that respect confidentiality and the wishes and needs of affected populations. Ensure access to predictable and high-quality services at local, national, and transnational levels through outreach, community empowerment, referral, and care.
- **Strengthen cross-border communication:** Enhance communication on protection risks, needs, and services through initiatives, developing communication tools, establishing preferred two-way communication channels, and providing trustworthy information to persons on the move, those at risk of onward movement, and their host communities.

Main activities of the MENA Community Protection Network

- Mapping⁴ of organizations and services through the ActivityInfo platform to ensure accurate, up-to-date, and standardized regional service information.
- Coordination of outreach and community awareness initiatives.
- Response to protection risks and needs, with a focus on persons with specific needs.
- Increase protection outreach and enhance the disclosure of specific needs⁵.
- Capacity building of organizations, including those led by forcibly displaced persons and strengthen horizontal learning through sharing policy guidelines, tools, and lessons learned.
- Promote communication with communities through awareness raising.

⁴ [MENA COMMUNITY PROTECTION NETWORK MAP \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/mena-community-protection-network-map).

⁵ UNHCR uses the term “persons with specific needs” to refer to individuals in an emergency who “face heightened protection risks because of their circumstances or the context” and who thus “face specific barriers due to discrimination, their identity, or other factors that prevent them from fully enjoying their rights or accessing services they need.” UNHCR, “Emergency Handbook: Persons at heightened risk,” <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/125333/identifying-persons-with-specific-needs-pwsn>.

- Identify protection trends in accordance with UNHCR's data protection policy and other applicable protection standards.
- Track service updates and referral information through ActivityInfo in alignment with data protection standards.
- Provide other support activities identified by network members.
- Coordinate and engage Joint meetings with other Networks.

Network Partnership Inclusion Criteria:

- **Membership Policy:**

- Each organization designates focal points and backups who are committed to attending and participating in network activities and meetings.
- Network members must actively participate in and engage with network meetings and activities throughout the year.

- **Eligible organizations**

- UN agencies, state agencies, international and national NGOs, Community-based organizations, hospitals, relevant private sector companies, Civil Society Organizations, youth, refugee, and women-Led Organizations.
- Organizations providing services through physical spaces, virtual platforms, or mobile units, which are working with refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees, stateless persons, or other persons in need of international protection.
- Organization Conduct outreach and/or provide protection and support services directly or through safe and confidential referrals, following a survivor-centered and age, gender, and diversity approach.

- **Adhere to core principles:**

- **Human rights and humanitarian principles:** Organizations must respect human rights and adhere to humanitarian principles. The principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence must imperatively guide all interventions.

- **Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse:** Organizations must implement measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

- **Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) Policy:** Service provision must underscore the AGD policy, human rights, and Community-based approaches to foster an environment free of discrimination and persecution, promoting inclusion and access to specialized protection.

- **Community-based approaches:** Engagement in Community-based approaches is essential.

- **Do No Harm:** All interventions must be monitored and evaluated to ensure they do not harm forcibly displaced, stateless or host communities.

- **Accountability to Affected People** Network members must remain accountable for all its activities to forcibly displaced persons and communities, as well as to other stakeholders, including service providers, site administration, donors, and security providers.

- **Verification process** ([Annex 3](#)): During the stages of network expansion across countries in the MENA region, the Network's Coordination Team will consult with UNHCR COs and verify that all inclusion criteria are met before formally inviting them to an interview, accepting applications of organizations to become network members. Organizations express interest by sending application through the [MENA Community Protection Network Membership Form](#). After verification and approval, Once the organization provided an invitation to login to **MENA ActivityInfo platform** and an account to enter organizational information and service details, it is granted official The Network Membership.

- **Withdrawal Process:** Organizations may choose to withdraw from the network for several reasons (refer to [Annex 2](#)), To withdraw, an official notification must be sent to the coordinator and co-chairs detailing the reasons and the effective date.

- **Removal of Inactive membership:** A member may be removed when remains inactive for a continuous period of **12 months**, and removed after a 1-month remediation period (refer to [Annex 2](#)),
- **Termination of membership:** A member will be terminated immediately: When violates the Network core principles of membership criteria (refer to [Annex 2](#)),

Removal and Termination decisions are taken by the Network Coordination Team in consultation with UNHCR Country Offices, the organization will be removed from all Network platforms, maps, mailing lists, and activities.

Network Structure:

Besides the main Network Coordination Team (currently the UNHCR MENA Community Based Protection), and the Network 'members, the network will structure will consists of:

- **The Co-Chairpersons:** consist of 2 members max, selected based on feedback of the main Network coordinators, the expression of interest and capacity by the organizations.
- **Advisory Group:** comprised of max 5 of members -individuals working with key organizations or stakeholder groups in the MENA region who can guide and inform the development of the network and its activities, facilitate decision-making by consensus, and offer expertise in their respective areas. Advisors may be selected by network coordinators or nominated by network members.
- An open call for applications will be conducted to select the Co-chairs and Advisory Group members. Interested organizations will be chosen based on the results, in consultation with the Coordination Team, COs, and endorsements from Network members.
- Co-Chairs and Advisory Group members will serve for a two-year term max, with annual reviews to ensure alignment with network priorities and capacity. Responsibilities will be assigned accordingly, in agreement with the Network's members. Please refer to [Annex1](#) for detailed responsibilities of both Co-Chairs and the Advisory Group

Network Meeting

- The Network will convene virtually and will be called on quarterly basis [time frame to be agreed with all members] or for *ad hoc* engagements.
- An agenda will be prepared and shared with members ahead of each meeting to facilitate productive discussions.
- Members are encouraged to suggest additional agenda items to ensure all relevant topics are covered.
- It is important Network's members are recommended to confirm their participation after receiving invitations to meetings and events to ensure visibility of engagements.
- The Coordination Team, Co-chairs, and the Advisory Group will meet bimonthly until the end of 2025.
- Network meetings should refrain from discussing individual cases information, in alignment with the Data protection policies⁶ providing supportive environment, hate and discrimination free zone for discussing potentially sensitive challenges.
- Notes from each meeting will be distributed among all members via the Network official mailbox address.

⁶ [General Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy | Refworld](#), [General Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy | Refworld](#), [Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR | Refworld](#), [Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR | Refworld](#)

- Detailed records of all meetings, Summary Notes report, and all recourses and any relevant materials will be maintained and shared exclusively through the Network's Teams Channel. For transparency and accountability [The Network's Portal](#) will remain the public-facing platform for regional maps and publicly sharable materials only.
- All members encouraged to provide their responses on the meetings and overall network activities using the official channels of the Network or when evaluation surveys are circulated.

Revision of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference guiding the structure and activities of the MENA Community Protection Network and will be revised annually and/or according to the needs of the Network, as agreed by the members.

Annexes:

Annex 1

These tasks will help ensure the Network' members, Co-chairs and Advisory Group play a crucial role in guiding and supporting the Network, they can roles and responsibilities rotationally among them and effectively guides and supports the MENA Community Protection Network, fostering growth, collaboration, and impactful outcomes:

Network Members' Responsibilities

- Participation commitment: Network members must commit to actively participating and engaging in network meetings and activities throughout the year.
- Engage and Provide Feedback: Actively engage in discussions and activities, offering constructive feedback.
- Participate in Planning: Contribute to the development and endorsement of network activities and action plans.
- Keep Information Updated: Ensure all relevant information is current.
- Support Network Activities: Assist in identifying organizations, implementing services, supporting empowerment and resilience, establishing referral pathways, and strengthening cross-border communication as outlined in the network's main activities section.

Co-chairs Responsibilities:

- Assist in convening, managing, and network meetings and relevant events.
- Support the development, implementation, and oversight of the Yearly Network Actions Plan.
- Support in building the capacities of the Network' member on safe disclosure, identification, and referrals of people with international protection and specific needs to protection and multisectoral assistance services.
- Support the monitoring the Network WhatsApp Group, community dynamics, trends, and messages through social media and other communication channels.
- Support the developing the Network 's Referral Pathways and the Activity Tracking System
- Work closely with the Advisory Group to guide and inform the development of the network and its activities.
- Undertake any additional division of responsibilities as agreed between the coordinator and co-chair organizations.
- Assume coordinator roles if the Main Coordinator position is not filled or when the Network Coordinator is temporarily unavailable, dividing responsibilities as appropriate.

Advisory Group (AG) Responsibilities:

- Utilize their deep contextual knowledge of the MENA region and expertise in areas such as Community-based protection, community-led initiatives, international protection, forced displacement, trafficking, and smuggling to inform and guide the network's activities and strategies.
- to discuss regional programmatic aspects to inform operational plans. This involves identifying the specific needs, priorities, and challenges within the MENA region into the operational programs.
- Advise on the execution of the network's work plan to ensure effective progress and outcomes.

- Facilitate connections between the MENA Community Protection Network and other relevant entities, networks, services, and actors in the MENA region.
- Enhance collaboration, resource sharing, and overall effectiveness.
- Advise on the inclusion of new organizations that align with network goals, ensuring diverse and comprehensive representation within the network.
- Provide feedback to ensure the quality and relevance of network materials and activities.
- Support the engagement of forcibly displaced and stateless communities, refugee-led, and Community-based organizations in relevant network activities.
- Assist in securing necessary resources for the network's initiatives.
- Help with planning and messaging to ensure clear and effective communication within and outside the network.
- AG be called upon for quality assurance and programmatic feedback beyond the network.

Annex 2

Withdrawal Process

Organizations may withdraw from the network for the one of following reasons:

- No longer working with forcibly displaced and stateless persons or their host communities.
- Ceasing operations in the humanitarian sector or no longer providing protection services. Exit from the MENA region.
- Voluntary exit due to other organizational priorities.
- Reports or allegations of violations of human rights.

To Withdraw, the organization must send an official Withdrawal Notification to the Coordination Team including Co-chair and providing details and the reasons with the intended exit date.

Removal of membership: Removal of Membership

A member may be removed when it remains inactive for a continuous period of **12 months**. Inactivity is defined as:

- (i) Not attending Network meetings;
- (ii) Not participating in Network activities, capacity-building sessions, or joint initiatives;
- (iii) Not responding to repeated communications from the Network Coordination Team; and/or
- (iv) Failing to update organizational and service information for one year.

Upon identification of inactivity, the Coordination Team issues a **formal one-month remediation notice** requesting the member to confirm continued interest and to demonstrate renewed engagement. If no response or corrective action is received within the one-month period, and the organization fails to address the causes of inactivity, the member will be **removed from all Network platforms, maps, mailing lists, ActivityInfo access, and activities**.

Immediate Termination of Membership

A member will be terminated immediately when it fails to meet the Network's core participation and protection standards. Termination may occur at any time, without a remediation period, for any of the following reasons:

- Non-compliance with Human Rights and Humanitarian Principles
- Violations of the UNHCR Code of Conduct
- Failure to implement safeguards or violations of PSEA standards
- Fraud, corruption, or any misconduct undermining the integrity of the Network
- Providing false, inaccurate, or misleading information during the application process or in subsequent updates
- Actions or reputation that negatively impact the Network or undermine trust in the Network's work

Termination decisions are taken by the Network Coordination Team, in consultation with relevant UNHCR Country Offices. The organization will be immediately removed from all Network systems, including the Teams Channel, ActivityInfo, mailing lists, and maps.

Annex 3:

MENA Community Protection Network Maps Overview and Benefits

Rationale

Countries in the MENA region have developed sophisticated mapping and referral systems for the refugees, internally displaced, and stateless persons residing within their borders and moving onwards. However, key challenges remain on a regional level. Highly vulnerable people are moving across countries in different directions, sometimes quite rapidly, and there is minimal consolidated information on services across countries. There is also limited coordination of protection across borders, enhancing difficulties for reaching out to and identifying individuals with protection needs, while grass roots organizations often have limited the means to facilitate disclosure of specific needs and access to services. With high risks of violence and exploitation facing displaced persons, it is critical to strengthen information and protection capacities across borders and along every step of the displacement cycle.

Maps Objective

The objective of the MENA Community Protection Network Map is to reduce risks and improve access to protection for displaced persons by developing a focused mapping of safe services and community-based protection initiatives that adhere to basic humanitarian principles. This can, service providers and communities in the MENA region strengthening coordination \and referral pathways for persons with diverse needs and capacities

Benefits of Participation

The regional online map of service providers, Community-based organizations, and other protection actors is part of a phased approach in the MENA region to facilitate the development of cross-border communication,

referrals, capacity-building, and protection networks. Organizations that participate in the online map will be able to:

1. Learn about multi-sectoral services and other protection and support offered to refugees, displaced person, and others on the move in the MENA region.
2. Increase the identification of people with international protection needs, survivors of torture, victims of trafficking, GBV survivors, children at risk, and other people with specific needs along all stages of the displacement cycle.
3. Strengthen displaced persons' access to protection, case management, and multi-sectoral services across borders in the MENA region.
4. Support the empowerment and resilience of communities and the most vulnerable populations through the reestablishment of community networks and access to support services linked across countries in the MENA region.
5. Establish and maintain \ referral pathways within and across countries in accordance with the principles of confidentiality and the respect for the wishes and needs of the affected populations, which could also facilitate cross regional coordination.
6. Participate in a regional community protection network that can promote the exchange of good practices, build trust, and facilitate referrals.
7. Implement awareness-raising campaigns and communication with communities across countries regarding available services and protection along the displacement cycle.
8. Benefit from capacity building and horizontal learning, sharing policy guidelines, tools, and lessons learned; and
9. Access additional coordination and protection tools that can enhance protection and increase the quality of services provided to refugees and other people of concern in origin, transit, destination, and return countries.

Application Process for Inclusion in MENA Network Online Maps

Organizations interested in joining the regional online maps of services may petition the network for inclusion on the map. Organizations are encouraged to apply for consideration via the following process:

1. Organizations must complete the MENA Network Membership Form ([KoBo Form](#)) to provide basic information about the organization, including contact information for an organizational focal point.
2. Network Coordinator will review submissions and contact the applicant for conducting interviews, and in consultation with and UNHCR country operations to verify that the organization meets the following eligibility criteria of the Network Membership and for appearing on the map:
 - The organization must work with refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees, stateless persons, other persons in need of international protection or in mixed movements.

- The organization must conduct outreach and/or provide protection and support services directly or through safe and confidential referrals in accordance with a people and survivor-centered and age, gender and diversity approach.
 - The organization must abide by respect for human rights and humanitarian principles, engage in Community-based approaches, and work to implement measures for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
3. Once an organization has been deemed to meet the eligibility criteria, the UNHCR Information Management team will add the organization to the ActivityInfo Tool and create an account, then organizations will receive an invitation with log in link on the **MENA ActivityInfo Tool**,
 4. Once the organization receive an account on the **MENA ActivityInfo Tool**, this is an indication they are members of the Network and be responsible to fill their organizations information and services,
 5. The coordinator will verify them and translate them to Arabic, French and English versions of the online maps on ArcGIS Online using the data entered in the **ActivityInfo Mapping Services Form**.
 6. As part of the process, organizations will be asked at the end of the Form to indicate their consent for the submitted organizational information to appear in an open access, online maps available to the public and hosted on a secure data server by UNHCR.
 7. New organizations who consented to display their information on the Maps, will be added by **quarterly** basis.
 8. **Active Organizations - members are responsible and expected to be engaged in the Biannual Reporting/updating cycles** every year (Jan–Jun and Jul–Dec).
 9. Organizations are encouraged to check [the Network Online Maps](#) at different intervals to see if their information has been added and updated .

Questions? Please Contact MENA Community Protection Network Coordination Team at [MENA Community Protection Network: jorrbcomnw@unhcr.org](#)