

## Shelter Cluster Information Management Strategy

### Guidance Note

*This guidance note introduces shelter cluster information management (IM) strategies. It is intended for IMOs to support the development of IM strategies.*

#### What is an IM strategy?

An IM strategy is a document that is developed early on by the cluster as a complement to the cluster strategy, and that serves as a framework to carrying out IM tasks in support to coordination functions. As such, the strategy includes clear objectives, scope, and other parameters, in addition to outlining what, how and when different tasks will be rolled-out.

#### Why have an IM strategy?

Cluster IM isn't only a set of tools and activities, but a series of processes that are embedded within the greater cluster operations. The purpose of an IM strategy is to encourage cluster IMOs to go through the process of identifying how they can best fulfil their role of supporting cluster coordination functions and the roll-out of the cluster strategy, and then formalizing this reflection through a document that outlines foreseen tasks and activities. In other words, the IM strategy is meant to improve the IM function efficiency by anticipating IM needs and the IM function relevance by outlining work plans that directly address and support cluster coordination functions.

From a practical perspective, an IM strategy is also a useful document that can be used as a single reference point that compiles all IM tasks, activities, etc.

#### What should be included in an IM strategy?

Whichever the format of the IM strategy (standalone document or embedded in the cluster strategy document), key content as outlined below should be covered throughout.

##### I. Parameters and scope of the strategy

This section explains where the IM strategy sits within the larger cluster coordination documents that serve as a backbone to its operations, to ensure that it is not implemented in its own silo. Depending on the context and the current phase of a cluster lifecycle in which it is being developed, the IM strategy should always be aligned to the broader cluster strategy, but can also refer to different documents:

- In sudden onset emergencies, the IM strategy can be developed directly with the cluster strategy, which, at this stage, will often consist of identifying the most urgent needs that the cluster needs to address to provide life-saving assistance.
- In protracted crises or during recovery phases, other cluster-specific strategic (performance reviews, gap analysis) or crisis-wide documents such as the Humanitarian Response plan can also inform the IM strategy.

##### II. Strategic objectives

Following on the above, the IM strategy states its own objectives in support to the core coordination functions that were identified for a specific context. A few schematic examples:

Cluster strategic objective	IM strategic objectives
Improve transparency and communication across the cluster	SO1. Streamline dissemination SO2. Revise and streamline reporting tools between partners and the cluster coordination
Reinforce accountability to affected populations by basing strategic decisions on evidence	SO3. Reinforce the way cluster assessments are conducted and how the data is used SO4. Revise and standardize cluster indicators to better align with an evolving context SO5. Improve the way gaps in the SNFI response are identified

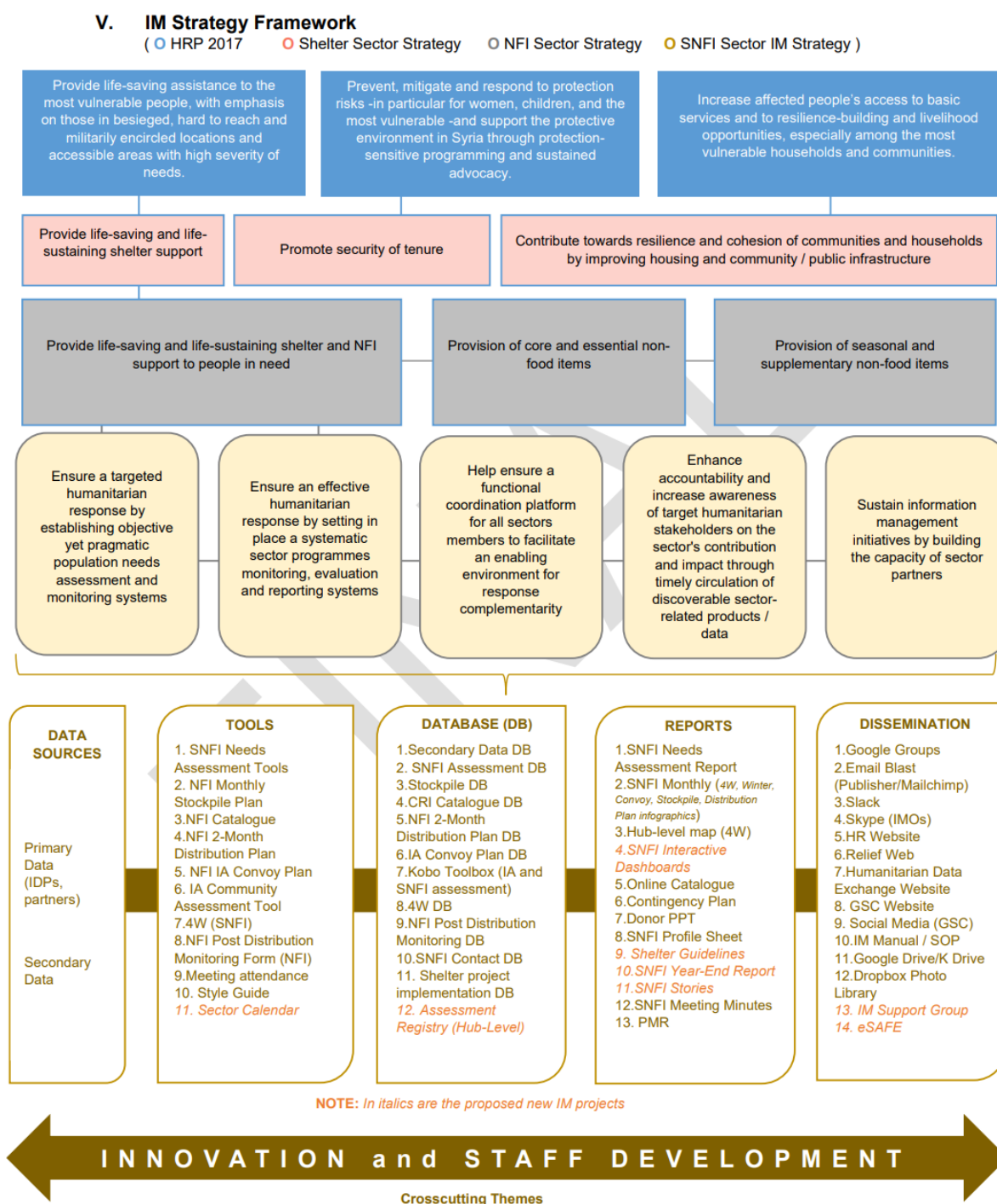
### III. Framework (linking objectives to activities/tasks, and tools)

Once strategic objectives have been defined, the IM strategy outlines how they will be addressed. As a starting point, this [document](#) from the GSC is a useful resource that lists common shelter cluster IM activities and useful tools to implement them. Beyond identifying activities/tasks and corresponding tools, the IM strategy should always clearly state how each is related to a specific strategic objective. Linking strategic objectives to specific activities and corresponding tools is what will constitute the framework of an IM strategy.

*In the example above, an activity for SO5 could be the development of a dashboard that reports on the response and is updated monthly.*

To note that identifying IM activities and tasks to undertake, and tools to facilitate them, has to be preceded by a thorough review of what is already in place, assessing whether the tools, activities, etc. need to be refreshed and/or replaced, and what needs to be developed from scratch. As such, developing an IM strategy is also an opportunity to take stock of what has been working out well and what has not in terms of IM within the cluster.

Below is an example of an IM strategic framework, from the shelter cluster in Syria. It begins by listing the different parameters and cluster strategic objectives on which the IM strategy is built, then lists the IM strategic objectives and finally, outlines through which activities and tools the strategic objectives will be addressed. New IM projects and tools are also identified.

Example of an IM Strategy Framework; [2017 Syria SNFI Cluster IM strategy](#)

#### IV. Work plan

Once the framework has been established, the next step will be to outline the work plan for the implementation of the strategy, i.e. (1) by who, when, how often the different activities will be carried out, (2) a timeline to fulfil the strategic objectives and, (3) how the strategy implementation will be monitored. The work plan can be a matrix (what, when, who, frequency, etc.) as in the Syria strategy, or a calendar-type document, whichever way works best for the IMO.

In addition to the work plan, there should also be a paragraph on how the strategy will be rolled out, by specifying who will take part in its endorsement (cluster coordination team, the cluster Strategic Advisory Group, full cluster, etc.?) and how the key components of the strategy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders to ensure they are properly implemented.

#### V. Roles & responsibilities

Finally, the IM strategy states who will be responsible and accountable for each of the different activities/tasks that are outlined, as well as indicate the different stakeholders that may take part in its implementation.

### How to develop an IM strategy?

As a recap, below are the key steps to undertake when developing a cluster IM strategy:

