GLOBAL PROTECTION CLUSTER | STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2016-19

CONSULTATIONS AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS

NEW YORK, 27-29 OCTOBER 2015

1. The Global Protection Cluster Coordinator and the Senior Protection Coordinator travelled to New York for consultations on a revised strategic framework with departments and agencies of the UN which have protection mandates or responsibilities, including the offices of the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Advisor on R2P, the OHCHR, UNDP, the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children in Armed Conflict, the Department of Political Affairs, OCHA, the Human Rights Up Front team, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Central Emergency Response Fund, the liaison office of UNHCR, the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict and the Office of the Secretary-General.
2. Summary notes of the meetings can be found below grouped into different areas but several general themes emerged from the consultations, as follows:
    a. While UNHCR's mandate and work is understood, and the inherently political dimension of it is appreciated, there is a lack of understanding of UNHCR's role as protection cluster lead; the Office's work in bringing together the UN, NGOs and Red Cross family should be more widely appreciated. Beyond that, the Office's role as a bridge between political and military parts of the UN and humanitarian agencies, as cluster lead, is not well understood;
    b. There is, therefore, considerable scope for the constituent parts of "the system", including the GPC, to syncretise efforts in support of the field and in global advocacy for protection;
    c. there is a clear desire in New York to strengthen engagement with humanitarian actors and the protection cluster in particular;
    d. while several interlocutors do not appear to understand the operational dimension of humanitarian protection, in general a strong preference to focus on programme and outcomes was revealed- this requires operational cooperation and practical coordination; none of the interlocutors expressed a need to re-define or re-interpret the concept of protection;
    e. In order to leverage the complementarities that exist the GPC needs to include New York-based entities in its work, which requires adjustment in the timing and location of some activities;

f. The link between a cogent analysis of a country situation and an effective operational response was underlined, even by offices without a strong operational focus;
g. the GPC needs to strengthen its support to the Humanitarian Country Teams to develop protection strategies, based on information-sharing and sound analysis, that act as framing documents for humanitarian programmes- funding for projects would be facilitated if their place within a programmatic protection approach could be clearly seen.

Engagement with peace operations

1. It was suggested that there an opportunity for the GPC to convene a lessons learned exercise on how clusters work with missions. This would be particularly pertinent as there will be a demand for more human rights engagement with clusters in the field and the role of human rights information in defining programmatic engagement will be critical. There is a role for the GPC in describing the good practices.
2. It was suggested that the GPC and DPKO could do some joint work in explaining Protection of Civilians and cooperation. Capturing best practice would be a helpful approach. There is a need to ensure an enabling relationship between clusters and missions. The diagnostic tool can provide a basis for cooperation, e.g. in Mali.

Linking relief to development

1. There is a feeling that the focus on emergency response in the clusters has come at the expense of solutions, longer-term and multi-year interventions and building the partnerships required to advance that work. It was felt that the role of humanitarians in rule of law discussions in New York is missing.
2. The pilot of the SG Framework on solutions revealed that the Resident Coordinator's convening power needs to be explored more in developing strategies for durable solutions and early recovery.
3. In terms of Housing, Land and Property issues, it was suggested that it would be helpful to look at best practice in the field and work backwards to draw lessons, which all operations could be applying.

Political engagement

1. Several Reviews this year have contained three major themes: prevention of conflict; primacy of political solutions; complementarity of mandates. There are limits to humanitarian action but humanitarians need to articulate the expectations of other actors.
2. There is a role for Sustainable Development Goals in preventing conflict; more resilient societies obviate humanitarian problems. The lack of attention by political actors to humanitarian issues can undermine the

political process, e.g. in negotiating peace agreements issues of displacement and return can often be critical but are overlooked.

3. Joined-up analysis is missing; it was suggested that cluster leads in the field need to facilitate this analysis, including political analysis. Where are the opportunities for sharing analysis between political and humanitarian actors?
4. There is a need to link information from affected people to political decisions, and this is very *ad hoc* at present. Dialogue with communities could be helpful to political processes. There is a need to formulate in what circumstances information can be shared, respecting the principle of "do no harm".
5. There is a need to try to find the comfort zone between the humanitarians and political actors. There is a great deal of scepticism in sharing information but can this be overcome, for example, by sharing information on trends in sexual violence. It would be helpful to diffuse that scepticism because there is a moral imperative- beyond mandates- to bring together potential physical, political and legal protection efforts.

Coordination

1. The key question is how we make the centrality of protection an operational reality. In practical terms, it requires saying what it means. The GPC is needed to promote a cultural change in the field, to ensure results-based planning at the field.
2. The GPC needs to give better support to the field on protection. There is a demand for more support, guidance and training in order to equip our colleagues to perform. There is a perception among donors/member states that protection clusters are not practical enough, that there is too much focus on advocacy.
3. It was suggested that the GPC needs to reflect on what is changing and what we need to adapt. The GPC has not fully grasped some of the changes, e.g. a crisis in urban settings. Analysis on the changing landscape is needed.
4. The challenge of localisation for the upholding of international standards needs to be addressed and the GPC has a clear role to play in that regard. However, the output of the GPC needs to be lighter and more practical. At present, the field is swamped with papers and guidance.
5. It was suggested that the GPC needs to formulate 3-4 tasks that can be expected from protection clusters in the field, e.g. strategy, advocacy, what does it mean to deliver protection? This is a missing piece- a policy instruction would be helpful. The GPC could provide more guidance to the field on programming in the HRPs and how to work towards collective outcomes. In displacement situations we also need to lengthen horizons.
6. It was suggested that it would be helpful to work with protection clusters in the field on an *ad hoc* basis to gather information for special mandate holders. It was suggested that the GPC could use its network power to disseminate information on the work of the offices and to help it in its work at the country level, including by working with RC/HCs.

7. It was suggested that the offices of mandate holders could organise a briefing session for the GPC on their work and how the clusters could work together, in overcoming an "analysis paralysis". Of particular interest to the GPC/field clusters would be the feedback loop, wherein the mandate holders brief the Security Council on the results of missions to the field, which can lead to deployment of peacekeeping forces.
8. The role of the clusters in the MRM is unclear but there is a feeling that the UN system is changing and partners will have to change with it. It was suggested that Nigeria could be an example of possible joint working between the protection cluster and the MRM, e.g. on developing SOPs for the Nigerian army. There needs to be a greater exchange of technical expertise between clusters and MRMs.
9. The GPC could look at what is happening to trigger a response but also early warning indicators to identify potential victims of sexual violence. Programmatic response to survivors of SGBV could be improved by the SRSG meeting with clusters. The main challenge is to ensure synergy between UN Action and clusters, because the intelligence is missing to ensure programmatic response.

Funding

1. There is a perennial issue of coherence within protection because of the diverse range of actors. There is a need to ensure that there is respect for coherence in terms of presentation but also in planning and programming.
2. It was suggested that the GPC could be stronger in defending the field from excessive process. A guide to programming could accompany a HCT protection strategy.
3. It is difficult to map protection elements in funding applications because the definition is diffuse. At present, funding does not match the priorities of the IASC in making protection central to humanitarian action.
4. An HCT protection strategy can be seen as a framing document for financing submissions. If HCT has a protection strategy then donors would feel more comfortable in assessing whether a financing submission is a contribution to protection. Guidance on a programmatic approach to protection is also needed: most agencies do not have a programming approach but a project approach.