Global Protection Cluster

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2016-19

OVERVIEW

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) was established in the context of the humanitarian reform in 2005. It is a network of UN agencies, NGOs and international organizations working on protection in conflict and disaster settings, including in child protection, gender-based violence, housing, land and property and mine action.

The Strategic Framework is based on extensive consultation on-line, with staff in the field and at headquarters, as well as a literature review of relevant recent reviews and evaluations of humanitarian response: a description of the consultations is annexed; a context analysis, which is derived from the consultations and literature review, forms the background to the development of the Framework and is also annexed. The Framework guides the priorities and work of the GPC for the next four years and builds on the achievements of the GPC to date, which include promoting the centrality of protection in humanitarian action, providing a wide spectrum of support to staff in the field and developing policy standards and response capacity.

The GPC uses the IASC definition of protection which states that protection is ''all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee laws)." That means protection is an objective, a legal responsibility and a multi-sector activity to (1) prevent or stop violations of rights, (2) ensure a remedy to violations- including the delivery of life-saving goods and services- and (3) promote respect for rights and the rule of law.

VISION

All people affected or threatened by a humanitarian crisis have their rights fully respected in accordance with international law and their protection assured by relevant and timely actions through all phases of the crisis and beyond.

MISSION

Within the overall humanitarian response architecture, the GPC works to improve the predictability, leadership, effectiveness and accountability of response to ensure that protection is central to humanitarian action. The protection of the rights of people in conflict and disaster settings requires a broad range of action by a wide variety of duty-bearers, so the GPC also acts as a bridge between humanitarians and others, including development, political, peace-keeping and other relevant actors.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1

PROTECTION IS CENTRAL TO HUMANITARIAN ACTION

THE GPC WILL:

ENGAGE STATES, POLITICAL, HUMAN RIGHTS, DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ACTORS to leverage capacity in analysis, early warning, prevention, response and solutions to crisis, in particular by bringing field and community perspectives in policy processes and strategy design and implementation;

ASSIST HCS, HCTS AND FIELD CLUSTERS TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT COUNTRY PROTECTION STRATEGIES through guidance, mentoring, mission support, an annual review of major operations and by engagement with the Emergency Directors Group and donors;

CONTINUE TO EXPLAIN WHAT PROTECTION MEANS in operational terms, including through results-based management, in community-based protection and by capacity building and continuously **SET STANDARDS** in protection for accountability to affected people;

SUPPORT FIELD-LEVEL COORDINATION, including by working with AORs to ensure a coherent and comprehensive protection response in conflict and disaster settings;

WORK WITH DEVELOPMENT ACTORS TO DEFINE IN PRACTICAL TERMS how humanitarian and development programmes can reinforce each other to protect people, to ensure that durable solutions are as sustainable as possible and that protection programmes remain operational, as needed, through relief to development and development action. This will be done through joint programming frameworks, pilot programmes, sharing lessons across operations and working with UNDP on the SG's Policy Committee decision on early recovery;

USE THE POWER OF NETWORKS to promote the centrality of protection in humanitarian action, engage a wider constituency and advance the work of field clusters through the engagement of new partners and the use of social media and **FOSTER NEW THINKING** an annual high-level advisory group on protection composed of thought leaders and change agents convened by the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection.

OBJECTIVE 2

PROTECTION RESPONSE IS TIMELY, OF HIGH QUALITY AND RELEVANT

THE GPC WILL:

PROMOTE AN OUTCOME-ORIENTED APPROACH, in which protection outcomes are defined and measured by a reduction in risk of exposure to rights violations and by a causal logic linking activities to a remedy or change in outcomes;

STRENGTHEN LINKS WITH INNOVATION LABS, GLOBAL CLUSTERS AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS TO ENSURE THE PROTECTION CLUSTER TOOLBOX INCLUDES INNOVATIVE APPROACHES and provides practical advice on interventions that are growing in importance, such as cash-based interventions, locally-led protection efforts, social media, engaging with faith groups, urban settlements and remote monitoring technologies as well as on neglected areas of intervention, such as working with private entities and anthropologists;

ENGAGE LOCAL AND NATIONAL ACTORS in order to grow the understanding of protection in humanitarian action and improve delivery and the sustainability of interventions by producing bespoke materials that are written by and with relevant actors and translated into relevant languages;

MAINTAIN TRAINING of Cluster Coordinators and protection cluster members on coordination skills and technical aspects of protection, develop a Community of Practice and increase the provision of direct support on discrete issues, such as defining in practical terms accountability to affected people, the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, strategic planning, phasing out clusters etc.;

PROMOTE PROTECTION INFORMATION MANAGEMENT as a foundational element of good programming and **MAINTAIN THE CAPACITY** of the GPC to provide support to the field, including local and national actors in languages and through modalities available to them, in data and information collection and analysis to inform protection strategies and humanitarian response and facilitate the measurement of the impact of the work of field protection clusters.

IMPLEMENTATION

The GPC will prioritise support to field colleagues in developing Humanitarian Country Team protection strategies, to act as a programming framework, and the work of protection clusters in critical, large-scale emergencies and countries with integrated missions. The GPC is also ready, within the limits of its capacity, to support the development of strategies and protection coordination mechanisms and country teams in all situations, including in preparedness and in working with the Solutions Alliance in finding solutions to displacement.

The GPC is responsible for ensuring protection sector-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to emergencies and for ensuring greater predictability and effective response through this strategic framework. The GPC is guided by the Principles of Partnership, which underscore that participants respect each other as equal partners, undertake tasks with transparency, adopt a results oriented approach, show responsibility in the implementation of activities, and ensure complementarity of participants' activities.

UNHCR will deploy a dedicated GPC coordinator and head of an Operations Cell. GPC partners will ensure the continuous strengthening of the GPC Operations Cell, including through efficient working practices and expanding the team to incorporate relevant operational experience and language skills and ensure timely response.

A Technical Working Group of the GPC shall be chaired by the GPC coordinator and comprise no more than five humanitarian organisation representatives, based on operational relevance and geographical and language diversity. The TWG shall meet on a quarterly basis to monitor the implementation of the strategic framework, and advise on collective funds, thematic round-tables, the location and timing of the annual retreat and evaluation, among other tasks. The members of the TWG shall serve no more than the duration of a work-plan (two years) in order to ensure the GPC remains representative of its participation.

The GPC has four Areas of Responsibility, as noted above, and several time-bound Task Teams working on policy, protection mainstreaming, law and training. In order to promote the coherence of the protection response and the alignment of the objectives and work of the Areas of Responsibility and Task Teams of the GPC, a Protection Programme Reference Group, composed of the AOR and TT leads and chaired by the GPC coordinator, will meet twice a year to discuss work-plans, policy standards, operational priorities and response capacity, among other issues. In addition, the GPC coordinator shall attend the annual meetings of the AORs and the head of the Operations Cell shall attend the regular meetings of the Task Teams.


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MONITORING & EVALUATION

The GPC commits itself to align measurable actions against the strategic objectives in this framework, in accordance with a series of agreed work-plans, covering the GPC and its AORs, which contain relevant indicators.

In order to monitor performance and measure the impact of its work in meeting the strategic objectives outlined above, the GPC will use the consultations for this Strategic Framework as a baseline and will develop indicators to measure its impact in achieving its stated objectives through external reviews. An evaluation of the work of the GPC will be commissioned by the UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service and undertaken by an independent consultant in 2016, which will be used in future reviews to measure the progress of the GPC.

In 2016 and following years, the GPC will publish an annual review of its work and its success in promoting the centrality of protection in humanitarian action in the field.

An annual meeting of the GPC will include field clusters and will be used to identify recurring coordination problems in the field, substantive protection problems which require guidance, advocacy issues and support requirements from the GPC participating agencies, AORs, Task Teams and Operations Cell. The cluster performance monitoring tools will be used to assess the impact of the GPC's work in supporting the field protection clusters.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of the new strategic framework reached out to a wide range of humanitarian and non-humanitarian partners to stimulate high levels of ownership and commitment to action going forward. Through this collaborative process, led by a ProCap Senior Protection Advisor deployed to the GPC, the strategic framework reflects the ambitions of the Whole of System Review and those engaged in protection in the field.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

February 2015 – February 2016

Outline of process February and July 2015	Strategic Advisory Group	Consultations process is outlined and agreed
Literature review June-August 2015	Geneva	Context analysis drafted and uploaded
On-line consultations September 2015	PHAP	Survey questions are developed and agreed and survey is launched in English and French; 1,300 responses. Findings collated and report uploaded.
Consultations at headquarters September-December 2015	Geneva, New York, London, Oslo, Stockholm, Washington DC, Melbourne	Presentations and structured discussions; Reports uploaded
Consultations with the field August-December 2015	Nigeria, Ukraine, South Sudan, Syria, Myanmar, Geneva, Bangkok	Presentations and structured discussions; Reports uploaded
Synthesis of consultations December 2015	Geneva	Uploaded to website
Draft strategic framework circulated for comments Mid-December 2015 to mid-January 2016	Geneva	16 sets of comments received: 15 relating to content and text of draft, 1 relating to direction of GPC
GPC Strategic Framework 2016-19 drafted End January 2016	Geneva	Comments synthesised and incorporated into draft; Financing Panel and SG Report findings included; context analysis re-drafted
Introduction of Framework and launch of GPC Work-plan 2016-17 End January 2016	Geneva	Videos of ERC, AHC and SR IDPs produced for launch and social media accounts created

NEW STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS CELL LEAD IMPLEMENTATION

ANNEX 1

SITUATION ANALYSIS AS AT JANUARY 2016

1. The GPC Strategic Framework 2012-2015 sets out the background in which protection risks arise in humanitarian settings and the then response. Its focus on fragile states has stood the test of time. However, while there is continuity in the background, since the elaboration of the first Framework in 2012 there have been significant changes both in the context for humanitarian action and the response. As well as negative trends, like the halt to democratic progress in Africa, strong positive global developments need to be borne in mind, including massive reductions in poverty in China, progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, huge reductions in crime levels including in countries like Brazil and major advances in the application of science and technology to everyday life: the focus of this analysis, however, is on the continuing violations of human rights of people in armed conflicts and disaster settings.

2. Developments since 2012 include the reaction to and continuing fall-out from the wave of uprisings in 2010 and onwards in the Middle East and North Africa, referred to as the "Arab Spring"- that bare statement encompasses enormous displacement both within and from Syria that is now creating a crisis in Europe; the intensification of rivalry between regional powers in the Middle East, the humanitarian implications of which are being seen most catastrophically in Yemen; the destabilising power of disease, allied with weak governance in fragile states; the renewal of rivalries in Europe; the re-emergence and strengthening of Salafist movements in Western Africa, the Sahel and the Middle East as a reaction to the failure of good governance; the failure of political change and continuing and repetitive crises in eastern Africa and increased criminal violence overwhelming national governments in Central America.

3. Climate change and the disasters it engenders have been recognized as significant drivers of displacement. An average of 26.4 million people per year since 2008 have been displaced from their homes by disasters brought on by natural hazards and displacement risk is largely driven by the fact that more and more vulnerable people are living in disaster-prone areas. Climate change is a megatrend that has started to compound other megatrends, including food and water insecurity and competition over resources. Climate change could, in combination with other factors, drive even more displacement in future.

4. If current trends continue, by 2030, when the Sustainable Development Goals expire, the cost of humanitarian assistance will have risen to $50 billion and 62 per cent of the world's poor could be living in fragile and conflict-affected states, a clear warning that humanitarian needs will spiral even higher than today.

5. These are just some examples of cyclical or re-emerging situations with new dimensions or new events, occurring in tandem with the growth of the World's population, continuing movement of people from rural to urban areas, environmental degradation and decreased biodiversity, growing microbial resistance, trans-national criminal networks and rising inequality. At the same time, the capacity of the international system to prevent and resolve crises is being tested to its limits and the international community's willingness to work together to solve problems is absent, illustrated by sclerosis within the Security Council.

6. Quite how intractable situations can become is illustrated by the seemingly never-ending crisis in Afghanistan: according to UNAMA, the civilian loss of life and injury reached unprecedented levels in 2014 with 10,548 documented civilian casualties. At the end of March 2015, UNHCR and its partners assessed that there were 850,377 conflict-induced IDPs, an increase of 50,000 since the end of 2014. In 2014, 81 aid workers were killed in the performance of their duties, underlining again the supreme sacrifices being made to assist people in need and the challenge of responding in insecure environments.

7. Displacement is now at a magnitude not seen since the end of the Second World War. Over eight million people were displaced in 2014 alone, the highest annual increase in a single year, with 59.5 million people displaced worldwide by the end of 2014 owing to persecution and conflict, generalised violence or human rights violations. Of these, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates 38 million people have been internally displaced worldwide by conflict or violence, the highest number ever recorded. UNHCR records that 51% of refugees are children, the highest proportion in a decade. The SRSG on Children in Armed Conflict records a big upswing in grave violations against children, including attacks on education facilities. The desperation of people in flight has been transmitted vividly in the passage of migrants in the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden, the Caribbean and Bay of Bengal. At the same time, the number of refugees returning to their countries of origin fell to 126,800 persons, the lowest figure recorded since 1983. The High Commissioner for Refugees has called these levels of displacement "a paradigm change, an unchecked slide into an era in which the scale of global forced displacement as well as the response required is now clearly dwarfing anything seen before". It is not only the size of the displaced populations that is causing concern but the acceleration in the pace of displacement.

8. Part of the reason the numbers of displaced persons is so high is that most situations of displacement are now protracted, persisting an average of 17 years. Displaced persons have a right in international law to a durable solution but, more broadly, solutions to displacement are indispensable for national, regional, and international peace and security and for creating the stable and secure conditions that are essential for achieving sustainable development goals. Yet, three quarters of humanitarian funding in the last decade has gone to the same 20 countries, while six of the largest recipients had had humanitarian appeals for 10 consecutive years.

9. Aside from the protracted nature of displacement, five further key features need to be highlighted in this Framework: first, the nature of conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia has inhibited humanitarian access, with a consequent emphasis on response by local actors, often without necessary support, awareness of international standards and in situations of danger; second, and related, there is a growing acceptance of the limited role that humanitarian actors can play in resolving and responding to situations and a greater understanding of the agency of affected people themselves, e.g. in Myanmar, and the need to include them in designing response strategies; third, children remain at the centre of crisis, whether as targets for recruitment, because they cannot cope with the danger of the sea, as witnesses to atrocities or through the destruction of schools and clinics; fourth, displaced people are less and less likely to be found in camps but more dispersed and in urban areas; and finally, the vast majority of conflict-affected populations are in Muslim countries.

10. Against this background the humanitarian response system has been challenged to act faster and better, particularly in protection of the human rights of crisis-affected people. The need for further improvements in existing emergency response mechanisms, thus ensuring speedy and effective delivery in new crises continues to be a defining priority for the humanitarian system. Since 2012, the Humanitarian Reform has itself undergone further reform through a Transformative Agenda, leading to system-wide declarations of major emergencies (or "Level 3", currently in South Sudan, Iraq and Yemen) and consequential actions.

11. The November 2012 report of the Secretary-General's internal review panel on UN action in Sri Lanka criticized the UN's failure to do everything in its power to counter targeted attacks on civilians. The Human Rights Up Front Plan of Action that flows out of the Sri Lanka panel report represents a significant attempt to place human rights on the agenda of senior UN staff members, who can no longer claim that protection is not their responsibility. The May 2013 OHCHR/UNHCR joint background paper for the IASC on the protection of human rights in humanitarian crises echoed one of the IRP criticisms that "the notion of 'protection' loses its specificity when it is used to refer to a broad range of humanitarian activities", running the risk of obscuring the very limited extent to which the UN's protection actions actually served to protect people from the most serious risks. The paper asserts that "humanitarian assistance activities may have a protective impact, but are not necessarily the same or a substitute for protection activities and protection outcomes".

12. A September 2013 Study on Protection Funding in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies identified *inter alia* the need to build a simpler conceptual framework for humanitarian protection, to step up advocacy for protection within humanitarian organisations, to place protection at the centre of humanitarian response, to engage donors, to increase the amount of development funding for protection, to develop a framework for reporting protection results and to understand better the costs and benefits of protection mainstreaming.

13. In December 2013, the IASC adopted a Statement on the centrality of protection in humanitarian action, requiring all Humanitarian County Teams to place protection as the objective of their work in a crisis. The statement is part of a three-pronged approach, including an independent Whole-of-System Review of protection in May 2015 and an IASC Protection Policy in 2016, to improving humanitarian response.

14. A High-Level Independent Panel on Peacekeeping Operations in 2015 identified "significant, chronic challenges" in the way that UN peace operations work. It noted that real progress has been made in promoting norms and frameworks for the protection of civilians but the gap between what is asked and what peace operations can deliver has widened in more difficult environments. A High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing reported in January 2016 that the gap between humanitarian needs and humanitarian aid has never been so great. It calls for action to address root causes of humanitarian needs, a deepening and broadening of the resource base for humanitarian action and a Grand Bargain on efficiency in the giving and spending of humanitarian funding.

15. The reality of humanitarian response is rarely reflected in discussions of humanitarian protection. Southern states and organisations are no longer merely recipients of aid, but donors contributing to international aid and relief operations. As the Humanitarian Financing Report states, "states which are appropriately credited and recognised for their contributions to humanitarian aid are more likely to respond generously. There is a need to better reflect what all states contribute to humanitarian action".

16. South-South humanitarianism is not a new phenomenon, but the diversity of actors and their growing contributions and influence makes it an opportune moment to examine the nature and implications of southern partnerships for humanitarian assistance. A recent Humanitarian Policy Group report on humanitarian action in Syria stated, "it is clear that the formal humanitarian system needs to rethink how it responds to needs in Syria and potentially in similar conflicts elsewhere. The formal system has seen many changes over recent years; some have improved it, others have not, but none has been what one might call radical or fundamental. It needs to explore creative ways of responding, and do so not in isolation but by involving new players, even unfamiliar ones."

17. The challenge facing the Global Protection Cluster is to ensure that differences in understanding of the concept of protection enhance, rather than restrict, the assistance provided to populations affected by crises.

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ANNEX 2

CONSULTATIONS ON THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2016-19

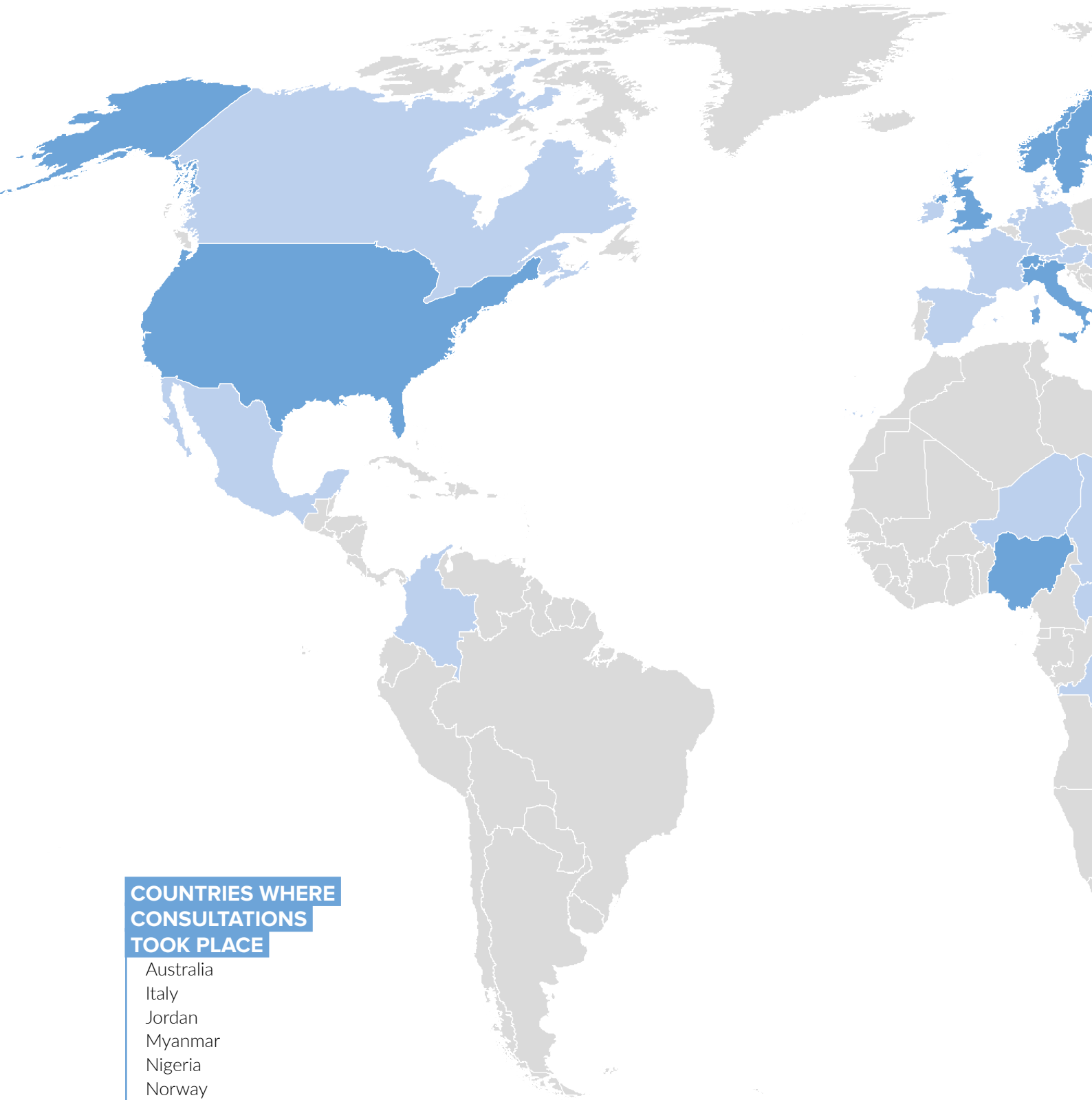
Introduction

The strategic framework for the years 2012-15 has been delivered by the dynamic network of partners who make up the Global Protection Cluster. Support to protection coordinators from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe has been provided through hundreds of missions, tailored guidance, training events, round-tables and exchanges of experience between operations. As a global platform the GPC has produced a detailed analysis of protection funding and a statement by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the Centrality of Protection in humanitarian action, as well as an independent Whole of System Review on protection. Looking forward, this global advocacy will lead to an IASC protection policy.

The consultations for the development of our new strategic framework, for the period 2016-19, are unprecedented in the number and diversity of people reached, from local partners in Myanmar and South Sudan to Permanent Missions in Geneva and non-humanitarian partners in New York and elsewhere. Overall, some 2,000 partners have contributed to the consultations through face-to-face discussions or through an on-line survey. The extent of those consultations is set out in this report, which serves as the background to the publication of the GPC Strategic Framework 2016-19.

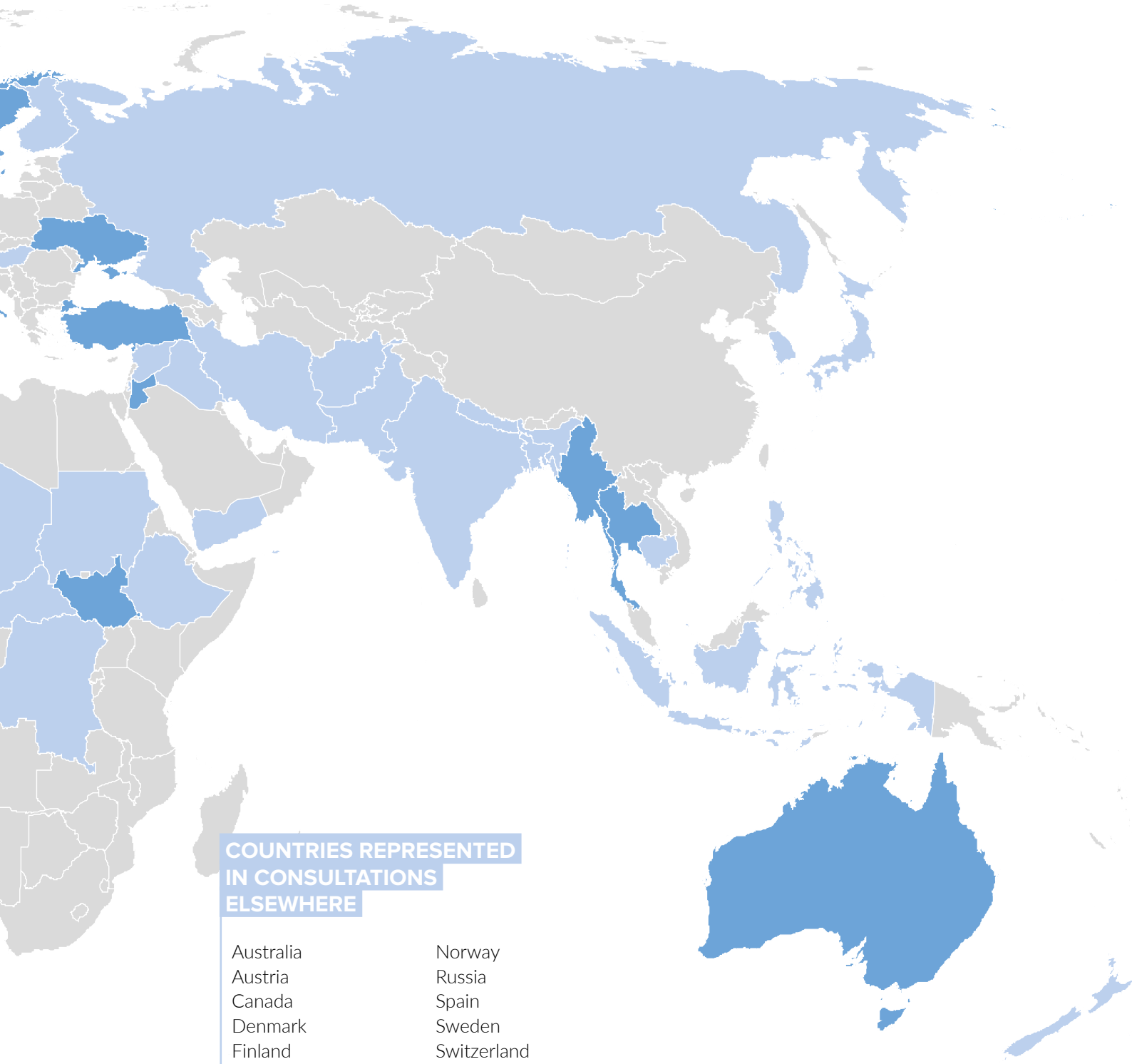
The consultations themselves are all published on the GPC website. Here, the richness of the input from partners is summarized as faithfully as possible in order to ensure valuable insights into our work are captured and made widely known. I am grateful to everyone who has taken part in these consultations and look forward to working with you in the coming years to implement our renewed vision.

Louise Aubin
Global Protection Cluster Coordinator



COUNTRIES WHERE CONSULTATIONS TOOK PLACE

- Australia
- Italy
- Jordan
- Myanmar
- Nigeria
- Norway
- South Sudan
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Thailand
- Turkey
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom
- USA



COUNTRIES REPRESENTED IN CONSULTATIONS ELSEWHERE

Australia
Austria
Canada
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Korea
Luxembourg
Mexico
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Russia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Turkey
United Kingdom
USA
Ukraine
DR of Congo
Sudan
Central African Republic
Yemen
Iraq
Pakistan
Chad
Myanmar
Nigeria
South Sudan
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Niger
Afghanistan
Bangladesh
Cambodia
India
Indonesia
Thailand
Iran

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COMMON INSIGHTS

Reports on all the consultations for the development of the GPC strategic framework can be found at www.globalprotectioncluster.org . The following represents some main points from the consultations.

HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS NEED TO ADOPT A PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH TO PROTECTION

Throughout the consultations, the issue of coherence within the protection sector because of the diverse range of actors and different components was raised again and again. There is a need to ensure that there is respect for coherence in the presentation of the protection sector but also in planning and programming.

At present, funding for protection does not match the priorities of the IASC in making protection central to humanitarian action. However, it is also difficult to map protection elements in funding applications.

A Humanitarian Country Team protection strategy is useful as a framing document for financing submissions and for setting the priorities in Humanitarian Response Plans and Common Humanitarian Funds. HCT protection strategies can facilitate assessments as to whether a project makes a contribution to protection.

GUIDANCE ABOUT INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS NEEDS TO SPEAK TO THE FIELD

The independent Whole of System Review on protection made two recommendations, which are two sides of the same coin. One, echoing the 2013 funding study, says there is a need to explain what protection means. Another, echoing recommendations from the World Humanitarian Summit consultations, says that protection actors need to be more inclusive of local agencies in the understanding of and approach to protection. These two recommendations clearly resonated with people, not only in the field.

From articulating what "life-saving" means for the protection sector to explaining what protection means in an Islamic context or how food assistance contributes to protection outcomes, there is clearly a lot of work still to be done. In carrying out this work a clear message from the consultations is that guidance needs to be translated into relevant languages, needs to be disseminated and trained on and needs to be simple and clear, using examples of good practice. Again and again a preference was expressed for less generic guidance or policy and more exchanges of practice between operations on specific issues.

THE NETWORK POWER OF THE GLOBAL PROTECTION CLUSTER NEEDS TO SWING INTO ACTION

There are several elements coming out of the consultations that help to shape the use of the GPC's network power. First, participation in the GPC is too narrow and needs to reach out to include human rights, political, peacekeeping and development actors as well as to national and local agencies, including in the French-speaking and Arab-speaking worlds. Second, protection programming is not merely a technical exercise but rests on a comprehensive analysis of a situation and a multi-functional approach to operations, which requires the inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders. Third, the GPC should be more active in defending staff in the field from excessive processes in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and reporting. Fourth, the GPC could assist country operations with advocating for the rights of affected people in situations where local advocacy is not possible, on particular themes (e.g. attacks on schools and clinics) or in regional problems, like the LRA-affected areas or Da'esh.

SYRIA

The humanitarian response in Syria is now shaped by a Whole of Syria approach, backed by UN Security Council Resolution 2165 of July 2014. All the ingredients are present for a further escalation of the crisis in Syria.

Meetings were held with the RC/HC for the Whole of Syria, donors, regional directors of international NGOs, UN agencies, cluster and sub-cluster leads and local NGOs.

Syria is not being approached as a protection crisis and this is reflected in a lack of ideas about how to approach the situation, which is now moving into a protracted phase. The GPC was asked to give advice on how this could be handled, including by asking for multi-year funding, and on the expectations of RC/HCs. An audit of the centrality of protection was held to be useful.

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In the context of the Syria operation, where much work is carried out in dangerous conditions by local and diaspora organisations, the GPC needs to bring the concept of protection back to concrete actions, offer practical tools to the field, offer more support to local agencies through the operations cell, translate materials into Arabic and fit them to an Islamic context.

ASIA-PACIFIC

The Asia-Pacific region is somewhat unique: it is characterized by natural disasters, middle-income countries with functioning governments, a large civil society, strong private sector and a lack of adherence to international standards. In this region, meaningful localization is an issue- how can international standards be upheld when local actors are the first, and often only, responders?

In a consultation hosted by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies in Bangkok, the Asia-Pacific region came up with many recommendations for the GPC. The GPC was asked assist the field in articulating protection objectives, to translate and disseminate existing guidance, mentor field coordinators, provide guidance to donors on funding protection, build the capacity of national disaster management agencies, identify national champions on protection, e.g. national human rights commissions and adapt its working methods to accommodate social media.

The Humanitarian Action Group in Melbourne convened a consultation in October , which called for a fundamental shift in thinking and operating if humanitarian actors are to influence protection outcomes for affected populations. Specifically, humanitarian actors fail to articulate what success looks like for protection in humanitarian action. Strengthening the evidence base and monitoring and evaluation are seen as prerequisites for defining success but the system cannot measure the success of protection if there is no overarching strategic approach and no dedicated protection response

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ON-LINE CONSULTATIONS

A survey about protection and expectations of the GPC was carried out with PHAP, which resulted in 1,323 responses.

Responses regarding protection priorities fell along several different dimensions, with most focusing on services and programmes; specific target groups; law, policy, and advocacy; and specific issues and challenges. Almost half of the respondents find their current focus on displaced people more or less correct, while many comment on the tendency to exclude those who are not displaced.

Two of the top three challenges identified for the protection cluster concern its focus being wrong – there is not enough focus on operational protection and advocacy. The other top challenge concerns the capacity of the cluster, pointing to its insufficient funding.

Around half of the respondents with a peacekeeping operation active in their context identify confusion regarding roles and goals as the primary challenge. Only a tenth of respondents think there is too much coordination with peacekeeping missions.

While four fifths responded that national and local agencies are included in the protection cluster in their contexts, only two fifths find that all participants are reliably able to understand and effectively participate in HCT and cluster meetings. Only half find that the dynamic in cluster and HCT meetings is respectful of local views and traditions. In many contexts, guidance documents are not translated into local languages, especially in Africa.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GPC FROM THE ON-LINE CONSULTATION

Less than half of respondents are well acquainted with the GPC, indicated room for improvement in terms of ensuring that all relevant humanitarian actors are aware of the GPC and its activities, especially outside of Europe.

The top priority identified is to provide guidance on protection-related policy, with promoting mainstreaming a close second.

Two areas more directly concerned with local contexts are also prioritized highly: educating national actors on protection and advising on developing protection strategies adapted to local contexts.

Three areas are clearly not prioritized by respondents: advising on access to existing funding opportunities, advising on effective communication about protection strategies, and other technical support.

The top three categories of needed support all concern strengthening resources and direct capacity building of organizations and their partners.

This is followed by five areas relating to advice, analysis, and information management.

The least prioritized areas are advice on the use of cash and how to set up or phase out a cluster.

NEW YORK

Consultations in New York with the offices of special mandate holders, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Office of the Secretary-General revealed that there is a lack of understanding of the GPC but considerable enthusiasm for greater cooperation and scope for synergy. There is a strong preference for cooperation on operational issues rather than policy. It is clear that New York based agencies need to be included in the work of the GPC; at the same time, humanitarians are missing from discussions in New York

In particular, it was said that a protection strategy at the country level is an important framing document to ensure complementarities are leveraged and to provide a basis for programming. The GPC should provide a guide to programming to accompany HCT protection strategies. The GPC should ensure that its guidance is practical and operationally relevant; the dilemma of localization needs to be addressed by the GPC

Many recommendations were made to the GPC, including that the GPC should support HCTs to develop protection strategies, the GPC should convene a lessons learned exercise on how missions work with clusters and capturing best practice, the GPC should use its network power to disseminate information about the work of special mandate holders and the GPC should provide more early warning indicators to identify potential victims of sexual violence.

SOUTH SUDAN

An operation like South Sudan throws up in stark relief some very basic problems that the GPC was recommended to focus on. There was a call to share experiences and lessons learned from other operations, particularly on accountability to affected populations and in measuring the impact of the protection sector's programmes. The GPC was requested to come up with guidance on timeframes for measuring impact and to limit ambition. It was suggested that there has to be a link to service delivery and not behavior change in a time-limited programme.

The need for a protection framework to guide the efforts of the HCT and as a basis for programming was noted many times during the consultations. The GPC was recommended to produce some short guidance for RC/HCs on their responsibilities to operationalize a protection strategy.

The need to share experiences on sub-national coordination was clearly expressed and the GPC was asked to provide further human resources to provide coordination capacity in hotspots like Bentiu and Malakal. That being said, the level of coordination in Juba needs to be rationalized; there are too many coordinators in the capital, too many heavy processes and too many preconceived notions and templates.

The GPC needs to take into account the limitations of the field and tools needs to be simple and accessible and based on common sense, helping field staff to use them and not just as passive recipients of training. Cultural norms are an obstacle to a rights-based approach and tools need to be adapted to suit the context.


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UKRAINE

Freedom of movement, housing, civil documentation, registration as an IDP and challenges in access to services are major concerns. The lack of a national institutional focal point for displaced persons in the office of the Prime Minister or President, with counterparts at regional level, is undermining effective efforts to deal with these problems. In this situation, the GPC could help develop a strategy to support and strengthen state mechanisms and ensure a rights-based approach to the needs of the conflict-affected population.

The protection cluster in Ukraine is seen as an important means to consolidate a community of national protection actors in Ukraine, including self-organized IDPs. Existing NGOs are becoming more protection and human rights focused through the meetings and activities organized by the cluster. However, there is more for the cluster to do, such as lifting up the standards of national regulations and laws and this requires an holistic lobbying strategy and a coordinated approach to change laws. The role of the protection cluster as a national actor needs thinking through and the GPC could assist with this process.

THE GPC WAS ASKED TO PROVIDE SOME GUIDANCE ON SPECIFIC ISSUES, SUCH AS:

a. **Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance:** a Cash Working Group has been set up in Ukraine outside the cluster structure. Now that the HNP and HRP are being developed, guidance reads that multi-purpose cash assistance will remain outside of the clusters in terms of coordination but also of the budget. Clarification from the GPC on how multi-purpose cash activities should be coordinated would be welcome.

b. **Coordination of issues regarding older persons:** given the demographics in Ukraine, older persons are prominent on the agenda and are an important group at risk. There has been a push for the protection cluster to coordinate a working group on and a preferred option would be to create a task team led by a specialist agency, which has the wherewithal and technical knowledge. Guidance from the GPC and examples of other operations about the subject of older persons would be helpful.

c. **Coordination between Protection and Health cluster on MHPSS issues:** while MHPSS is under the health cluster, a number of protection actors provide psycho-social support and consider this as a key protection activity. A hybrid approach to coordination is adopted in Ukraine but a more coherent approach might be needed and the GPC could provide advice about how this is done in other contexts.

Further training is needed for national actors on humanitarian principles. The GPC also has a role to play in demonstrating that the protection cluster must focus on delivery. That being said, the GPC can only be effective in reaching national actors if language is clear and advice is practical and guidance is translated quickly.

Several of the themes which emerged from the consultations echo the Independent Whole of System Review, notably the need to include local actors in defining protection for the particular context they work in and making guidance relevant and timely.

CONSULTATIONS WITH PROTECTION CLUSTER COORDINATORS FROM FIELD OPERATIONS

The following cluster coordinators shared the needs of the field clusters during a consultation in Geneva: Ukraine, Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa and Goma), Sudan, Central African Republic, Yemen, Iraq, Pakistan, Chad, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan, Palestine, Ethiopia, Nepal, Colombia, the Philippines and Niger.

Several common themes emerged, including a desire for the GPC to facilitate the sharing of good practices across operations and to facilitate the exchange of experience in problematic areas of work, such as remote management, working with older persons, working with government in clusters and disengagement of protection clusters. It was recommended that the GPC finds human resources dedicated to establishing a community of practice and ensuring that operations talk to and learn from each other.

At the same time, several coordinators expressed appreciation of GPC missions to the field, which promote dialogue and reflection on the direction of operations. It was recommended that the GPC undertakes annual missions to operations.

By far the strongest common request to the GPC concerned guidance on the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. Coordinators feel overwhelmed by the heaviness of the process and by repeated changes to what is needed. The GPC was asked to use its network power to advocate for better planning processes; it was felt that outside influence is often needed to support country level planning because it is sometimes not supported by the collective or at HQs.

The GPC was asked to provide tip sheets on what in concrete terms has to be done, including help on indicators, global guidance on how to calculate populations and numbers of beneficiaries, developing a strategy within a results-based management framework and generic costing of activities. It was suggested that the GPC needs to defend field staff from excessive processes and a review of how coordinators spend their time would be helpful in order to show how much time was spent on processes rather than engaging with persons of concern, gathering information or undertaking analysis.

In terms of guidance, there was a general feeling that there is enough written material but that it needs to be made simpler, translated and disseminated properly. The GPC was asked to use its network power to exchange practices: particular areas on which such exchanges would be useful include good examples of working through local partners, how to work with AORs, the coordination of cash interventions; working in a protracted situation with emergency characteristics; strengthening the link on protection to the RC/HC; making the cluster coordinator a member of the HCT; capacity building of state officials; working with integrated missions; how in practice the link between relief and development will be constructed.

The GPC was also asked to deploy experts to provide punctual help on specific issues for a couple of months, e.g. on mainstreaming, to build capacity, to provide advice on the approach to urban displacement and host families as first responders and the erosion of the solidarity system by humanitarian response. The help desk function of the GPC is seen as useful but a GPC depository of advice, which can be easily accessed, was also called for.

Several participants said that ensuring the centrality of protection in humanitarian action should be a strategic objective of the GPC. A clear indication was given that coordinators expect to be consulted on the development of the IASC Protection Policy.

The Permanent Mission of Norway in Geneva convened a meeting of the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group, which includes Permanent Missions, UN agencies and International NGOs, to discuss priorities for the GPC strategic framework. The meeting heard that there is more guidance, more professionalization than ever but that still protection does not seem to have improved, indicating a gap between intention and outcome. One of the problems is that staff in the field are grappling with processes and this is distracting from community engagement.

A negative perception by many states about what "protection" means is affecting humanitarian efforts and the dynamic needs to be changed. Protection needs to be less conceptual and more action-oriented: a protection strategy at the country level is an important tool to ensure coherence and complementarity. Overall, communication about protection needs to be clearer and simpler.

The Global Protection Cluster has a role to play in pushing behavior change within the humanitarian community. A possible element in this regard is to audit Humanitarian Country Teams in how well they have made protection central to the humanitarian operation.


Global Protection Cluster