

**ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs
11 – 13 JUNE 2013 - International Conference Center Geneva**

REGIONAL SESSION

BACKGROUND PAPER

AMERICAS Regional Session

**Advocating for protection of persons with specific needs: LGBTI,
unaccompanied children, indigenous people and Afro-descendants in the
Americas**

Wednesday 12 June 2013, 9h00 – 13h00 - Room 4

All individuals forced to flee because of persecution, conflict or violence leaving behind their homes, families and communities, find themselves in a situation of acute vulnerability. Fear, lack of protection, disorientation and sense of defenselessness are common characteristics of forcibly displaced populations.

Yet, not all asylum-seekers, refugees and displaced persons are alike. There are certain categories of displaced persons who bring with them additional specific needs depending on their intimate being, their age, conditions of flight or their belonging to minority groups. Their distinctive needs require dedicated assistance and protection both in access to asylum and in the upholding of their rights as displaced individuals.

How are these unique demands for protection addressed? Are UNHCR and its partners' advocacy efforts bringing the desired results in this respect? Can we improve our strategies and outcomes?

This session will explore how the rights of displaced LGBTI, unaccompanied children, indigenous and Afro-descendants are defended in the Americas through advocacy with national and local authorities. The aim is to explore gaps and challenges and share best solutions to the plight of persons of concern with specific needs in the region.

Part I – Interactive Dialogue (9.00 – 10.45)

Moderators | **Luisa Cremonese**, Senior Coordinator (Gender Equality and Women), UNHCR

Speakers | **Steeve Laguerre**, Director, Foundation SEROvie, Port-au Prince, Haiti
Pablo Minda, Research Professor, Universidad Luis Vargas Torres de Esmeraldas, Esmeraldas, Ecuador

Alejandro Nunez Medina, Fundación Casa Alianza, Mexico, I.A.P., Cerro de Churintzio, Mexico

Each presenter will focus on one of the groups with specific needs indicated above and will have 20 minutes to expose his view in accordance to the operational context they work with and guided by the following questions:

1. What are the main protection needs for this category of persons of concern?
2. What are the main challenges in accessing protection for this category of persons of concern?
3. What strategy did actually work to enhance access to protection for this category of persons of concern?
4. What more can be done to improve our advocacy strategy and intervention?

The audience will have 45 minutes to ask questions or bring forwards personal experiences in advocating for the protection of persons with specific needs

Part II – Advocacy strategy break-up groups (11.15 – 12.45)

Moderator | **Jason Knapp**, Program Officer, Church World Service

Participants to the session will be divided in three (3) break-up groups. Each one will focus on one of the groups with specific needs discussed in Part I.

Each groups will be assigned a group-based (not individual case) scenario on: A) **LGBTI in Haiti**; B) **Unaccompanied children at the US-Mexico Border**; and C) **Colombian indigenous people and Afro-descendants refugees in Ecuador**, and will be asked to:

1. Identify the main protection needs of the group – what peculiar necessities would the group have in the given situation?
2. Identify the main current or potential challenges that the group may face – what are the legal or material obstacles to effective protection?
3. Map the main recipient(s) of the advocacy intervention(s) – who are the main stakeholders for whom a change in attitude towards persons of concern is required? What are their interests?
4. Choose the type(s) of advocacy intervention(s) that you believe may provide the best results (drafting a letter, convening a meeting or a seminar, presenting an amicus brief, meeting with the authorities, printing booklets, etc.).
5. Draft your advocacy strategy for the assigned group of concern.

Groups will have 45 minutes to brainstorm around and discuss the scenarios along these lines and come up with an advocacy strategy for the group of displaced individuals they were assigned to.

The advocacy strategy should clearly state in bullet points format (max 1 handwritten page): a) the identified protection needs of the assigned group of concern, b) identify obstacles to its effective protection; c) the type(s) of advocacy intervention(s) chosen; d) the reason(s) for engaging with the identify recipient(s) of the advocacy intervention(s); e) the concrete plan of advocacy intervention(s).

A rapporteur from each group will report to plenary and will discuss their suggested advocacy strategy with proposals coming from the audience.

Wrap-up and Conclusions (12.45 – 13.00)

In conclusion, a synthesis of the discussion and of the outcome of practical exercises will be given together with some concluding remarks on advocacy for protection of vulnerable groups of displaced individuals in the Americas.

Concluding remarks |

Marta Juarez, Director, Bureau for the Americas, UNHCR