



WORKING TOGETHER
FOR PROTECTION

One Humanity: Shared Responsibility

DISCUSSION ON SG REPORT FOR WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT | 24 February 2016

The Global Protection Cluster convened a meeting at the offices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva on the Report of the UN Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit (SG Report). The meeting was attended in person by Permanent Missions, UN Agencies, international organisations and non-government organisations and on-line from Bogota, Kabul, Oxford and Washington DC. Written inputs from Geneva and Kabul were sent after the meeting. A summary of the discussion follows:

1. The SG Report is seen very positively, not least because of its focus on humanity and the central place of protection in humanitarian action (para.49). Indeed, protection is seen as a thread throughout the Report (One Humanity: A vision for change, para.17 and throughout).
2. There is a high number of encouraging elements in the SG Report, especially in upholding norms, new ways of responding, recognizing and empowering people as the central agent of their lives and futures and leaving no-one behind. A global campaign on upholding norms of international humanitarian law and human rights law (para.68) and the development of regional and national frameworks on displacement (para.84) are seen as particularly welcome opportunities for advocacy.
3. Humanitarian agencies are well-placed to describe what a human rights-based approach to response looks like, including in the right to information and the right to participate.
4. While the SG Report does not say much about grave violations against children in conflict, the accent on accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law is positive.
5. A campaign on international humanitarian law should recognize that the existing framework is more than adequate to respond to new ways of war and has evolved efficiently to respond to new developments. The challenge is compliance and this is where we need to have a collective voice. The Report is very helpful in tackling unhelpful interpretations of international humanitarian law and lack of compliance.
6. The breath-taking ambition of the targets set in the SG Report is inspiring. In order to energise people to work towards the targets it would be helpful to define more tangibly what the goals are.
 - a. Eradicating gender-based violence is a very tall order, it exists in every society and cannot be separated from social constructions of gender roles and the way communities define themselves. The link between gender relations and fragility and conflict must be recognized in discussions of prevention. There is a lot of potential in the Report to also look beyond what we as humanitarians normally do and push the enforcement side of gender-based violence response.
 - b. Building on the previous point, the emphasis in the Report on upholding respect for and compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law is

praiseworthy and it is widely recognized that reinforcing the global justice system is needed (para.64-66). The relationship between humanitarian action and criminal justice is a complex and often neuralgic one and deserves further thought to describe in practice how the relationship can be managed and strengthened.

- c. In working for compliance with existing law it would have been positive for the SG Report to acknowledge that affected people themselves want to see justice for wrongs committed, whether in international or national systems. The effect of the arrest of General Pinochet, for example, was profound in sending a message that violations of human rights will not be tolerated.
- d. The recognition that displacement is not primarily a humanitarian challenge but a complex political and development challenge is welcome (para.81). A target for reducing internal displacement by at least 50% by 2030 (para.83) is a potential game-changer, especially if the critical operational and policy steps outlined at para.84 are implemented as a package. However, the target could prove to be a meretricious one if, as repeated displacement situations have shown, the reduction of displacement is achieved by closing settlements, forced evictions, failure to register or de-registration of IDPs, lack of acknowledgement of a problem or transfer of populations. It would be preferable to speak of finding durable solutions to displacement and setting targets for solutions. We need also to bear in mind that displacement is often a life-saving coping mechanism for people fleeing conflict or disaster and a focus on preventing displacement could be deathly. Rather, a rights-based approach, emphasizing the right to freedom of movement, should be emphasized. Throughout the discussion, freedom of movement emerged as a recurring theme.

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- 7. The changes envisaged to the humanitarian response architecture are potentially very radical but, at present, lack a pathway. There is a risk that in ending the artificial division between humanitarian and development action the Report will not be read as a whole and we lose more than we gain. It is notable that the existing humanitarian architecture merits no mention in the Report, without any indication of what the future looks like. A worry for protection is that development actors tends to overlook human rights as a focus for and outcome of development action and overlook human rights violations as a vector of violence and conflict.
- 8. The Report recognizes the frustration of national and local actors (paras.11-12). There is a question about whether international actors, the Global Protection Cluster and field clusters have done enough to enable a wider understanding of protection and build local and national capacity. The challenge in emphasizing local and national response is to ensure that international standards on protection are maintained; this is not an abstract concern and affects the viability of efforts to uphold international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. Complementarity of effort, based on comparative advantage and synergy, should be underlined.
- 9. The focus on “collective outcomes”, taken together with the emphasis of the SG Report on protection, chimes very well with the 2013 IASC Statement on the Centrality of Protection in humanitarian response and could potentially be a great step forward in moving beyond a sector-led response working in silos to one where protection is the end goal of humanitarian action.
- 10. In his endorsement of its new strategic framework, the Emergency Relief Coordinator challenged the Global Protection Cluster to come up with concrete suggestions for action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o97h5TTzEBY>. The ERC recognises the strategic objectives of the Global Protection Cluster as being closely aligned with the World Humanitarian Summit intended outcomes.

11. In developing key messages, it was suggested that the Global Protection Cluster should bring in the perspective of affected people. What does safety and dignity mean for someone affected by violence? The fate of indigenous people needs special attention in a new approach to humanitarian action.
12. At the same time, it was recognized that the Global Protection Cluster should not try and address all issues in the Report and we have to focus on key issues, recognizing our capacity for actually pushing them forward.

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