

GLOBAL PROTECTION CLUSTER | STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2016-19

CONSULTATIONS IN THE SOUTH SUDAN OPERATION

JUBA, 24-26 November 2015

1. The Senior Protection Coordinator of the Global Protection Cluster travelled to South Sudan to hold in-depth conversations with the deputy Humanitarian Coordinator, OCHA, UNHCR, the heads of agencies with protection mandates and responsibilities, donors and the UN Mission in South Sudan about their expectations of the GPC going forward. The Protection of Civilians Unit in UNMISS also made a written submission and Save the Children sent suggestions by email. Of all the discussions the insights of the donors were particularly helpful in focussing the priorities of the GPC.
2. The situation in South Sudan since December 2013 is described in stark terms in the Security Council Resolution 2155 (2014) –extended to 15 December 2015- which mandates UNMISS with wide-ranging responsibilities for the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel. The High Commissioner for Human Rights despatched a 10-person team in October 2015 to investigate allegations of on-going war crimes and crimes against humanity in the context of the conflict and to report to the Human Rights Council in May 2016. The situation for the people of South Sudan remains grave.
3. This wide-ranging consultation covered a lot of ground, and it is a struggle to summarise the substantial input, but several themes emerged:
 - a. Notwithstanding the pace, range and depth of the operation and the multiplicity of actors with protection responsibilities the dynamic within the protection cluster and between the cluster and other partners, such as UNMISS and other clusters, is very positive and action-oriented; of particular note is the focus of the cluster on discussion of protection themes, information gathering (in difficult circumstances) and the production of protection trends analysis, which is widely appreciated;
 - b. The inclusion of a wide range of actors in the cluster, from uniformed and civilian components of the mission, to INGOs and national NGOs, is a very impressive achievement and enables more comprehensive analysis and programming;
 - c. The high levels of funding of the cluster programme in 2015 is a tangible sign that the cluster is not only getting partnerships right but is also producing a credible programme that can attract interest;
 - d. Serious security concerns are not only inhibiting access and, thereby, information gathering but also advocacy with and to the

- government and non-state actors about human rights; an approach that does not endanger staff, including better integration of the HRUF action plan within the mission, deserves consideration;
- e. The level of coordination in Juba, including the multiplicity of groups and meetings, and the resources devoted to it (a rough calculation reveals a protection coordination team of about a dozen people) needs serious re-evaluation; by contrast, sub-national coordination emerged as a key weakness, although the cluster has plans to address this; a focus on sub-national coordination will also build on the cluster's impressive work on including local partners;
 - f. The HCT protection strategy is not translating into a credible programme, nor is it assisting with treating South Sudan as a protection crisis, rather than a food crisis;
 - g. Even in a short mission the multiplicity of stakeholders, each with their own perspective, interests, capacity and agenda is very apparent and presents a supreme challenge to achieving a coherent protection programme.
4. 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. On measuring impact, the GPC was asked to collect examples of good practice and to facilitate the sharing of experiences of protection clusters in developing the contextual information to suggest that progress is made by something not happening. 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 behaviour change in a time-limited programme.
 5. The need for a protection framework to guide the efforts of the HCT and as a basis for programming was noted in various ways again and again. The HCT has a protection strategy but it is not seen as an operational tool and is not being used as a frame for programming. The work-plan in particular is seen as confusing. It is not clear who has the ownership of the strategy as a collective ownership means no one owns it. The GPC was recommended to produce some short guidance for RC/HCs on their responsibilities to operationalizing a protection strategy.
 6. The GPC was commended for the IASC statement on the centrality of protection, which is seen as a useful strategic statement that is simple and clear and speaks to the field. It was suggested that the South Sudan HCT protection strategy also needs to be a statement (like the centrality of protection statement) of the priorities in South Sudan that the HCT is capable of addressing.
 7. Concerning the sub-clusters, it was suggested that the GPC could provide blue-prints for integrated work-plans, bringing all the various elements of protection together in a coherent programme. The GPC was asked to provide benchmarks for the deployment of child protection specialists in L3 situations. The GPC was also asked to produce a handbook for donors

to explain what protection means in general and the impact on affected children. The sub-clusters are happy with the integration and visibility of GBV, child protection and mine risk concerns into the analysis of the HNO and HRP and said that the GPC should adopt a policy that this becomes the norm.

8. Mine action has tried to shift focus from mine victims (about 60 people a year) to the enabling function of mine action for humanitarian action. Mine Action wants to be integrated from the get-go into the analysis of the HCT and cluster.
9. Gender reflexions are included in three ways in the operation, through development, humanitarian and peacekeeping. At present, capacity is missing as there is no GenCap and UNFPA is seen as lacking capacity to implement activities. The gender perspective in the operation is weak, including in the GBV sub-cluster although the UNMISS is receiving support from the office of the SRSG on sexual violence in armed conflict.
10. There is a multi-layered relationship between the protection cluster and the UNMISS, with a good deal of cooperation on common concerns but a clear divergence of perspective and, to some extent, aims.
11. The substantive areas of common concern include the human rights violations in South Sudan and the ability of the international community to influence the warring parties or address human rights issues generally. Many interlocutors expressed dismay at the lack of integration of the HRUF action plan into the thinking and work of the UNMISS and the UN in general, for example by the failure to protest the exclusion of or other action against senior humanitarian officials for highlighting human rights problems. The list of senior officials excluded or forced to leave is worryingly long.
12. An area of good cooperation between the cluster and the UNMISS is the sharing of information and analysis. The cluster was singled out for praise for its analysis, particularly the production of protection trends on a quarterly basis, and this focus on analysis is helpful to the collaboration with UNMISS, which maintains an analysis function and capacity. The cluster is included in POC working and technical groups within the mission and in the JOC and there is cooperation in practical areas like the deployment of FOBs/TOBs and long-range patrols.
13. An area in need of further consideration is the production of public reports by the UNMISS on the human rights situation in the country- which it is mandated to do by the Security Council- including on the numbers of civilian casualties. Some expressed the view that the lack of public reporting by the UNMISS or public advocacy exposed humanitarians to problems when raising concerns about what they are seeing on the ground. It was suggested that there is an issue of capacity within the mission to produce reports and that the GPC should consider deployment of personnel.
14. An area of potential collaboration between the cluster and the UNMISS is on the POC sites. There is a clear divergence of perspective on the POC sites between the UNMISS and humanitarian actors, including on how to show that mechanisms exist to maintain the civilian character of these spaces and that undesirable elements are excluded, how to articulate

- protection for the larger group of displaced people outside the POC sites and the stage at which gears are shifted to look at solutions. It was suggested that the cluster needs to focus early on solutions in order to maintain principled discussions before political considerations take over.
15. It was suggested in the UNMISS that South Sudan is a unique context because of the POC sites, for which there is no clear rulebook for the protection challenges presented and no clarity on the answers. This suggestion underlines the need for the cluster to engage with the mission on the POC sites as the situation in South Sudan is not, in fact, unique. The GPC should engage with DPKO to highlight potential answers to what seem to be intractable issues on the ground.
 16. The provision of information to affected people in order to counter misinformation and rumours was identified as key for the cluster. Protection issues in South Sudan are very complex and international agencies do not have much access. Therefore, building capacity of national actors is critical and it is obvious that more and more local agencies are participating in the cluster.
 17. It was said that all intentions by the GPC for specific guidance for the field turns into long generic products- and there was some scepticism that the GPC is capable of producing short guidance relevant to the field. It was said that every initiative from HQ turns into a reporting requirement on the field.
 18. However, field level clusters need to be updated more regularly by the GPC on the development of international standards. It was suggested that it may be useful for the GPC to prioritise certain countries and experiment a bit in terms of support given to the operation.
 19. The protection cluster was praised for enhancing the capacity of Southern Sudanese in work on protection although a need to strengthen local NGOs to do trends analysis was identified in order to improve capacity to respond. Sub-national coordination is a struggle, because that is where the problems are but capacity is weakest. In designing any capacity building the GPC needs to take account of the limitations of the field. There is a huge gap between stated objectives of a project and what the staff in the field think the objectives are, particularly on the softer side of programming. Tools need to be simple and accessible and based on common sense, helping field staff to use them and not passive recipients of training. Cultural norms are an obstacle to a rights-based approach, and tools need to be adapted to deal with that context. That should be the focus of the GPC's work.
 20. It was suggested that the GPC should hold a round-table to learn experience from other operations on sub-national coordination. The challenge in enhancing sub-national coordination is to increase information flow without increasing the reporting burden. The GPC was also asked to find human resources to improve coordination particularly in hotspots (Bentiu, Malakal) but bearing in mind the number of deployments to date to South Sudan the GPC would require some rationalisation of coordination before committing further resources.
 21. There is a lot of data but not enough analysis of the data, e.g. 5W. It was suggested that the GPC could come up with the type of interface for

protection as the Ukraine web resources- some basic tools would be helpful from the GPC. A repository of tools from various operations would be helpful and a community of practice would be helpful if it can be used with Skype.

22. The cluster is interested in pushing forward the idea of mainstreaming but it lack ideas. It is not just about training and this requires a lot of support from the GPC.
23. In general, it was felt that the GPC needs to be more supportive in raising issues from South Sudan to the global level, and from Africa in general.
24. The level of coordination and heavy processes was frequently criticised. It was felt that there is too much focus on process and too many preconceived notions and templates. The South Sudan operation is seen as a monster, with way too many layers and too much coordination, clusters and task forces, working groups etc. This was seen as a distraction when the focus should be on delivery.
25. The way South Sudan is being viewed as a food crisis rather than a protection crisis was criticised by many. It was suggested that it would be helpful to understand best practices from other operations, particularly in the coordination of data collection and analysis and prioritisation.
26. The GPC was asked to provide practical and concrete support to the field. Results-based reporting was identified as an issue for the future. The budgeting breakdown is important and the GPC was asked to identify the additional costs of protection mainstreaming.