

PROTECTION CLUSTER WORKING GROUP

MISSION STATEMENT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Established in September 2005 as part of the humanitarian reform and accountable to the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Protection Cluster Working Group¹ (PCWG) is the main inter-agency forum at headquarters-level for the collaboration and overall coordination of activities supporting protection in humanitarian action.²

Mission

States have the primary responsibility to protect all persons within their jurisdiction in line with international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law. In this context, the mission of the PCWG is to facilitate a more predictable, accountable and effective response by humanitarian, human rights and development actors to protection concerns within the context of humanitarian action in complex emergencies, disasters and other such situations. Established primarily to support the implementation of the cluster approach, the PCWG is also ready, within the limits of its capacity, to support protection coordination mechanisms and country teams in all complex emergencies, disasters and other such situations.

Participation

Reflecting the essential inter-agency and collaborative nature of the protection response, the PCWG is a broad-based, participatory forum, comprising on an equal basis United Nations humanitarian, human rights and development agencies and actors, as well as non-governmental and other international organisations.³

Global level

- At the global level, the PCWG undertakes to increase the overall protection response capacity (in terms of human resources and expertise) as well as the capacity of individual members of the PCWG, particularly those that have assumed the role of focal point agency for areas of the protection response (such as gender-based violence, rule of law etc.).⁴
- The PCWG coordinates the development and further refinement, as appropriate and in accordance with its work plan, of policy, standards and operational tools relating to protection in humanitarian action, including practical guidance on how to establish and manage protection coordination mechanisms.
- The PCWG recognises that each Cluster Working Group has a responsibility to adopt a human rights based approach to their work. The PCWG works with other clusters to ensure that protection concerns are mainstreamed in their work, in particular the Early Recovery Cluster. It will also ensure collaboration with other protection-relevant fora.
- The PCWG works to promote age, gender and diversity mainstreaming and rights-based and community-based approaches in its work.

Field support

- The PCWG undertakes support missions to assist field-based protection working groups/country teams with identifying protection gaps and needs and developing

¹ For further information on the background and activities of the PCWG, see the *Progress Report* to the IASC Principals (December 2005) and the PCWG Workplan for 2007, available from UNHCR.

² In accordance with the PCWG's December 2005 *progress report* to the IASC Principals, protection is defined as "all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law, i.e., human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law." During 2007, the PCWG will further clarify this definition in operational terms, i.e., what are these "activities" and who implements them.

³ The PCWG is chaired by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Participants are: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Mine Action Service, United Nations Relief and Works Agency, World Food Programme, Office of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, International Organisation for Migration, Concern Worldwide, Danish Refugee Council, Human Rights Watch, Interaction, International Catholic Migration Commission, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, International Rescue Committee, Jesuit Refugee Service, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Norwegian Refugee Council/Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Oxfam, Save the Children Alliance, Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, Terre des Hommes, World Vision International. The International Committee of the Red Cross participates as an observer.

⁴ See further, *Progress Report*.

appropriate prevention and response strategies, including mainstreaming cross-cutting issues such as age, gender and HIV and AIDS. In this regard, priority will be given to those countries where the cluster approach is being implemented.

- The PCWG assists field-based protection working groups/country teams in facilitating advocacy on specific protection issues by actors such as the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the High Commissioner for Refugees and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, including the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons.
- The PCWG can receive and respond to requests from the field for the provision of technical and policy advice on specific protection issues.
- The PCWG undertakes capacity building of humanitarian actors and other stakeholders (national and local authorities, affected populations etc.) through inter-agency training initiatives.
- The PCWG can receive concerns from individual cluster members relating to the protection response in a given country and seek constructive solutions.
- The PCWG approaches donors in support efforts to mobilise resources for field-based protection activities.