



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

ROUNDTABLE ON PROTECTION IN YEMEN

Amman, Jordan 5-6 March 2018

INTRODUCTION

On 5 and 6 March 2018 in Amman, Jordan, the Protection Cluster Yemen hosted a roundtable meeting on protection in Yemen. Participation comprised UN, humanitarian actors in protection, donors and diplomatic representatives with the objective to collectively analyze the protection situation in Yemen and agree on strategic actions relating to programming, operations, advocacy and stakeholder engagement. Discussions were held under Chatham House rules. This note is intended to summarize the main discussions and conclusions.

PROTECTION SITUATION

Protection Cluster colleagues presented the main drivers of protection in Yemen regarding IHL/IHRL violations, conflict-related forcible displacement, violations of human rights and weak rule of law, psychosocial support needs, negative coping mechanisms and violations of the rights of children and gender-based violence. In addition to ensuring linkages between macro-level information on civilian impact, participants stressed the importance of a specific risk/threat analysis which should underlie and inform programming. Participants discussed the critical role of the Protection Cluster and individual agencies operating within their respective mandates to inform HCT strategic decision-making and advocacy on IHL/IHRL, among others, while already possessing sufficient information to push forward with humanitarian protection responses. Issues such as female recruitment and family separation (of boys), FGM linked to displacement, marginalized communities and emergency displacement tracking were identified as potential areas to watch. Noting the difficulties of monitoring protection in Yemen, participants noted the need to focus on situations generating the highest protection risks for the conflict-affected population.

YEMEN PERSPECTIVES

Due to the difficulties of securing travel for Yemeni nationals out of Yemen, participants conducted a Q&A via video-teleconference with Yemen NGO representatives on community coping strategies, traditional protection mechanisms and operational challenges. Prior to the Q&A, Yemen NGOs had developed the following key messages addressed to international donors:

- Commit to a minimum funding package of 4% for protection programming broadly, including protection-centred livelihoods and education programs.
- Re-establish an in-country presence (or frequent visits, at a minimum) and take leadership on negotiating improved access and safety for humanitarian workers.
- Invest in rebuilding systems that provide greater legal and social security for Yemenis, including the restoration and maintenance of public services and the social protection fund.
- Fund and actively support human rights, including through empowering Yemeni civil society.
- Do not mistake humanitarian aid for a solution to Yemen's crisis.
- Take all appropriate measures to press for the lifting of the blockade on Hodeida Port and Sana'a International Airport.

Participants noted the need to support protection activities identified as urgent priorities by beneficiaries, and likewise important to local authorities to secure access. National NGOs raised important internal needs, including funding, capacity-building as well as security and self-care. While donors expressed the availability and desire to increase funding for protection in Yemen, the challenges of funding NNGOs directly were noted and donors were requested to commit to pooled funds as a means for NNGOs to access funding. Participants agreed that communication channels could be improved to help NGOs to better understand the differing modalities, timelines and priorities of donors.



HUMANITARIAN ACCESS AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Colleagues presented an overview of humanitarian access constraints, operational challenges and the blockade affecting protection actors, with particular focus on restrictions on movement of organizations and personnel, as well as interference in the implementation of activities, including lengthy approval processes. As part of the presentation, the following recommendations were made:

- Increased donor presence – permanent and temporary
- Flexible and multi-year funding for activities
- Possible humanitarian corridors or agreement of localised ceasefires
- Mechanisms to increase confidence of parties to the conflict in security/management of revenue
- More aggressive public and private advocacy

Among the issues discussed were prospects for further access challenges linked to fragmented authorities and resource needs, lessons learned from Syria, differences in access between international organizations, international and local organizations, and solutions ranging from proxy indicators, integrated programming, and involvement of local stakeholders in planning. Participants expressed the need to articulate humanitarian access challenges specific to protection to help inform advocacy efforts, particularly with much focus on goods and personnel for famine and cholera.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

An overview was provided of the main issues and current efforts to enhance the protection of civilians, including protection dialogue on compliance with IHL, delivering assistance to the most vulnerable, including women and children, displaced and war wounded, and ensuring physical safety and security of civilians, as well as information from the monitoring of civilian impact. Participants discussed the relationship between and programmatic focuses around advocacy, dialogue with parties to the conflict, efforts with authorities and communities toward behavioral change of perpetrators and informing response directions to support protection of civilians.

PROTECTION RESPONSE STRATEGY AND PRIORITY DIRECTIONS

Following a presentation of the main elements of the Protection Cluster strategy in the YHRP, colleagues provided interventions on programming directions for the UN, NGO and donor community. In addition to taking note of key trends and priorities in the cluster strategy, participants noted that data and assessments were already sufficient in some areas for donors to fund programming, the need for monitoring to result in a responses or services and building the capacity of partners on protection minimum standards. In terms of priority directions, participants noted the need for more predictable and reliable funding of the protection response to build the response and ensure linkages between advocacy and programming, community-based protection and communication with communities as critical, and ensuring holistic approaches toward the protection of civilians, displacement and socio-economic vulnerability and coping mechanisms. Participants also noted the need to expand presence of protection actors, particularly at the level of field coordination and through referral mechanisms, as well as priority areas in legal assistance, livelihoods, social cohesion and protection monitoring reporting. In addition to sharing from lessons learned from an evaluation of a comparative protection response, donors emphasized the desire to increasingly fund protection, while noting the need to account for differences between donor frameworks, timelines and approaches. Points discussed include: prioritizing emergency assistance over awareness raising or capacity building, cash assistance requiring a linkage to services or a protection outcome, curriculums for psychosocial support, broader interest in IHL, displaced and migrant portfolios and the potential drawbacks of adopting a Humanitarian Plus approach.



MINIMUM SERVICES AND CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION

Colleagues exchanged considerations on developing a minimum service package for protection, including child protection and GBV, and ensuring the centrality of protection, mainstreaming and integration with other sectoral responses. Participants broadly agreed that protection mainstreaming was a minimum standard for safe humanitarian programming, and the responsibility should not be shouldered only by the Protection Cluster. Needs were identified to better outline priorities for and strengthen integrated programming with protection in, for example, famine response and cholera programming, to join donors and humanitarian partners in the centrality of protection. Reference was made to the Whole of Syria emergency response package for protection as a positive example.

ROUNDTABLE CONCLUSIONS

- Develop partner engagement strategy, including mapping of protection donors with their priorities, guidelines and contacts to help build relationship between cluster members and donors.
- Explore support to Protection Cluster to identify dedicated capacity building for NNGOs on specific capacity building priorities, including strengthened understanding of IHL and its operational value in humanitarian protection.
- Undertake stocktaking on protection data collection and develop a protection information strategy that improves real-time and quality analysis that will contribute to evidence-based protection programming, including responsive services and risk reduction. in addition to advocacy.
- Protection Cluster to develop a paper outlining protection-specific humanitarian access challenges, while communicating to partners the importance of alerting donors to access-related or other operational challenges in a timely manner and with details of specific impacts on programming.
- Protection Cluster to continue to inform HCT decision-making on protection of civilians in collaboration with UN mandated agencies, while strengthening cluster risk/threat analysis to inform programming.
- Protection partners to inform pilot phase of Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP) to ensure optimal linkage to response, including advocacy on specific issues and community-level efforts toward protection of civilians.
- Develop minimum service packages, drawing on existing templates/guidance that can be applied in Yemen, in order to prioritise and fast track effectively.
- Protection mainstreaming/safe programming/integration to be tabled at ICCM and related strategy developed, potentially including a ProCap, then raised to HCT.
- Further build approaches for community-based protection that include two-way communication with implementing agencies.
- In collaboration with participants, Protection Cluster to develop action plan with timelines and responsibilities for implementation of Roundtable Conclusions.

