



**GPC ALL MEETING
THURSDAY 17TH JANUARY 2013, 15-17H00
UNHCR GENEVA, ROOM MBT-550**

1. SITUATION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The Global Protection Cluster Coordinator informed the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) of the importance of maintaining focus on the protection situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) even in circumstances in which the escalating conflicts and deteriorating humanitarian situations, in Mali and Syria, demanded our collective strengthened and enhanced coordination and operational attention.

It was underlined that the humanitarian and protection situation in CAR continues to be precarious and currently the field presence of Humanitarian actors is fragile and limited in terms of physical presence, but more importantly technical capacity and expertise in critical and essential specialized areas. The meeting presented an opportunity for colleagues in the CAR Protection Cluster to communicate the gravity and urgency of the situation and the areas of specific support required from the GPC - including on the approach and content of advocacy.

Situation Update – CAR Protection Cluster Coordinator

The security and humanitarian situation in CAR were a concern prior to the events of December 2012. Since December 10th the situation has further deteriorated in the north, north-east and central regions with fresh displacements both within CAR and across borders to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad. Access by humanitarian actors to affected populations outside Bangui is limited and there are unconfirmed reports of armed non-state actors encouraging the formation of self-defense forces which are reported to be perpetrating serious human rights violations. The semblance of law and order that existed before has completely disappeared along with any vestige of effective central government control. There are also reports of child recruitment and basic services have become inaccessible to populations in these parts of the country.

The current capacity of the CAR Protection Cluster is significantly reduced, compounding its pre-existing limitations in terms of presence as well as the technical capacity and expertise of its participants and partners. Some core Protection Cluster participants such as IRC, IMC, Mercy Corps, COOPI, DRC, UNICEF and UNHCR already have a presence on the ground. However, most expatriate staff members were evacuated thereby further reducing capacity. Some international staff members of Protection Cluster participant agencies are expected back in country within the next days - as the security situation allows. A protection assessment is planned in the coming week, the scope of which is under discussion. A flexible approach in terms of participation, duration and areas covered will need to be adopted in line with security and access conditions.

Current Urgent Support Needs of the Central Africa Protection Cluster:

1. Human resources: Needs have been identified for 2 Protection Officers to support the Protection Cluster Coordinator. Staffing needs for thematic areas include Child Protection, SGBV, Housing, Land and Property Rights Issues, needs assessment and information management.



2. Information management: the scale of the humanitarian needs and displacement patterns in the country since the events of December 2012 continue to be unknown and there is an urgent need for support on information management to, *inter alia*, collate and analyze data for a coherent overview of the situation, support the planned needs assessment and analysis, and optimize the use of this information at the national and global levels.
3. Funding: CAR continues to suffer from chronic under-funding. The results of the needs assessment will provide the basis for the CAR Protection Cluster with the support of the GPC to present evidence based programming advocacy information for increased funding by donors to this operation.
4. Advocacy and information sharing on the situation in CAR: The CAR Protection Cluster is working on the production of a comprehensive statement on the protection situation in country. This is a challenging process due to most agencies and organizations having evacuated their staff in December, and access being constrained outside Bangui. With the planned return of actors and needs assessments it is envisaged that this process will be expeditiously concluded. The support of the GPC in high-lighting the situation is needed.

Discussion

In discussion, Mine Action requested further information on explosive remnants of war, unexploded ordnances and the use of land-mines and the associated protection risks. The CAR Protection Cluster committed to provide feedback following the planned assessment.

Handicap international requested information on new IDP displacements. The CAR Protection Cluster Coordinator explained that this information is not currently available but will be shared progressively as feedback from the planned assessment becomes available.

In response to a question on current inter-ethnic tension, it was explained that such tension existed in CAR where groups associated with the various non-state actors could be identified on ethnic but also on religious lines.

The Protection Cluster has not looked at HLP issues but would welcome support on technical assistance and capacity to study land related issues.

The Protection Cluster thus far has had limited interaction with the BINUCA Mission. This is seen as a gap and avenues of interaction will be explored. Peacekeepers from the various regional countries have generally been welcomed by the population. The MICOPEX force and any reinforcements thereof hold the possibility of enhancing the physical security of the population.

Outcomes/action points

1. The CAR Protection Cluster and the GPC Support Cell: to coordinate advocacy related to the current humanitarian situation and donor funding for CAR. However, any advocacy statements will be based on



the humanitarian needs assessment to be undertaken in the next week. There will be a GPC agreed advocacy statement also covering the various areas of responsibility. GPC partners were invited to suggest avenues for targeted advocacy to highlight either the overall protection situation in CAR (including low funding for protection response) or specific areas requiring heightened attention.

2. *Global and National Level Protection Cluster Participants:* to consider providing additional capacity and needed technical assistance and expertise. Human resource gaps should be closed as soon as possible, notably related to Child Protection, SGBV and information management.

2. SITUATION IN SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

L-3 Declaration Measures and Actions by the Global Protection Cluster Lead and Participants

The Global Cluster Co-coordinator opened the meeting by outlining the significance of the Level 3 emergency declaration for the Syria situation by the Emergency Relief Coordinator. She outlined the series of actions that are needed to be taken by the Global Protection Cluster based on the IASC Principals note *“Basis for Declaration of a Humanitarian System-Wide Emergency Response L3”* (attached):

1. Deployment of the Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism Core Team– due to access constraints in Syria it is envisaged that there will be an initial strengthening of co-ordination in Amman. It was underlined that the preferred location for the coordination of protection activities is Damascus. It is also envisaged that the Senior Emergency Coordinator, once appointed, will provide concrete planning, coordination and strategic direction.
2. Recommendation of what are the clusters to be activated and where they should be based. On location of the protection cluster/protection coordination mechanism – the preference of activation of the protection coordination mechanism (cluster) is within Syria with a strong link to any co-ordination set up being designed for Amman. Sensitivities on activation of the protection cluster and its work also need to be taken into account although in-country protection coordination is already in place dealing with community services and protection and it may not be as contentious as initially envisaged. A central focus on responding to the protection needs of the affected population, with full respect of humanitarian principles, is expected to mitigate acceptance challenges of an effective protection mechanism.
3. Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) – IARRM Core team to undertake preparedness, community profiling and secondary data analysis once deployed. There is also a need to support assessments that will be undertaken within Syria as determined by access. In this respect, already existing assessment results should be fully utilized to avoid duplication.
4. Elaboration of an initial strategic statement by Humanitarian Country Team (priorities and strategic approach). This will require the expeditious conclusion of the draft outline of the Protection Strategy that has already been initiated by the Global Protection Cluster Coordinator. The Protection Strategy will then



inform the Humanitarian Country Team strategic statement.

5. Advocacy on the situation but based on the essence of the crisis and targeted at right holders and duty bearers. To this end, possible common advocacy efforts should be undertaken. The Global Protection Cluster Coordinator will soon coordinate a GPC advocacy statement on the protection situation in Syria.
6. Identify Priority Projects as well as underfunded projects for initial CERF allocation and advise the Senior Emergency Coordinator, through the Humanitarian Country Team, on priority CERF allocation. The Protection Coordination Mechanism (Cluster) will look at prioritizing funding to those areas that appear to be under-funded such as Mine Action.
7. Real time evaluation of cluster response – this will be on-going and will commence as soon as there is a decision of cluster set up and this is likely to occur early next week. Notwithstanding, a coordination performance checklist will be completed and shared with OCHA as required under the dictates of the transformative agenda.

It was noted that currently there is a mission of Emergency Directors in Damascus and more information on L-3 roll out will come post their mission. The Directors, upon the advice of the humanitarian country team, are also expected to recommend the most appropriate coordination mechanism, including the optimal clusterisation configuration.

On the issue of whether or not a protection cluster will be activated it was noted that it will come into place in some shape or form and it will work primarily in Damascus with linkages to any Amman coordination mechanism, as appropriate. Furthermore, it should not diminish in any way the significant response already being undertaken by the Government of Syria.

Syria situation update

The conflict intensified during the course of 2012; humanitarian response security and access are the main restrictions. By the end of 2012, over 2 million persons have been displaced and 4 million are directly affected by the conflict. Displacement has affected every part of Syria. The areas most affected are: Central-Western region: Homs -> Al Nabak, Damascus; Southern region: Daraa -> Sweida; Northern region: Aleppo, Idlib; North-Eastern region: Hassakeh, Raqqa and; South-West: Damascus, Rural Damascus. Collection of IDP data is a major gap with regard to their needs and locations as well as disaggregation of figures.

Most IDPs are hosted within the community or private accommodation and less than 5 % live in collective centers and public buildings. All IDPs are viewed as being vulnerable.

There is in place a robust humanitarian effort being coordinated by the Government who are central to the response and relief activities (key ministries being Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MOLSA) and Local administration (ROLA) and Governors). This co-ordination is occurring country wide. There is also strong response from Syrian communities and a number of local civil society organizations to assist the affected population. Co-ordination by humanitarian actors is grouped around 4 sectors: community services/protection



(UNHCR/UNFPA); education (UNICEF); inter-agency forum (OCHA); and health (WFP).

UNHCR has presence in 5 locations across the country (outside Damascus no international staff present). Key priority responses being undertaken: legal support for IDPs; prevention and specific response for SGBV survivors (although there are cultural sensitivities involved in handling these cases which are yet to be bridged and this issue is widespread as indicated in the IRC report); child protection response; lost documentation; protection monitoring in collective centers/shelters.

Key methods of working include coordination with key line ministries, building partnerships with civil society alongside building their capacity, working with government relief bodies as well as the SRC, which has a nationwide presence, and working through out-reach volunteers in communities and through partnership with international agencies such as DRC and premier urgency.

On humanitarian access: Participants raised the issue of accreditation into Syria being tightly regulated at the moment by the State authorities. The cross-border operations that are currently being attempted are not sustainable since they cannot maintain a continuum in service delivery in areas controlled by non-state actors as well as in those controlled by State authorities. Therefore, the current situation requires activities to be based in Syria and work through Damascus.

Responses in reaction to L-3

Mine Action staff is in Damascus and will be coordinating mine action response activities and will tie into any protection co-ordination mechanism in country. Already there exists an informal coordination group, however, an assessment is not possible although ERW impact is significant due to security and access issues and clearance plans are ready and on stand-by. Support staff members are based in Amman already and are working to coordinate the NGO response especially with regard to Mine Risk Education.

Food Security Cluster has had a person deployed in Amman since 25th December and currently background information is being collected. The Protection Advisor for Food Security Cluster is closely following the situation.

Child Protection AOR has 4 rapid response team members on stand-by but visas are the issue for entry into Syria. One rapid response member is already in Amman.

OHCR deploying 4 human rights officers into the region around Syria.

IARRM Core Team a Coordination, Technical, Needs Assessment, Information Management and Inter-Cluster Coordination Team has been mobilized and placed on the highest level of readiness. The team will deploy to the location deemed most effective and efficient once Emergency Directors and Syria Humanitarian Country Team provide the relevant direction on this.

Issues that require further consideration in the appropriate forum

1. Accreditation – how can NGOs and others be supported in entering Syria? What support can the



protection cluster provide?

2. Co-ordination modalities – how does the protection cluster actually set up? To be discussed further.
3. CERF allocation regional or in country – to be discussed further.

Outcomes/action points

1. GPC Support Cell: to ensure that draft protection strategy outline is circulated to members of the GPC Steering Committee for consideration and in-put.
2. Global Protection Cluster Coordinator: to initiate and lead on advocacy which must be targeted and based on facts as well as complement other advocacy actions that are taking place by others.

3. MISSION DEBRIEFS – CHAD AND DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The Senior Protection Officer (ProCap) deployed to the GPC to perform roving support functions presented the report of his mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The report was welcomed by the GPC participants. They also informed that it was important to review the excellent report submitted and discuss it in detail at a later stage. The report on Chad could not be submitted due to time constraints, however, it was also decided to discuss it in detail at a later stage.

Outcome/Action Points

The GPC Support Cell: to schedule a special coordination meeting of the GPC during which the two mission reports and recommendations contained therein will be considered by GPC participants, especially including the target audience of the recommendations.

**Global Protection Cluster,
19 January 2013**