

Closing Remarks for the Global Protection Forum on “Access that Protects” Geneva, 28 October 2022

Good morning, Good afternoon, Good evening colleagues,

I have the pleasure to provide few remarks at the end of this very fruitful discussion and rich week of the Global Protection Forum.

While there is certainly still a long way to go, together and thanks to the joint efforts and good practices shared with us today and during the whole forum, the route towards achieving our common objectives hopefully appears less challenging and key actions needed clearer.

This common objective being to:

1. **Secure and sustain humanitarian access and space as key to contributing to effective protection of the persons we work with and for.**
2. **Better using access negotiations as an enabler and opportunity to strengthen the centrality of protection in our collective interventions and achieving collective protection outcomes.**

‘Access is essential to effective humanitarian action but is not an end goal’. It is ‘rather a means to fulfil the broader goal of improving the humanitarian conditions of people in need of assistance and protection’.

There is no magic wand, or one size fits all approach.

As David and Ramsey highlighted, Protection – including the gender lens – is essential to provide better context analysis on the risks related to specific interventions and mitigating measures that should be put in place through engaging with local communities to enable access to essential services. Without it, we risk achieving access...that does not protect, if populations cannot access services or go back home safely or find ourselves back to the “well fed dead” scenarios of the 1990s.

Ashley highlighted how access, presence and proximity – or the lack there of – is closely linked to lack of attention to protection.

Localisation provides opportunities to ensure access and operational continuity in many situations. Working with and through local actors and communities enhances proximity of the response, but it is unlikely to achieve protection – and likely to increase risks for local partners – if it means international actors abandon the frontlines to local actors, transfer risks, and if we fail to leverage our collective capacity, resources and added values.

Using opportunities of access from non-protection actors, such as our food security colleagues, can also contribute to protection thanks to clear and safe protection observation, reporting and referral guidelines to feed our collective protection monitoring and analysis particularly in areas hard-to-reach for protection actors.

As Ramsey showed with the case of Nigeria, coordination and advocacy for Access, CMCoord and Protection are closely linked. We should continue to work on enhancing coordination of action across those forums.

Using opportunities for protection advocacy in our access negotiations, in our engagement with local authorities, leaders, armed actors and communities is not easy! Ashley showed very eloquently the challenges that new variants bring to old problems. Actually, it may well be one of the most difficult, sensitive and challenging aspect of our humanitarian work. But if humanitarian work was easy, there would not be a need for all of us... As William Chemaly, our former GPC coordinator, often told us, as protection actors in particular, but as humanitarians in general, we need to be troublemakers, smart and enabling troublemakers, but troublemakers nonetheless, and not shy away from difficulties and challenges.

I would like to propose a provoking thought as we discussed engaging Access WG to achieve access that protects. Let's have OCHA and a protection actor or the protection cluster co-chair the Access WG in all operations to bring both expertise together on access and on protection.

I hope that we can build upon this opportunity to put in practice all the shared good practices and learn from those who are advocating and negotiating every day on the frontlines and in hard-to-reach areas to deliver services and protection for those who need it the most.

For those of you who have never done so, I would strongly recommend reading the seminal report Stay & Deliver, and its sequel ['Presence & Proximity to stay and deliver, five years on''](#).

With this, I would like to close our October 2022 Forum.

I can say with confidence that year after year the Global Protection Forum has become a great event and platform for various actors from different sectors, regions, backgrounds and expertise to come together not only to discuss policies and practices but also to shift behaviours in order to advance access that protects, and the broader protection agenda.

A special thanks again to all organizers of the Forum, Marie and Emma, and a HUGE thank to PHAP and the production team who made this all possible - Julie, Nathalie, Markus and all the interpreters. Thank you to Houda for being such a great facilitator, to our panellists and all of you for joining us today and this whole week. We've had great participation in all 12 sessions of the Forum.

The recording of the sessions and key background documents will be available the GPC website soon. We look forward to future events/learning, engagement and collective actions on access for protection - including our End of Year Event in December. More on this soon.

Thank you all, good luck, stay safe wherever you are, take care, and have a great weekend for those of you who can take some well-deserved rest.

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