

Consultations of the Ukraine operation

Kiev, September 2015

1. The situation in Ukraine is well known and won't be repeated here. While the adoption of *A Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements* on 12 February 2015 notably decreased the intensity and scope of hostilities in eastern Ukraine, the report on the human rights situation in Ukraine (16 May to 15 August 2015) of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights continues to note the impact of the conflict on the civilian population, including thousands of violations of the rights to life, liberty, security and physical integrity. The humanitarian response is shaped by a number of government legislative acts on aid to displaced persons, registration, the payment of pensions and benefits and freedom of movement from non-government controlled areas but the situation of many people remains desperate. As of 7 September 2015, the Ukrainian authorities report that 1,460,000 persons are internally displaced, with another 1.1m Ukrainians seeking asylum or other forms of stay in Europe.
2. The Ukraine Protection Cluster undertook consultations on expectations of the field of the GPC and provided a note of those discussions.
3. The lack of respect for the rule of law across the country, with armed groups composed of volunteer battalions effectively controlling many areas is a major problem. However, lack of respect for the rule of law also extends to frequent changes in the regulations concerning the humanitarian response adopted by central government.
4. Freedom of movement, housing, civil documentation, registration as an IDP and challenges in access to services are major concerns. The lack of a national institutional focal point for displaced persons in the office of the Prime Minister or President, with counterparts at regional level, is undermining effective efforts to deal with these problems. In this situation, the GPC could help develop a strategy to support and strengthen state mechanisms and ensure a rights-based approach to the needs of the conflict-affected population.
5. In a very centralised system of government, as in Ukraine, there needs to be a strong line of communication between the field and Kiev so that the cluster can issues with the Government. The Cluster has a role in raising the profile of protection and ensuring protection is mainstreamed into the work of other clusters. Standard setting, such as the development of vulnerability criteria and evaluation guidance are a positive step forward, and well appreciated. Some clusters, such as shelter, may still require further work to inhere protection standards.

6. The protection cluster in Ukraine is seen as an important means to consolidate a community of national protection actors in Ukraine, including self-organized IDPs. Existing NGOs are becoming more protection and human rights focused through the meetings and activities organized by the cluster. However, there is more for the cluster to do, such as lifting up the standards of national regulations and laws and this requires an holistic lobbying strategy and a coordinated approach to change laws. The role of the protection cluster as a national actor needs thinking through and the GPC could assist with this process.
7. The operational support that the GPC offered last year, such as training on IASC guidelines was appreciated but more could be done in terms of support in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, for example by standard activity costing. The cost of protection activities obviously has to be adjusted per situation but it would be helpful if the GPC could do some basic background work on this. The GPC is also asked to provide guidance and best practices/ examples for how to work with national partners, particularly in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.
8. The GPC could provide some guidance on specific issues, such as:
 - a. **Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance:** a Cash Working Group has been set up in Ukraine outside the cluster structure. Now that the HNP and HRP are being developed, guidance reads that multi-purpose cash assistance will remain outside of the clusters in terms of coordination but also of the budget. Clarification from the GPC on how multi-purpose cash activities should be coordinated would be welcome.
 - b. **Coordination of issues regarding older persons:** given the demographics in Ukraine, older persons are prominent on the agenda and are an important group at risk. There has been a push for the protection cluster to coordinate a working group on and a preferred option would be to create a task team led by a specialist agency, which has the wherewithal and technical knowledge. Guidance from the GPC and examples of other operations about the subject of older persons would be helpful.
 - c. **Coordination between Protection and Health cluster on MHPSS issues:** while MHPSS is under the health cluster, a number of protection actors provide psycho-social support and consider this as a key protection activity. A hybrid approach to coordination is adopted in Ukraine but a more coherent approach might be needed and the GPC could provide advice about how this is done in other contexts.
9. Further training is needed for national actors on humanitarian principles. The GPC also has a role to play in demonstrating that the protection cluster must focus on delivery. That being said, the GPC can only be effective in reaching national actors if language is clear and advice is practical and guidance is translated quickly.

C. Conclusions

10. Several of the themes which emerged from the consultations echo the Independent Whole of System Review, notably the need to include local actors in defining protection for the particular context they work in and making guidance relevant and timely.
11. Actionable suggestions for the GPC include:
 - a. Providing guidance for RC/HCs on their responsibilities to make protection central to the humanitarian operation;
 - b. Providing further training to national actors on humanitarian principles and the concept of protection in humanitarian action;
 - c. Clarifying at the global level the role of protection clusters in cash coordination;
 - d. Providing further guidance on protection activities and more explicit advice on the Humanitarian Programme Cycle;
 - e. Conducting an audit of the centrality of protection in the operation;
 - f. Providing examples of good practice in protection relevant to the Ukraine operation, including examples of working with older persons;
 - g. Ensuring that standards and guidance are developed from a diverse perspective and are automatically translated into Russian.