

GLOBAL PROTECTION CLUSTER | STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2016-19

CONSULTATIONS OF THE MYANMAR OPERATION

YANGON, 21-22 OCTOBER 2015

1. The Senior Protection Coordinator undertook a series of consultations in Yangon with donors, UN agencies, international NGOs and local NGOs over two days. The situation in Myanmar is well known and won't be repeated here but it is worth highlighting that the country suffers from multiple emergencies, with different causes and effects, response and, more important, different prospects for solution. There is an emerging possibility of progress towards solutions in Rakhine, whereas Kachin remains an on-going humanitarian situation and the South-East has some time ago moved from a humanitarian to an early recovery/development scenario on the spectrum from relief to development. Human rights problems elsewhere, e.g. in Chin, continue to result in outflows of people and recurrent problems, e.g. flooding, continue to cause misery for thousands of people. Myanmar has a high number of CSOs, who respond quickly when floods occur, often in tandem with the private sector.
2. During the consultations, a consensus emerged that the Global Protection Cluster is looked to for guidance, experience and the sharing of best practices e.g. on inclusion of national partners, but that this support to the field needs to be stepped up and made more relevant for the field.
3. It was felt that the guidance provided by the GPC is useful but that the coordination toolbox (on the GPC website) is incomplete, with gaps on assessments, training templates etc. It was felt that it would also be useful to draw on guidance from the region, e.g. the mainstreaming guidance from Nepal, tailored to Myanmar. As the toolbox appeared to be incomplete staff used their own contacts to check if what was lacking was available, e.g. from the GBV AOR in Bangkok
4. Advocacy is a challenge in Myanmar, especially the relationship with the Government. Training for staff would be helpful, especially on working with local authorities. Everything is done behind the scenes in Myanmar but there was a feeling that perhaps agencies could be more vocal. It was recommended that the GPC could convene a workshop to bring together experience from around the World. Some technical issues could also be covered, including indicators about outcomes, development of analysis, stakeholder mapping etc. Questions such as how can levers like CTFMR be used to convince authorities to stop using children as forced labour? What are the strategic uses of different types of advocacy? How to construct a feedback loop? It was felt that the GPC could hold regional workshops on

protection advocacy as there is a demand for something more tangible, a framework that is practical and helpful.

5. It was felt that advocacy cannot be situated only in the protection cluster in a context where access to food and shelter is an issue. There is too much weight on the protection cluster when the responsibility belongs to the HCT, e.g. on health access. The GPC should advocate with other global clusters to take up their responsibilities to advocate for protection. What does the centrality of protection mean when it keeps coming back to limited actors?
6. It was felt that the centrality of protection has not been fully absorbed by the clusters/sectors. The protection cluster here developed a presentation on the centrality of protection in Myanmar and a presentation in the GPC toolbox would have been helpful; as an example, it was said that the Global Cluster Coordinator's webinar was helpful. A presentation could be developed from that.
7. A recommendation to the GPC to use an innovative approach to explaining centrality of protection should be used, e.g. a game.
8. There is a problem of international, field and national levels working on different planes, a gulf in understanding. For example, the national government understanding of protection is lacking and focussed on social welfare. It was recommended that the GPC should deploy someone on mission for a week or a month to help the cluster navigate the guidance that exists and help find what is relevant to the operation on the ground. An external person can provide a fresh look.
9. The GPC should compile best practices from different operations and build a community of practice, which was said to be very helpful. Questions could include how to approach difficult problems, e.g. talking to the government about "protection" issues.
10. The GPC should address the issue of governance failures in the system, i.e. why are parts of the system not pulling its weight? Also at the national level protection actors tend to pull back when talking about governance vs. protection because of an emergency mindset. There is a lack of understanding about the "egg model". The GPC could be a catalyst behind linking relief to development, or even just reinforcing the egg model. This would also help in the dichotomy between humanitarian protection and human rights defence.
11. The GPC could provide more support to the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. The guidance on the HPC dictates a very heavy process, and GPC support to a lighter process would be helpful. What is the purpose of the HRP? Is it for fund-raising or a strategic document? What are we trying to do with these documents? The protection analysis is more interesting

than the other aspects of the HPC. The GPC needs to be ahead of the game rather than following behind.

12. The working language in the regions is Burmese but at Yangon level is English. The cluster at the national level needs to bridge this divide. The GPC guidance should be translated into local languages for it to be useful for local actors, who are providing humanitarian response.
13. A question was raised about whether the operation is coordinating at the right level. Is there a need for a cluster in Yangon? Should there be a need only at the local level? The example of Somalia is relevant and the GPC could help resolve some of these questions.
14. The participation in the cluster needs to be broadened to include private sector, e.g. businesses as well as national authorities. The GPC has a role to play in sharing practice and guidance. Clusters are in general not very inclusive and private sector is often the first responder. The GPC could facilitate working with private sector and its participation in the cluster/strategy.
15. Local NGOs are obtaining funding through UN agencies or INGOs and not directly from donors. Partly, they do not know what the funding situation is for protection or what they can get funding for. The funding restrictions placed by donors, e.g. the requirement for matching funding, or the payment cycle, inhibits applications from local NGOs who do not have reserves to draw down.
16. Local NGOs find the link to the UN for advocacy is useful, in removing military installations from civilian areas. This is the kind of support they need, rather than financial support.
17. Local NGOs tend to participate in technical working groups rather than broader clusters. The cluster meetings are helpful as a forum to share information and difficulties and to receive technical advice. It would be helpful to hold meetings in Burmese, because some people cannot speak English well, especially because the people who are working in the field do not have strong English skills. The translation of GPC guidance is essential if it is to be useful.
18. Local NGOs do not take part in the Humanitarian Country Team as the criteria for participation do not permit local NGOs, although this may be changing. Local NGOs do take part in the area HCT (Joint Strategy Team). However, the link between the locality and the capital is not clear.
19. Local NGOs do not have capacity to attend all meetings at national level and will attend according to the relevance of the agenda because one meeting can take up a whole morning or afternoon (because of traffic in Yangon).

20. It would be helpful to develop proposals more at the field level, and more explanation needed in the field of funding processes.

Conclusions

21. The consultations made clear that while the guidance produced by the GPC is helpful there is a need to ensure that the guidance keeps pace with developments, e.g. the IASC statement on the centrality of protection in humanitarian action, is published and disseminated more rapidly and through different channels, is tailored to operational realities and is translated into local languages in order for it to be useful. The lesson for the GPC is that guidance needs to be developed more quickly, with less emphasis on getting the (English) language right, clearer and simpler.
22. It is clear also that guidance need not necessarily come in written form or come from a central point; the consultations in Myanmar echoed other consultations in requesting the GPC to build a community of practice to exchange experience between countries and to be innovative in disseminating messages.