



Panellists

Mr Volker Turk

Assistant High Commissioner on Protection, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Mr Eugene Owusu

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan.

Facilitator

Mr Panos Moutziz

Director, Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT)

Webinar summary

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Humanitarian leadership on protection: Why it matters? How to do it?

Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) are responsible for ensuring that protection is at the heart of humanitarian response. This expectation is reflected in the IASC Principals Statement on the centrality of protection in humanitarian action from December 2013. However, many HCTs still do not have a protection strategy. Additionally, there is still confusion over how the role of the HC differs from the HCT and the Protection Cluster, and what actions are expected of each of them to enhance protection practices.

Based on their experiences, the speakers outline practical steps that senior humanitarian leaders in field operations can take to:

- ◆ Take forward the key leadership responsibilities on protection.
- ◆ Capitalise on the complementary roles of HCT members, the Protection Cluster, and Inter-Cluster Coordination Group.
- ◆ Advocate with different stakeholders in-country to maximise protection outcomes.

Practical steps for HCs to take forward their responsibilities on protection

- ◆ The HC should request a few members of the HCT - possibly the protection cluster lead agency (UNHCR), one NGO and one UN agency - to develop a short (2 pages) HCT Protection Strategy that prioritises the 2 or 3 most critical protection concerns in-country. The HCT protection strategy needs to derive from the protection cluster (including sub-clusters) analysis of vulnerabilities and to focus on the leadership role HC/HCT members can play to advance the issues. This can include public or 'behind doors' advocacy on critical protection issues and/or vision guidance to clusters and Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) on how to prioritise/operationalise programmatic responses to vulnerable groups.
- ◆ The HC/should have protection as a standing item on the HCT agenda where the agency lead for Protection presents a Critical Protection Issues (CPI) Note linked to the 2 or 3 critical protection concerns. The Note can be prepared by the Protection Cluster Coordinators and should include follow-up actions for HCT members.
- ◆ The HC/HCT should support the Protection cluster and sub-clusters to compile strong protection analysis which is reflected in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and facilitate protection programming.
- ◆ The HC/HCT should ensure that the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) strategic statement and the cluster/sector plans have strong protection objectives with the ICCG tasked to ensure mainstream protection across the different clusters.

Useful links

The Global Protection Cluster: <http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/>

The Centrality of Protection: Practical Steps for Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams: https://deliveraidbetter.s3.amazonaws.com/media/page_pdfs/HCHCT_CoP_in_practice_Note_FINAL.pdf

STAIT Webinar Summary – Centrality of Protection: <http://www.deliveraidbetter.org/pages/webinars/accountability-to-affected-people/protecting-civilians-mission-impossible-humanitarian-leadership-in-action>

Mr Volker Turk

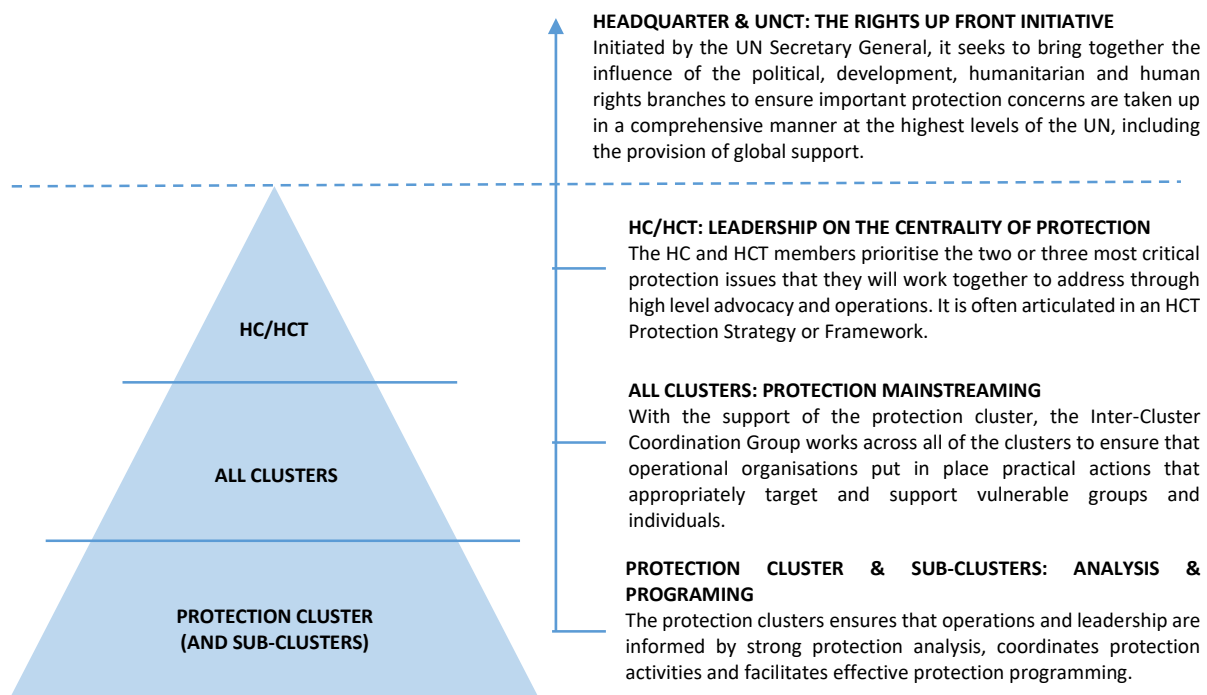
Assistant High Commissioner on Protection, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Protection is the very essence of humanitarian action and therefore must be at the centre of humanitarian response. In order to do this effectively, HCs should exercise leadership to ensure that protection is at the centre of humanitarian planning, preparedness, and response. While the Protection Cluster is tasked with raising protection issues, providing analysis, and coming up with options, and the ICCG/HCT is in charge of mainstreaming protection in all the activities of the operation, it is the HC's responsibility to provide direction to ensure a coordinated response to protection issues.

Why is collective leadership by Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams important for ensuring that the centrality of protection is put into practice in field operations?

1. As the top strategic body within an interagency response, the **HCT** has responsibilities that cannot be delegated to the cluster or a single agency. With the help of the Protection Cluster, the HCT helps in identifying and addressing the 2 or 3 most critical protection concerns in a systematic and strategic manner. Additionally, within the HCT, there should be a small team (consisting of agency representatives for the Protection Cluster and sub-cluster, as well as at least one NGO representatives) to lead the drafting of a protection strategy. The protection strategy should be short, flexible, and realistic. It should ensure that key protection activities are taken forward in the advocacy and operations of all HCT members. The HC/HCT should make protection a standing item on the HCT agenda, as it is in Iraq where the agency lead for Protection (UNHCR) presents a short Critical Protection Issues note every fortnight prepared by the Protection Cluster Coordinators with recommended actions for HCT members.
2. The HC is responsible for ensuring that protection is prioritised in operations, mainstreamed across the clusters, and that decisions are informed by strong protection analysis. The **HC** has a particularly important role to provide clear direction across the response when faced with protection dilemmas. For example, in Iraq, humanitarians had to decide how to engage in centres set up to screen civilians fleeing areas of armed conflict, even though human rights violations were alleged to be occurring in these centres. Humanitarians needed to strike a fine balance between upholding the humanitarian imperative whilst not compromising fundamental human rights norms. Such situations involve compromises and require clear direction from the HC on what positions should be taken across the response.

THE PROTECTION PYRAMID



Protection is often perceived as being too sensitive to take up with Governments and non-state armed actors. It can be seen as a choice between protection and access. What are the practical steps that HCs can take in-country to show leadership on sensitive protection concerns despite the challenges?

1. The HC should advocate for space and political backing within the UN system and by partners, NGOs, and donors, to raise and advocate for difficult protection issues.
2. The HC should strive to have a sustained engagement with governments and other stakeholders over time, as this will increase confidence in the UN/HCT as a reliable partner. In many cases, UNHCR's engagement extends over decades and the Office's protection and assistance activities are well-understood.
3. HCs are often also Resident Coordinators. In this case the HC/RC should use experience and resources gained elsewhere, including political and development, to a critical situation before it creates humanitarian need.
4. The HC is in a unique position to increase advocacy efforts with government members, placing emphasis on the responsibility of States to uphold and comply with international laws that protect people in armed conflict.
5. The HC should establish or engage with existing networks of influential stakeholders for advocacy (for example, influential Ambassadors). As the leader of the operation, the HC should build on the complementarities across his/her HCT members who have access to different levels and types of stakeholders.

Mr Eugene Owusu

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan.

South Sudan is one of the most challenging protection contexts in the world. Since 2013, the population has been exposed to repeated attacks and other violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. This includes widespread sexual violence, forced recruitment of children and deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure. While some IDPs have found refuge in UN Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites, they represent a small proportion of the millions of people affected by the crisis and in need of assistance and protection. Even those who have reached the PoC sites face risks. Women and girls continue to be exposed to significant levels of sexual violence inside the PoC sites and when collecting firewood and food outside. Civilians have also been attacked after receiving humanitarian assistance, making conflict sensitive programming imperative in the South Sudan context.

What concrete steps can HCs take to ensure protection is at the heart of the operation and advocacy?

1. Strategic reflections and joint action:

- ◆ The HC and the HCT should create a protection strategy to anchor the activities of the HCT and place protection as a key component of Humanitarian Response Plans. For example, South Sudan is first and foremost a protection crisis. The HC/HCT decided to have both a specific Strategic Objective on protection and mainstream protection throughout the HRP. This will be complemented by a revamped Protection Strategy, which is under development.
- ◆ As the leader of the operation, the HC should ensure the implementation of the protection strategy. The development of a strategy or formulation of a Strategic Objective is meaningful only if it translates into meaningful action. To this end, the HCT in South Sudan dedicated time to discuss specific contexts and specific protection risks in order to identify steps to take to address them. In 2015, the HC made the situation in Central and Southern Unity – where horrific atrocities were taking place – a standing agenda item in the HCT. Under that agenda item, building on information and analysis compiled by the Protection Cluster, the HC/HCT discussed how to influence UNMISS' decision-making regarding deployment of troops and assets to the area.

2. Advocacy:

- ◆ The HC and HCT should use a combination of public and private advocacy to address issues related to protection of civilians. For example, in July 2016, when conflict erupted in Juba, civilians bore the brunt of the fighting. At the time, the HC/HCT engaged on multiple levels with multiple actors in an endeavour to protect civilians and ensure that the team could reach them with assistance. Both public statement condemning the fighting and a written demarche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was used. The HC also held conversations with all parties and urged them to uphold their obligations under IHL. The HC/HCT is also in charge of engaging proactively with various high-level mandate-holders in the United Nations to raise the profile of protection issues in South Sudan, such as the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

3. Funding:

- ◆ Ensure that protection partners are equipped with the necessary resources. Protection is often one of the lowest-funded clusters in a Humanitarian Response Plan. In South Sudan, the HC worked with the Advisory Board to allocate funding to protection partners at critical moments in the response. They funded a partner to work on clinical management of rape in Wau following the fighting in February and June. Dignity kits and child friendly spaces for the response in the Greater Equatoria region were also funded.

How can the HC/HCT address sensitive protection issues such as sexual and gender based violence (SGBV)?

Rape can be used as a weapon of war by all parties throughout the conflict. Women and girls are exposed to the risk of violence when carrying out their most basic daily activities, including collecting firewood and fuel. In responding to GBV, the HC/HCT in South Sudan faced a range of challenges, including: difficulties accessing locations where survivors are, as rape often occurs in remote and hard-to-reach areas during military operations; inability of survivors to reach care within the 72 hour window for Post Exposure Prophylaxis; and cultural stigma associated with sexual violence, which may inhibit reporting. Steps that the HC/HCT can take to address SGBV include:

- ◆ Include SGBV as a standing item on the HCT agenda, and engage with UNFPA, as the GBV Sub-Cluster Lead, to identify concrete actions to take forward.
- ◆ When possible, encourage UN missions on the ground to undertake patrols in areas where women are at risk.
- ◆ Work with the Protection Cluster to produce and distribute referral cards, so that survivors know where they could access services, both in the PoC sites and Juba town.
- ◆ Conduct advocacy activities to call for an end to the violations. This includes engagement at the highest levels of government, leveraging the donor community to bolster pressure, and behind the scenes discussions with armed actors to urge compliance with IHL.

This summary is a combination of presentations from the webinar and broader learnings from the STAIT team. To listen to the full webinar and to access recordings of past webinars, visit the STAIT webinar: <http://www.deliveraidbetter.org/>

