

NOTE ON THE ROLL-OUT OF THE CLUSTER APPROACH IN DRC

Status of the Roll-Out of Cluster Approach

- Seven Protection Working Groups (PWGs) are operational: Kinshasa, North Kivu, South Kivu (2 groups - 1 in Bukavu and 1 in Uvira), Province Orientale and Katanga (2 groups - 1 covering Kalemie, Moba, Pweto and Manono and 1 covering Dubie, Mitwaba). Participants include UN Agencies, International NGOs, and MONUC- (UN Peace Keeping Mission) Due to the number of National NGOs and also for security concerns national NGOs are being associated through separate meetings. UNHCR is leading the protection clusters with MONUC.
- To support the establishment of the PWGs, one Procap and four UNHCR staff have been deployed on respectively six months and two months missions in Bunia/Ituri- Province Oriental (PROCAP), North Kivu, South Kivu, Katanga, and Kinshasa Two additional Procap staff have been requested for six months for North Kivu and Kinshasa as well as the recruitment of an external candidate for Katanga. Receipt of funding is permitting the Office to start the process to create three (3) posts for Bunia (P3), Kinshasa (P4), Goma (P3).
- Terms of reference and guidelines for PWGs have been established and adopted for cross-cluster coordination in recognition of the cross-cutting nature of protection.
- Monitoring forms have been developed by the cluster lead and are being discussed with the partners in the protection cluster.
- There have been two (2) significant achievements to date as a result of the PWGs.
 - The first is growing collaboration between military and humanitarian actors. MONUC peace keepers are gaining a greater appreciation for the protection implications of their activities and are more receptive to concerns raised with them by humanitarian actors. One example is the recent deployment of MONUC Peace Keepers (South African Contingent) to Katanga Province, where the population was exposed to gross human rights violations by armed groups. This preventive deployment has proven effective in reducing violence against the population. The protection cluster has also led to improved coordination and information sharing between military and civilians within the UN mission; such as MONUC informing the PWGs of planned military operations in advance to limit casualties/ displacement and ensure quick assistance and relocation. Consequently, NGOs that were resistant to collaboration with peace-keepers are increasingly appreciating the advantages to closer coordination.
 - Secondly, the PWG are being recognized as a united group which has given it more advocacy force. This led to the National Congolese Army agreeing to change one brigade in Katanga due to concerns raised about human rights violations. High - ranking DRC government officials, including President Kabila, have been briefed about protection concerns by protection cluster leads.

Challenges

- Ensure a common and wide understanding of the cluster approach among all actors and interlocutors
- Determine when the provider of last resort comes into affect with new displacement and how to implement such a concept in cross- cutting clusters such as protection.
- Ensure adequate participation of NGOs at Kinshasa and field level level and dissemination of information to all NGOs in the field and ensuring constructive NGO participation in the protection cluster

- Identification of experienced senior staff for short-term missions pending the creation of posts and assignment of staff to the post. While the Procap Roster (tier 1) is proving to be a useful short-term stop-gap arrangement, staff familiar with UNHCR procedures and processes is needed for new areas of operations.
- Identification of experienced UNHCR senior staff with relevant skill profile for DRC operation. This is a key condition for establishing credible leadership of a cluster.

Future Activities

- Thus far, the PWGs have mainly focused on establishing themselves, reaching common understanding of TORs and guiding principles on operationalizing the protection cluster in the DRC while equally assessing and addressing new and/or urgent displacement situations. The PWGs will now build upon these activities focusing on comprehensive participatory assessments and analysis of needs/gaps and of capacities with a view to develop province-specific flexible protection strategies and establish action plans, which are reflective of the diverse realities throughout the country and key protection priorities.

April 2006