

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE  
IASC WEEKLY MEETING

**Summary Note**

28 November 2007  
Geneva

**I Briefing on the High Commissioner for Refugee's Dialogue on Protection Challenges on 11 and 12 December 2007**

Mr. José Riera (Senior Policy Adviser, Policy Development and Evaluation Service, UNHCR) briefed participants on the upcoming High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges on 11-12 December 2007. The suggestion to create a mechanism for flexible, non-directive consultations on protection between stakeholders first emerged from the Global Consultations on International Protection, held between 2000 and 2002 with the aim of adapting the 1951 Refugee Convention to today's challenges. The Dialogue on Protection is intended to serve as a forum for high-level and participatory dialogue that will permit discussion on special, novel or sensitive protection-related matters without evolving into a standing body or necessarily leading to elicit formal or agreed outcomes.

The first meeting of the HC's Dialogue on Protection Challenges on the topic "Refugee protection and international migration" will be held in Geneva on 11 and 12 December 2007. While international migration receives a lot of political attention, discussions are mostly focused on combating illegal immigration and smuggling and trafficking of people. In an attempt to fill this gap, the conference will be aimed at identifying challenges and building partnerships to guarantee refugee protection in mixed migration flows while approaching problems from a human rights perspective; the latter being especially relevant in preparation for the Global Forum on Migration and Development, to be held in Manila in 2008. It was stressed that the aim to enhance the protection of human rights of both refugees and migrants, does not imply an attempt to extend UNHCR's mandate to migrants.

For the December 2007 meeting, over 200 invitations have been sent out to states, strategic IGO partners (including the members of the Global Migration Group), NGOs from all continents (including migrants' and employers' representatives), the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and several experts. Since the Dialogue is designed as a forum for dialogue and exchange of views, all delegations – preferably consisting of officials with both decision-making authority and expertise in asylum and migration issues – are encouraged to participate freely, rather than submitting formal written statements. The conference itself will be informal in character with discussions in breakout groups, just as the outcome document will be a Chair's summary, rather than a more formal text.

The principal background document for the Dialogue is the paper 'Refugee protection and durable solutions in the context of international migration' and can – along with further documentation – be downloaded from [www.unhcr.org/hc-dialogue](http://www.unhcr.org/hc-dialogue). Further information will be given at a Food-for-Thought meeting on Wednesday, 5 December 2007 (12h30, MBT) and inquiries can be addressed to José Riera (Secretary of the HC's Dialogue; [Riera@unhcr.org](mailto:Riera@unhcr.org); +41 22 739 7684) or Rüdiger Schöch ([schoch@unhcr.org](mailto:schoch@unhcr.org); +41 22 739 8675).

## **II Debriefing on the Workshop on the IASC Gender-based Violence Guidelines in CAR, 29-31 October 2007**

Ms. Miriam Azar (Consultant, Women's Commission, formerly UNICEF staff) debriefed participants on the Workshop on the IASC Gender-based Violence Guidelines conducted in the Central African Republic from 29 until 31 October 2007. Since their endorsement by the IASC in 2005, the GBV Guidelines have been published in Arabic, Bahasa, English, Farsi, French, Russian and Spanish, and have subsequently been rolled out in Colombia, Uganda, Thailand, CAR, Mozambique and Nepal in 2007, with plans to roll out in Angola and Haiti in 2008. The tools have, moreover, been introduced and promoted through the deployment of GenCap advisors, and other Gender trainings organised through the IASC SWG on Gender. The Guidelines can be accessed at: [http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/subsidi/tf\\_gender/gbv.asp](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/subsidi/tf_gender/gbv.asp).

The workshop in Bangui was co-organised and facilitated by the GenCap advisor, UNFPA (Bangui & Nairobi) and UNICEF (Geneva), and joined by speakers from the CAR Ministry of Social Affairs, WHO and IRC, just as it was attended by 50 humanitarian actors including the CAR Government, UN agencies, international NGOs and local human rights organisations. Topics discussed at the workshop included concepts, tools for implementation, the political and social background, the legal environment, GBV programming, ethics and confidentiality and children as victims and witnesses of GBV. Group work resulted in the development of action sheets aimed at the improvement of a multi-sectoral approach and integration of GBV response into cluster work.

While several positive developments regarding responses to GBV in CAR can be noted (e.g. IRC's GBV programme, MSF's mobile clinics and local NGO assistance), participants identified several common challenges regarding programming responses to GBV in CAR. First, sexual and domestic violence remain widespread, which is of particular concern in the light of the climate of impunity and stigmatisation. Second, limited access to health services and psychosocial support affects not only the victims of rape, but also those subjected to female genital mutilation or infected with sexually transmitted diseases – often as a result of GBV (the overall HIV prevalence in CAR is 6.2% - 4.3% among the male population, 7.8% female). Further challenges include a general need to expand qualitative GBV programming, and the need to address the lack of (i) data collected in an ethical manner, (ii) technical expertise, (iii) funding, and (iv) security, confidentiality, respect, and non-discrimination when dealing with survivors – including by providing the space to ensure confidentiality is upheld. Humanitarian actors have also identified a need to improve their coordination and information sharing efforts, just as it is deemed essential to build technical expertise on GBV programming in humanitarian settings.

The outcomes of the workshop included (i) a group of trained and motivated humanitarian actors, including CAR government officials, and (ii) key recommendation to establish a time bound inter-agency GBV in emergencies coordination mechanism (to be chaired by UNFPA) that is to focus on the coordination of technical assistance, capacity-building, mapping of GBV activities, advocacy for a multi-sectoral approach and problem-solving activities in GBV interventions within humanitarian settings. The UNCT recently welcomed the TORs drafted for this Technical Group. The workshop provided momentum for using the cluster approach to improve coordination among humanitarian actors at all levels in particular aimed at improving data collection, advocacy, funding and supporting several political developments, such as the ICC investigations opened in May 2007.

After the briefing, the participants' attention was drawn to an article by ERC John Holmes that recounts his impressions after having visited GBV victims in DRC. The article can be accessed at <http://coalitionfordarfur.blogspot.com/2007/10/drc-congos-rape-war.html>.

### **III Introduction of the French Version of the Self-study on Civil-Military Guidelines in Multidimensional Peace Missions**

Approximately a year after the successful launch of the English version of the self-study UN-CMCOORD IMPACT (Integrated Missions Practical Approach to Coordination Tools), Mr. Josef Reiterer and Ms. Anne-Sophie Durand (Civil-Military Coordination Section, OCHA) presented the French version of the tool to the Weekly participants. The objective of this interactive tool, which has received very positive feedback from actors in the field, is to raise awareness on humanitarian guiding documents on civil-military coordination among peacekeepers and civilians working in or with integrated missions. The French version aims at responding to specific needs expressed by military and civilian personnel responding to complex emergencies in French speaking countries. The self-study tool is available on CD-Rom (to be ordered from [cmcs@un.org](mailto:cmcs@un.org)) and online at <http://ocha.unog.ch/uncmcoord/>.

## Participants

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