

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

IASC PRINCIPALS BI-ANNUAL MEETING

SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION POINTS

Geneva, 28 November 2022

Introduction

Mr. Martin Griffiths, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Chair of the IASC, convened the second IASC Principals bi-annual meeting in 2022 to discuss key humanitarian crises, Accountability to Affected People (AAP), Protection, humanitarian funding and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (PSEA/SH).

The ERC noted that Principals had gathered at a pivotal juncture. Reflecting on COP27, he stressed the humanitarian system needs to be better organized to address the climate crisis, particularly around resilience and ensuring the views of affected communities are adequately represented in the climate conversation, and tapping into climate funding. In this regard, he suggested to come together shortly to agree on collective roles and responsibilities to deliver on these issues and feed into COP28 consultations around climate-humanitarian-fragility.

Country Contexts

IASC Principals discussed critical humanitarian situations, including Somalia, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Haiti and Afghanistan and agreed on actions to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs on the ground.

Putting Communities Affected by Crises at the Center of our Work

The ERC opened the session by highlighting efforts of IASC members to put affected people at the center of the humanitarian response.

He noted that the report presented by Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) was commissioned to capture the perceptions of communities affected by crisis to inform IASC discussions and decisions on how to make the system more engaged with and responsive to communities affected by crisis. He also stated that the report demonstrates that we have a long way to go. The report also provides evidence for why change, while difficult, is necessary and that we need to work towards the ambition of a system and a response that is instructed by communities affected by crisis. There is much to learn from other sectors, including development actors, around community empowerment. Many humanitarian organisations have been working on this for some time, but it has proved challenging especially due to the short timeframes characteristic of humanitarian engagement.

GTS CEO, Ms. Meg Sattler, outlined that the report not only reflects the voices of communities surveyed across ten countries, but the learning from GTS' decade of experience listening to affected people. She proposed that to understand affected peoples' level of satisfaction with humanitarian assistance, it is also important to understand their expectations.

Ms. Sattler highlighted that affected people feel disempowered, with many not aware that they have the right to participate and influence decisions that affect their lives. In many cases, despite the availability of feedback mechanisms, communities do not participate because they do not believe that their feedback will influence decisions or action. While the majority of affected communities want to influence decisions, a minority believe that they actually can. Communities need a spectrum of options for meaningful engagement and participation that fit their needs and circumstances and they need to gain confidence that their views matter, which will only be achieved if their feedback is actioned.

At the same time, few say aid meets their needs. In Chad, only 8 per cent think aid covers their most important needs. People are also calling for long-term solutions whenever surveyed, even if they live in an active conflict areas. Fewer than 50 per cent of all people surveyed globally think the aid they receive enables them to live without aid in the future. Respondents who received cash and voucher assistance were similarly negative about their prospects for resilience. The largest gap between expectations and people's experiences is for transparent information on how humanitarian funds are spent. For instance, in Haiti, most (94 per cent) people feel that it is important to know how humanitarian money is spent in their communities, but only 2 per cent say they understand how funds are allocated. Further, fewer than half of people surveyed

Finally, Ms. Sattler outlined the report's conclusions: participation needs an overhaul so that feedback is not about AAP mechanisms; people's participation must drive the response; people need to be made aware they have a right to participate; transparency needs to increase; cash programming should be applied in a thoughtful and empowering way; the system needs to act on perceptions data; and participation goes hand-in-hand with longer term solutions.

Discussion

IASC members overwhelmingly welcomed the report and reflected on the implications of its findings for the humanitarian system. They noted the challenges presented with earmarked funding which constrains the system to deliver in response to the expressed needs of communities. They underscored the need to address the power dynamics and putting in place incentives to ensure that AAP is central to principled humanitarian action. They also noted that the resourcing of AAP, putting in place the right skill sets, and the mindset shift is needed to do better on our collective responsibility and commitments on AAP. It was agreed that the role of donors was fundamental in terms of incentives and in providing quality and unearmarked funding and that there were opportunities for strengthened use of tools, such as the pooled funds, to effect change.

Furthermore, they acknowledged that the coordination architecture needed to be closely examined as the system is challenged with the current set-up to be agile and flexible to course correct and respond to community feedback and demands in an efficient and timely manner. The importance of trust building with communities was underscored noting that it takes time and, as such, it was important to build on and reinforce

community networks and efforts and not replace or undermine them. A strong point was made on the need to move away from the mechanics of AAP and feedback loops and make time to carefully listen to what communities are telling us and co-creating the response. At the same time, a number of members cautioned against raising expectations of communities if we are not prepared yet to deliver on their expressed needs and feedback. Members emphasized the need for a collective approach, rather than multiple single-agency mechanisms and considered the need to build positive incentives to put people at the centre.

IASC members agreed that a people-centred approach extends beyond the humanitarian system, presenting challenges common to, and requiring collaboration with, development actors. The ERC emphasized this, proposing that bringing about a people-centred humanitarian system requires a generational change in the business model.

In conclusion, the ERC indicated that it would be important to test this people-centered response, applying innovative solutions, in a number of contexts over the next couple of years. This would require time, new partnerships, and new skills as humanitarians. Donors would be critical to this process. The pilots would be an opportunity to learn how to do it better and be more fit for purpose. It would offer an opportunity for “..people to look at us as partners not saviours.”

Follow-up Actions/Decisions

1. Provide an update on the initiative to pilot a people-centered, agile, locally-driven response in a number of countries

Protection: The Core of Humanitarian Action

The IASC Co-Champions on the Centrality of Protection (CoP), Mr. Filippo Grandi, UNHCR, and Mr. Sam Worthington, InterAction, shared their vision and plans to drive forward the key recommendations from the Independent Review of the Implementation of the IASC Protection Policy and ensure protection is placed at the center of humanitarian action.

Mr. Grandi voiced concern that little progress has been achieved putting protection at the center of humanitarian action. He noted that many of today’s crises are protection crises, yet gaps continue to be seen in terms of coherence, resourcing, and collective action translating into results. He highlighted the complexity of effective protection programming, which is less measurable than other forms of humanitarian action. He warned against siloing the discussion on and approach to protection, noting the multifaceted nature of an effective protection approach and the need for strong analysis and working closely with affected people and communities. Mr. Grandi then shared that this championship would focus on the following priorities: Firstly, the focus would lie on the sharing of good data and analysis as the basis for more effective protection programming. He then highlighted that protection was in large part about negotiations (around access, safe passage, legal provisions, etc.) on the basis of joint analysis. Therefore, secondly, the focus would lie on reviewing the collective capacity to negotiate and engage meaningfully with all parties to conflict, including with non-state groups, as a basis for effective protection programming. He proposed broadening interaction to include others such as the political actors and the Resident Coordinator system. Mr. Grandi then noted that the Protection Cluster had become quite process heavy and

despite ongoing efforts at simplification required a review of its efficiency. He shared that UNHCR had commenced a consultation process and would share options for its simplification and a proposal for cluster review by Spring 2023.

Mr. Worthington called on IASC members to identify how protection intersected with their work and how they could contribute to protect individuals within the frame of ongoing programming. He noted doing so requires a culture shift. He suggested working across country contexts. He also proposed identifying specific protection aspects which could be addressed collectively and mainstreamed across the response. Secondly, he suggested adopting an outcome-oriented approach to protection which focuses on measurably reducing risks. Such a shift would require working with donors towards outcome-focused reporting. It would also require working closer with affected people, shifting to meaningful input from affected populations.

The Co-Champions noted they would share their vision and an action plan on how to collectively address the recommendations from the independent review by Spring 2023. In conclusion, they stressed that if protection is deemed central to humanitarian action, all must contribute to shaping the way forward and the action plan and provide the political will and drive so protection is put at the center of humanitarian action.

The ERC thanked the Co-Champions for their reflections. He indicated that it was not a coincidence that AAP, Protection and PSEA were on the agenda of the meeting, noting that Centrality of Protection and centrality of community empowerment go hand in hand.

Discussion

Members voiced their appreciation for the Co-Champions' efforts. They highlighted that, at a time of growing polarization, protection needs were increasing while there was less acceptance of humanitarian modus operandi and IHL. Some participants stressed that programming might contribute to reducing protection risks, but that it does not address the root causes which are about violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL). While it was important to engage and negotiate with all parties to conflict, there were elements that are not negotiable, such as access. They suggested it was time for the sector to go beyond embracing the problem to also speaking out and pushing back. Members furthermore warned to also be aware of protection violations in the data sphere through misinformation and hate speech, among others. They stressed protection was not a technical issue but needed to be addressed holistically. They welcomed the intention to address gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection concerns, and called for further discussion around how to step up GBV prevention and response efforts. Members reiterated their full support to the Co-Champions, including in the review of the Protection Cluster.

In conclusion, the ERC thanked the Co-Champions for having taken up the baton and driving forward change to put protection front and centre of humanitarian action.

Follow-up Actions/Decisions

1. Share their vision and action plan [**IASC Co-Champions on Protection, Spring 2023**]

Humanitarian Funding

Reflecting on the morning discussion, the ERC highlighted that collective humanitarian values are being increasingly tested and warned that, despite rising number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, funding projections are worrying. Food insecurity, cost of living increases, conflict, and various macro-economic factors are projected to significantly impact resource mobilisation efforts in the coming period. The ERC queried if there were aspects of the funding issue that would benefit from a collective approach. He suggested that opportunities might exist around climate financing and that humanitarian organisations needed to be much more agile and engaged identifying new sources of funding.

Discussion

In the ensuing discussion, members shared the ERC's concerns on humanitarian needs increasingly outpacing funding, noting that end 2023/early 2024 is likely to be a particularly challenging time. However it was suggested further analysis was needed to underpin any potential collective resource mobilization efforts. Collective efforts were deemed effective only if specific, well targeted and complimentary to individual efforts. Representatives noted increasing earmarking requirements and many donors' lack of commitment to implement funding related to Grand Bargain commitments. Members also noted the importance of development funding in humanitarian contexts, and the importance of building bridges between the two, in particular in contexts like Afghanistan. The importance of forgotten crises was also underscored, and identifying a way to ensure funding is provided to these contexts. Members also warned that politics were having a detrimental impact on funding behaviour.

Follow-up Actions/Decisions

1. Share a global funding overview, focusing not just on the funding of humanitarian responses but also the trends in donor funding to the global humanitarian response, with the aim of identifying potential opportunities for targeted advocacy with a few donors [IASC secretariat]

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse/Sexual Harassment (PSEA/SH)

The IASC Champion on PSEA/SH, Mr. Andrew Morley, noted that the IASC Championship on PSEA/SH helps set the tone on this topic and that safeguarding is one of the highest callings for the IASC where the first principle is to "do no harm". There is nothing more fundamental than to protect those we serve. He highlighted that SCHR has been IASC Champion for more than a year. As an update of Championship priorities, Mr. Morley promotes an agreed understanding of a victim/survivor centered approach. As a country-level priority, the IASC has committed to deploy inter-agency PSEA Coordinators to the highest risk countries, and the Champion's deliverables include a project plan, donor proposal and identified funding. With regards to culture change, Mr. Morley noted the need to change what is happening on the ground, and deliverables included to broaden use of the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS). Since coming into use, the MDS has resulted in more than 200 applicants being rejected from humanitarian employment. As

approximately one-third of IASC members are currently part of MDS, this number has the potential to triple.

Discussion

Members highlighted the proactive attention to PSEA from country leadership, such as the Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They also highlighted lessons arising from the Ebola response, noting that the support package provided to victims must help survivors with resilience and livelihoods. One member noted they were using the SEA risk ranking to deploy PSEA focal points to the ten highest risk countries and also in response to new crises such as Ukraine. The organization had furthermore joined ClearCheck and begun entering into agreements with government counterparts. Members urged that to change culture, action is needed, rhetoric is not enough. Disciplinary action, such as dismissal of staff, has encouraged more cases to be reported. Other members noted they had increased their capacities, including at the regional level, and were committed to the MDS. Others called for radical transparency on reporting and investigations, highlighting that any report of misconduct was an indication that there are further issues; also noting that zero cases reported is unacceptable. Others offered their strong commitment to a victim-centered approach, drawing on the knowledge of victims themselves. A comprehensive strategy would include local women's organizations to bring about the normative changes needed. Noting its full support to a victim/survivor centered approach building upon existing definitions, another member underlined the need for a more systematic allocation of PSEA Coordinators to build upon existing rosters.

SCHR thanked the previous IASC Champions, noting its determination to maintain momentum to realise the ambition to deploy PSEA Coordinators to high-risk contexts. SCHR furthermore highlighted that MDS is in the collective plan, and is different from ClearCheck.

The ERC concluded the discussion in stressing that while the IASC works towards a more accountable, transparent humanitarian system, PSEAH is not an option, it is an obligation and the IASC must stand together in learning how to do it better.

List of participants:

1. Mr. Martin Griffiths, Chair and **Emergency Relief Coordinator**
2. Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director General, **FAO**
3. Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President, **ICRC** (morning session)
4. Mr. Robert Mardini, Director General, **ICRC** (afternoon session)
5. Ms. Shahin Ashraf, Acting Chair of **ICVA** Board and Head of Global Advocacy, Islamic Relief Worldwide
6. Mr. Ignacio Packer, Executive Director, **ICVA**
7. Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Secretary General, **IFRC** (morning session)
8. Mr. Xavier Castellanos, Under-Secretary General for National Society Development and Operations Coordination, **IFRC** (afternoon session)
9. Mr. Sam Worthington, President and Chief Executive Officer, **InterAction**
10. Ambassador Miriam Sapiro, Designated President and Chief Executive Officer, **InterAction**
11. Ms. Tjada D'Oyen McKenna, Chief Executive Officer, **Mercy Corps**
12. Mr. António Vitorino, Director-General, **IOM**
13. Mr. Volker Türk, High Commissioner for Human Rights, **OHCHR** (morning session)
14. Mr. Christian Salazar, Director of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division, **OHCHR** (afternoon session)
15. Mr. Andrew Morley, Chair, **SCHR** and President, World Vision International
16. Ms. Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, Vice Chair, **SCHR** and Secretary General, CARE International
17. Mr. Gareth Price Jones, Executive Secretary, **SCHR**
18. Ms. Agnes Veres, Director, Geneva, **UNDP** (afternoon sessions)
19. Mr. Ib Petersen, Deputy Executive Director, **UNFPA** (afternoon session)
20. Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, **UN-Habitat**
21. Mr. Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner for Refugees, **UNHCR**
22. Mr. Omar Abdi, Deputy Executive Director for Programme, **UNICEF**
23. Ms. Paula Gaviria Betancur, **UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons**
24. Ms. Sima Bahous, Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director, **UNWomen**
25. Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director, **WFP**
26. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, **WHO**
27. Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Head, **IASC secretariat**