

GSC Annual Event 2024 - Session Notes - Day 3 - 1

Date: Thursday, 13 June 2024

Time: 09:15 - 10:45

Thematic area: Safe, Secure and Protective Living Environment

Facilitator/Moderator: Carolina Cordero-Scales, IOM and Mohamed Hilmi, InterAction

Co-facilitator/Note taker: Mamen Sancha

Number of participants & countries represented (if relevant): plenary;

Moderator: Peter Kozelets, Senior Protection Officer at Global Protection Cluster

Panelists:

1. Philippe Stoll, Senior Techplomacy Advisor – ICRC - Humanitarian Principles and the Digital Age
2. AJ Morgen, Peace and Security Advisor – IOM - Conflict Sensitivity
3. Anne Filorizzo - Lead Advisor, MHPSS - Save the Children - Child Protection

Summary of the discussion:

This session aimed to provoke reflection on how to navigate complex issues that can impact the effectiveness and appropriateness of our Shelter and Settlement responses and our ability to provide safe, secure, and protective environments. The three panelists presented risks that may not have been considered by the sector so far or not to the extent that they could be considered.

Moderator: Peter Kozelets, Senior Protection Officer at Global Protection Cluster

- Shelter response is fundamental for affected communities to feel safe and secure, live with dignity, and start rebuilding their lives after a crisis.
- Collaboration between the shelter and Protection sectors is key to better identifying and mitigating protection risks, leveraging our collective effort to reach the most vulnerable communities, and upholding the commitment to Humanitarian Principles. The panelists will help us explore less obvious areas than the usual ones.

Panelist 1: Philippe Stoll, Senior Techplomacy Advisor – ICRC - Humanitarian Principles and the Digital Age

- In a world with autonomous weapons, misinformation online campaigns, cyber-attacks, etc., we must acknowledge that the use of digital technology is not innocent anymore. The ICRC has established a digital risk unit, a team composed of experts to advise the organization and develop concrete recommendations on the legal and policy challenges to protecting civilians from digital risks during armed conflict.
- Digital technologies and do-no-harm- principle. This is a very important consideration when deploying new technologies. We must be aware of the concerns of people who will be affected by this and of the real consequences. We do not test technologies on people; we are unsure what will come up later.

- **Digital technology is creating a barrier to empathy.** The distance from the subject makes it more difficult to recognize it as a person, but real people pay the consequences of misuse/lousy design.
- Artificial Intelligence and its bias. There is a massive tension around the use of artificial intelligence. Besides other considerations, the important aspect to keep in mind is that AI only uses the content available on the Internet, and the Internet is not a representation of the world.
- The humanitarian principle of independence is under significant threat in the digital era, mainly due to the influence of social media platforms like Twitter. The principle of independence requires that humanitarian actions be free from external political, economic, or military influences, ensuring that aid is given purely based on need and not influenced by any other agenda.

Panelist 2: AJ Morgen, Peace, and Security Advisor – IOM – Understanding and applying conflict sensitivity

- All we do in a conflict context is not neutral. Our presence is not neutral.
- Three parts of “Do no harm”: understanding the conflict context (dynamics, key actors, underlying causes), understanding our actions will have an impact, and making all the possible to create a positive impact with our actions (minimizing the negative impact and maximizing the positive one)
- There are some common misconceptions around conflict sensitivity:
 - 1 – Confusion between conflict and violence. Conflict refers to the existence of contrary interests of two groups of people. Violence is not a requirement for the existence of a conflict.
 - 2 – Conflict sensitivity only applies to programming. It applies to every person working on the response; no matter the role, the actions will have an impact, from procurement to the delivery of the response.
 - 3 – Conflict sensitivity equals peacebuilding. Conflict sensitivity focuses on ensuring that interventions do not worsen the conflict and ideally support peace. Still, it does not seek to address the root causes and with specific outcomes on building sustainable peace.
 - 4—Conflict sensitivity equals risk management. The first one concerns our impact on the context, while the second one concerns the context's impact on us.
- **Conflict sensitivity is the first step to every other principle in humanitarian work and allows for better operations, more accurate responses, and more responsible and sustainable work.**
- Changing the paradigm of working. Humanitarian workers have long been “working around conflict, ” justifying it with the principle of neutrality. The presenter explained two other ways: the approach of “working in conflict,” which means considering the conflict while working in the context, and the approach of “working on the conflict,” which means peacebuilding with specific outcomes.
- When considering a shelter response, the presenter commented how the social capital (what we do to strengthen the bond between a group) could be viewed as a secondary effect of the response and encouraged to think through the ways to create an additional effect by considering the connectors and dividers on the affected community and how the response will affect them.

Panelist 3: Anne Filorizzo - Lead Advisor, MHPSS - Save the Children – What safe, secure, and protective environment means when we talk about mental health and child protection

- Mental health is a right, and at the moment, 468 million children living in war-affected countries live in constant fear, experiencing grave violations of their rights with severe impacts on their mental health.

- Housing conditions are very important for vulnerable population groups' mental health, even more than for other population groups due to the long hours they spend at home.
- Some drivers strongly impact the mental health of a population, like the high density of people in shared spaces. On the one hand, it increases the need for competition. On the other hand, it usually comes with a lack of privacy, again an important component of mental health.
- Adolescents have particular risks. The development of their mental health is impacted by the living conditions and the anxiety related to that. At the moment, there is a gap in training humanitarian workers on the identification of children in distress to help with their referral to child protection services. There is an opportunity here to reflect as a sector, not about what we do, but how we do it.
- **Mental health is not the cherry on top of the support; it should be the foundation or the support.**

Inspiring messages from different speakers/closing:

- **Digital technology is creating a barrier to empathy.** The distance from the subject makes it more challenging to recognize it as a person, but real people pay the consequences of misuse/bad design.
- **Conflict sensitivity is the first step to every other principle in humanitarian work and allows for better operations, more accurate responses, and more responsible and sustainable work.**
- Mental health is not the cherry on top of the support; it should be the foundation or the support.