

Reporting by Session Note-takers at the 2019 Annual Consultations with NGOs

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| Date: | 3 July 2019 |
| Session Title: | Are standards the key to working together better? |
| Moderator: | Brett Moore (UNHCR) and Christine Knudsen (Sphere) |
| UNHCR focal point: | Miguel Urquia |
| NGO focal point: | Aninia Nadig |
| Major points arising from speakers and discussions | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection (as spelled out in Sphere’s 4 protection principles) should not be integrated into humanitarian response, rather it should be the basis for responses, it should be what the response is all about. Humanitarian response is about protection. Protection is not an after-thought to be added on. • Standards are important tools when engaging with (host) governments, as they help focus on important issues, be that material needs or integration and protection. More emphasis must be given to “educating” governments, MPs etc., so they fully understand the humanitarian and protection issues at hand. • It is possible to include refugees and other affected populations meaningfully when finding solutions for them; beyond complaints and feedback, but actually giving them agency over their fate. A few excellent examples were given, and where this is not happening, the importance of giving affected populations a meaningful voice was stated many times. • There is a lack of awareness of the fundamentals of standards, i.e. the difference between an indicator and a standard. Also concerns about the tension between local circumstances and global standards. There is clearly a need for more explanation, possibly training. • There is a trade-off when using multi-purpose cash response between giving people affected by crises decision-making power and meeting standards. • There are challenges when there are differences between global standards (like Sphere) and standards set by local authorities, which may be higher or lower | |
| Recommendations/Conclusions/Decisions on the way forward | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanitarian actors and standards initiatives to establish a clearer link between standards and existing human rights, to reinforce the standards’ relevance when engaging with national authorities • The problem of working to standards in areas where the local population lives below these standards is omnipresent. The recommendation is to apply the same standards for refugees/affected populations and host populations. It was recognized that standards are a powerful advocacy tool to draw attention to dire humanitarian situations of both populations. | |
| Top two quotes from the session | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We often treat protection as the cherry on the cake. But it is not the cherry, protection is the cake! | |

- Standards are not a high-level, top-down imposition of ways of working that are being forced on field workers. They are the starting point which shapes context-specific reflection and responses.

Any general points regarding UNHCR-NGO partnerships

Standards are a key element to working in partnerships. They provide a common language around which all partners can group themselves and find common ground for working together, be that concrete actions or the values and principles they base their joint work on.