

Protection in Practice: Strategies and Dilemmas

A roundtable discussion hosted by the Humanitarian Policy Group

[AGENDA](#)

[PARTICIPANTS LIST](#)

Aim of the event

To draw together senior protection practitioners and analysts to discuss key themes emerging from a body of research currently underway at HPG on field-based strategies employed by humanitarian actors to protect civilians in insecure environments ([click here](#) for more information on this project).

1. The roundtable opened with an introduction by USAID/OFDA Deputy Director **Greg Gottlieb** who emphasised OFDA's commitment to protection and support for continuing engagement with the humanitarian community to address the progress and challenges that confront the sector. He welcomed the opportunity to learn from and engage with partners through the course of the day's events.

Introduction: Protection in Practice: Issues Emerging from recent HPG research in Darfur, Columbia, and Northern Uganda

2. **Sara Pantuliano** from HPG recognized USAID/OFDA for its support of the ongoing *Protection in Practice* study. Built around three case study reports compiled for Darfur, Columbia, and Uganda, the study was designed to enhance an understanding of the impact of protection measures for civilians. The day's roundtable represented the second in a series of planned sessions to highlight and discuss the case study report findings with a view to inform a final report to be released in June.
3. **Sorcha O'Callaghan** from HPG provided a brief overview of the day's agenda. The four issues emerged from HPG's research and included mainstreaming protection, protection by presence, integrated U.N. missions and advocacy.

Session 1: Mainstreaming Protection - Impact and Accountability

Introduction: Elissa Goldberg, Government of Canada Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)

1. Elissa Goldberg began by emphasizing the need to develop political and practical approaches and tools for use by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and political actors to strengthen protection measures. She stressed that field level initiatives need to be buttressed on a political and security level to be effective. Elissa highlighted the fact that the last seven U.N. missions have had a protection component that, although imperfect, represent an important advance.
2. Elissa raised three questions to guide the session discussion: What does mainstreaming protection mean to different actors? Is it possible to mainstream protection without stand-alone protection interventions? How does one measure and/or quantify protection?

3. Elissa concluded her remarks by outlining the need for vigilance, flexibility, evidenced-based analysis, increased capacity, and the strategic use of limited resources to enhance protection impact.

Mike Wessells, Christian Children's Fund (CCF)

4. Mike opened his presentation by underscoring the need for critical reflection to improve protection efforts. The rationale for mainstreaming is to address the enormous protection gap that currently exists. Although states have the primary responsibility to protect, they often lack the resources or are themselves perpetrators of abuses. Protection specialists have a role to play, but it is fundamentally a collective responsibility. Employing a protection lens builds a stronger protection environment that can potentially boost the impact of humanitarian assistance by assisting the most vulnerable populations who are frequently the least visible. However, protection efforts must apply to all vulnerable groups. Focusing on special groups may have uses, but also creates problems.
5. Most practitioners view mainstreaming not as a substitute, but as a complement to existing humanitarian interventions. It is necessary to begin with an analysis of the gaps and available protection mechanisms in order to enhance impact. Mike offered the following examples to illustrate the opportunities to improve existing programming by applying a protection perspective:
 - Damaging food distribution practices that enable men to control food resources to the detriment of the most vulnerable, particularly women and children;
 - Lack of attention to lighting and security in water and sanitation interventions; and
 - Problematic focus of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programming on former combatants to the exclusion of other vulnerable populations.
6. Mike noted the need for improved training of practitioners to address the conceptual uncertainty surrounding the proper roles, responsibilities, and division of labor in protection implementation. The current lack of a conceptual coherence and a systematic approach to protection leads to coordination problems. Furthermore, efforts to build on local capacity so as not to undermine existing mechanisms or to create dependency must be actively pursued.
7. Mike called attention to the need to improve the documentation of impact through appropriate benchmarks and indicators in order to enhance coordination and accountability. He noted the inherent tensions between pursuing a generalized versus a targeted approach which risks a tradeoff between depth and breadth of programming.
8. In closing, Mike provided a summary of recommendations to identify the appropriate levels of programming and benchmarks of success, including applying a holistic analysis, identifying local resources, and pursuing an interagency approach, all of which will require impact research to achieve. **Mike's full presentation can be downloaded [here](#)**

Margaret Green, International Rescue Committee (IRC)

9. Margaret expressed her perspective that Mike Wessells' concluding recommendations would not be characterized as mainstreaming actions but as stand-alone actions requiring expertise. In her view, mainstreaming is how humanitarian work can modify programming to include protection, which for most operational NGOs is complicated by a high rate of staff turnover and inadequate training.

10. Margaret explained that for IRC, protection is defined in simple and generalized terms as identifying gaps and responding to them. Gaps relating to security are more difficult to address because staff are not qualified to initiate appropriate responses. She explained that an organisation like IRC can do basic mainstreaming, but would like to see the development of a two-tier system comprised of cultivating a basic understanding of protection followed by application of that understanding towards advocacy and program reform. She acknowledged that such an approach would add a great deal to staff responsibility and require a protection coordinator to facilitate.
11. Margaret commended the rapid pace of change occurring in the protection sector and appreciated the new USAID/OFDA guidelines that identify protection mainstreaming as a legitimate component of funding. She is optimistic that forthcoming funding will facilitate expertise at the field level.
12. Mainstreaming requires training to enhance an understanding of basics, but also a commitment at the senior level which is frequently challenged by the inherent political implications of protection. To address this requires greater inter-agency coordination and collective commitment.
13. Margaret noted that measuring protection represents a challenge but is possible. Conducting assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of conflict and employing various assessment approaches, such as examining knowledge and capacity of government officials and local access to clinics, are viable mechanisms.
14. Margaret identified the limitations of protection initiatives that are available to only a small sub-sector of a population because of limited funding. This aspect is often overlooked by policy planners and donors who are reluctant to address the high cost of protection programming.

General discussion

15. The discussion covered the following:
 - Mike elaborated on the concept of an epidemiology of protection he is researching through Columbia University, citing the piloting of a GBV assessment using the ‘sisterhood method of triangulation’ to evaluate changes in incidents rates.
 - Participants raised the issue of the controversial nature of indicators and benchmarks, including the inherent difficulty of comparing indicators across contexts, an absence of clarity as to the intended purpose of indicators, the inappropriate application of constricted timeframes to assess behavioral changes that require a long term parameters, and the frequent failure to link increased monitoring and reporting efforts to programming reform.
 - Despite challenges, a general consensus on the necessity of monitoring and reporting, and improved evidenced-based indicators, was expressed. Efforts to build consensus within the humanitarian community need to be continued and can be enhanced through drawing on past experiences.
 - Participants expressed concerns that government criticism and vague definitions on how to apply protection to programming continue to undermine protection, as exemplified in the Darfur case study report. The extreme protection challenges associated with Darfur however may not make it the most useful example for identifying or developing best practices.

- The group articulated the need to break down the mystique of protection as requiring a specialist. At its core, protection was identified as the need to ensure safety and if approached from that perspective could strengthen protection understanding and implementation. Technical interventions, like water and sanitation, represent more than just ensuring that water flows from a spigot. Intrinsic is the need not only to ensure safe access to that water supply but also an opportunity to protect women from rape and children from abduction.
- To strengthen mainstreaming protection efforts, participants identified the need for strong leadership, an expanded involvement of local actors and civil society, enhanced training and coordination, and wider distribution and sharing of good analysis.
- The gap between the humanitarian and security sectors was highlighted as an ongoing constraint to protection efforts. Security repercussions for humanitarian staff who highlight protection concerns was also identified as a significant concern.

Session 2: Protection by Presence - Strategies and Dilemma

Introduction: Helen Young, Feinstein International Center, Tufts

16. Helen Young began Session 2 by raising three questions that she hoped the group would address: In what situations has an international presence proved effective in protecting civilians at risk? What strategies can humanitarian actors employ to enhance protection by presence? What are the risk factors for both international actors and affected populations?

Liam Mahony, the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD)

17. Liam presented a summary from his recent book, *Proactive Presence* which can be downloaded from the CHD's website [here](#).
18. He indicated that he wanted to investigate through various case-studies how protection by presence (PBP) is able to influence the dynamics of violence on the ground, including how it affects perpetrators of violence and those affected by violence. The case studies included examples from Rwanda, Guatemala, Haiti, El Salvador, Kosovo, East Timor, Sri Lanka, and Colombia. Liam cautioned against using Darfur as a baseline study due to the unique conditions present in the conflict.
19. For PBP to success, three criteria must be met:
- A protection presence must be physically located in the conflict zone,
 - The protection presence has a conscious strategy about how to alter the behavior of a particular group, and
 - The PBP needs a clear understanding of how to leverage influence and power.
20. "Doing Protection" is not the responsibility of any single set of humanitarian actors. Liam noted that that many different groups, with different organisational structures and mandates, have come up with similar strategies for "doing protection." CHD has been working with these groups to distill a set of lessons out of the various experiences.
21. Liam reported that in every case study example, presence affected the dynamics of the conflict to some degree. Rarely, however, did it create change on a larger level. In suggesting reasons for this, Liam noted a web of relationships between those who perpetrate abuses, those who command the abuses, an international presence trying to influence the commanders, and those who are witnessing the actions in the field. Liam suggested that each abuser in an abusive system has a different set of factors to which s/he is sensitive, including personal image, alliances, benefits, orders, morality, etc. A proactive presence at the field level leads not only sends a message to perpetrators, but also has leverage on decision-makers and those exerting international presence. Liam suggested that decision makers are more likely to listen to international pressure when they know that there is field presence monitoring the situation on the group.
22. Field presence can have the following three impacts:
- It can provide protection, forcing decision makers at the top of a chain of command to pay attention;
 - It can encourage and empower civilian strategies for resistance; and
 - It can identify people at an institutional level and support reformers in the country.

23. Liam noted that successful PBP relies on an intensive and accurate analysis of the specific situation. He criticized as inaccurate and overly simplified those situations where responders apply a template from previous experience to a new situation without sufficient awareness of the current situation. He urged practitioners of PBP to commit appropriate financial and time resources to a rigorous analysis of the situation, including reasons for perpetrations and identification of key actors.
24. Liam suggested the following five strategies and tools for creating effective PBP:
- Local diplomacy, including maximizing contact with various actors and transmitting visible messages of international concern;
 - Encouraging local actors to strengthen their ability to protect themselves;
 - Bolstering the visibility of the particular agency /NGO/responder;
 - Convening and bridging different actors to talk to one another; and
 - Publicly advocating on behalf on particular actors. (Liam noted that advocacy is not the same as public condemnation. Rather, there are numerous ways to advocate without breaking relationships. This is the main topic of Session #4.)
25. Liam noted the multiple risks and challenges to PBP:
- There are many ways to do protection badly, which can contribute to the problem if the right mechanisms/personnel are not in place;
 - Mission security and the security of civilians involved in PBP can be compromised if the strategy of perpetrators is to attack internationals; and
 - Institutional challenges, such as confused attitudes and awareness of protection, including rigid views of institutional mandates and lack of trained personnel, can pose a challenge.
26. Liam closed by reminding the conference that presence itself rarely solves all problems. PBP might help change the dynamics of a conflict, but it will never be the solution. However, even if presence does not alter the nature of a conflict, it does *not* mean that presence is not successful in protecting specific populations. **Liam's full presentation can be downloaded [here](#)**

Victor Tanner, Independent Consultant

27. Noting that Protection by Presence has received an enormous amount of favourable attention, Victor argued that PBP does not in itself succeed in offering real protection to civilians. Observing that some limited successes in northern Iraq in 1991 and in the Nuba Mountains in Sudan in 2002-2003, Victor concentrated on four periods of the Bosnian war and analyzed whether presence was able to avert or alter a disaster.
- **Phase I:** April 1992, the Serb army was using force and terror to cleanse the Drina Valley. No international existed for prevention and therefore UNHCR and ICRC went against their standard operating principles and helped evacuate people to Hungary and Western Europe
 - **Phase II:** later in 1992 there were ongoing attacks in NW Bosnia. At this point senior UNHCR officials, against the advice of field staff, decided that the humanitarian infrastructure would help. However by the end of the year, most of the area was emptied of people. So why the change in policy by UNHCR? Many think it was due to a threat by the German government that they would place quotas on the number of asylum seekers and the fact that once a humanitarian response gets underway, it takes on a momentum and life of its own.
 - **Phase III:** Central Bosnia where UNPROFOR was present, clearly didn't have a preventive impact, as Srebrenica demonstrates
 - **Phase IV:** Major influx of humanitarian aid into areas where the BiH and Croat armies were active. These areas did not fall. This shows who the real protectors were. But did the

international community *enable* their work through their presence? One example of this was an OFDA-funded ‘mule train’ which supported the area with supplies and therefore allowed the real protectors to protect.

28. Victor concluded that humanitarian presence in its own right does not afford protection. Rather, protection occurs when the presence is accompanied by a tangible threat to the perpetrating authority—either a physical threat of force or some other form of condemnation and embarrassment. He added that there is no dilemma regarding presence when ethnic cleansing is occurring. You help people leave.
29. Victor also noted the diminishing returns of PBP. The first time international assistance occurs, the actors are unfamiliar with the scope of power of the humanitarians. However, over time, all actors come to understand the system better and with it the limit of the power of international humanitarian actors.
30. Victor cautioned against underestimating the momentum of humanitarian aid. Once a decision to send assistance occurs, other considerations—including protection concerns—are swept aside in the push to deliver tangible goods.
31. Looking at the example of Darfur, Victor argued that the relief side of humanitarian assistance increasingly comes at the expense of the protection elements. He also noted the manifestation of diminishing returns, in that belligerents have learned how to manipulate humanitarian actors.

General discussion

32. The discussion covered the following:

- Helen Young reflected that the two presentations complement rather than contradict one another. Liam narrowed the conversation to a particular subset of situation where PBP can succeed while Victor provided an overview of the shift in protection strategies and humanitarian assistance.
- Participants noted that PBP was a tool used by UNHCR in Cambodia and Thailand as early as 1980.
- There was general concurrence with the need for detailed analysis but participants noted that such analysis is often too expensive and, when done by national governments, often too sensitive to release publicly. Additionally, legal policies often prevent government agencies from funding particular organisations.
- There was agreement that humanitarian responders and funding agencies must always respond in a flexible manner. Concern was also expressed that the international community was increasingly disregarding the creation of “safe spaces” for targeted populations as a viable humanitarian option. Such safe spaces, it was noted, are credited with saving thousands of lives in various 20th century conflicts.
- It was suggested that insecure situations, where humanitarians cannot be present, should raise a warning and indicate that the protection situation is very bad.

- U.N. representatives noted that peacekeeping forces will never be able to protect civilians without a credible, parallel political process. Victor noted that U.N. force in Darfur is being touted as a solution and indicated that it will not work without an ongoing political process.
- Liam concurred with the notion of diminishing returns and suggested a need for a more systematic analysis of it to better understand how humanitarian actors can maximize their presence in the available time. He noted that the mere presence of a small NGO in Guatemala was able to stop the killing because the perpetrators did not know whether the NGO was a credible threat.
- The notion of *witnessing* was raised as an important result of presence. Even if NGOs cannot prevent violence, they can address it *post facto*. Furthermore, although it might be impossible to address the needs of large groups, organisations on the ground can protect small populations under immediate threat.
- The Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) representative noted that the organisation relies on a strong expatriate component to provide real presence. He furthermore indicated that the organisation continues to see itself as having an important advocacy role, noting that silence kills. However, he also cautioned on creating an illusion of protection where it is absent, such as in Rwanda, Srebrenica, and Zaire.
- The question was posed as to when the international community determined that presence is not working and the organisations are failing to stop attacks.
- Liam noted that one credible threat available to the international community is the threat to leave. If humanitarian organisations are unwilling to depart, then perpetrators can continue to abuse with impunity. Liam stressed the importance of managing expectations of recipient populations and training humanitarians in how to present themselves to locals.
- Victor agreed that presence does have value cautioned against directly or inadvertently suggesting that presence can have a “salvation value.”

Session 3: UN Integrated Missions - Experiences, Opportunities and Challenges for Protection

Introduction: Tori Holt, Stimson Center

33. Tori Holt introduced the session and posed the following questions to the panel: What have been the experiences of humanitarian actors engaging with integrated missions? To what degree are military and political approaches to protection complementary to those of humanitarian actors in field settings? What are some of the challenges of integration for humanitarian protection actors? Can these be overcome? How can humanitarian action and principles be better emphasised in integrated missions?

Oliver Ulich, U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

34. Oliver explained that U.N. integrated missions are comprised of a political and humanitarian pillar, each with its own deputy. He highlighted the conscious placement of OCHA outside of the mission structure where it reports to the humanitarian coordinator (HC). Definitions of the roles and responsibilities of integrated missions continue to evolve but are experiencing a greater degree of consensus. The last seven U.N. missions have contained a protection mandate. Efforts to clarify how the protection component is implemented in practice are ongoing.
35. Oliver identified improved physical protection, increased political leverage, and improved analysis as potential benefits of an integrated mission. Protection issues do not go away unless rule of law, DDR, and security sector reform are addressed. An integrated mission can provide the broader framework to address these key points.
36. Oliver identified UNMIS in southern Sudan as the only integrated mission in the country. AMIS, in contrast, cannot be defined as an integrated mission. The U.N. has components that relate to civil affairs in Darfur but no institutional linkages in place. He acknowledged the inadequacies of the current hybrid arrangement in Darfur.
37. In contrast to Darfur, Oliver referenced the DRC multi-dimensional mission, which has protection of civilians as its overarching mission and demonstrates stronger operational coordination. Exit strategies for protection, including army and civilian police reform, are clearly incorporated, but clarity on specific roles and responsibilities remains too limited.
38. Oliver identified the key to coordinating protection integrated missions as maintaining it under a humanitarian umbrella, as opposed to a human rights mechanism. He also highlighted the role of mediators and governments in addressing protection. Greater emphasis from the onset should be placed on governments to provide protection services and to enhance their capacity to do so. **Oliver's full speaking notes can be downloaded [here](#).**

Vladimir Zaghora, DPA

39. Vladimir emphasized the need to improve coordination on how protection is implemented on the ground. There is a need to find a common language of definitions among humanitarian actors.
40. The adoption of the responsibility to protect represents a significant advance. However, the political sensitivities inherent in protection manifest themselves at the Security Council level where national interests frequently complicate initiatives, as observed in the case of Darfur.

Linda Poteat, InterAction

41. Linda acknowledged the importance of having U.N. colleagues present at the discussion and the significant advances that the U.N. has achieved in improving integrated missions. She identified the important role personality plays and the need to institutionalize programming.

General discussion

42. The discussion covered the following:

- Participants broadly agreed that protection should be sustained under a humanitarian pillar. However, the important role of diplomacy in protection highlighted the need for skills outside of the humanitarian expertise. Humanitarian actors are uncomfortable engaging on this level because of perceived risks to maintaining an operational presence.
- Oliver responded that putting protection under a humanitarian pillar does not exclude access to the resources of the political pillar.
- The importance of recognizing the context on the ground was emphasized. The types of specialists employed in a particular protection response should be driven by the specific context of a crisis.
- Sudan was identified as an example where protection has a clear political dimension. Major challenges exist in the form of a disconnect between how the U.N. defines human rights and protection and how local government officials interpret protection.
- Participants noted the frequent reluctance of UN Resident Coordinators to raise hard issues with the government, leaving the task to Humanitarian Coordinators with comparatively limited funding and resources. Although protection was acknowledged as a primary responsibility of Humanitarian Coordinators, Resident Coordinators also have a responsibility to support a protection agenda. NGOs were encouraged to hold Humanitarian and Resident coordinators responsible for pushing a protection agenda in the countries where they are serving. The group noted that protection was a major topic at each Humanitarian Coordinators' retreat. Does the likelihood of public advocacy by an HC increase or decrease if they are also performing the function of DSRS? This is not yet clear but certainly there is a need for more support to HCs to carry out public advocacy.
- The discussion emphasized the overarching nature of protection that includes political, legal, humanitarian, and military components. The challenge remains how to successfully coordinate these diverse components. The lack of a clear understanding of protection by military forces was identified as a particular weakness which requires clearer mandates and capacity building initiatives to redress. Without adequate resources and capacity to enforce, clearer mandates can raise unrealistic expectations.
- The primacy of a credible political solution to support humanitarian protection interventions was repeatedly underscored.

Session 4: Speaking Out or Staying Present? The Tension Between Advocacy and Operationality

Introduction: Abby Stoddard, Center for International Cooperation

42. Abby indicated that the notion of advocacy is central to the operational role of NGOs and put forward three goals for the session: to clarify the various meanings of “advocacy,” to highlight effective strategies that have been used by NGOs to advocates and to understand the trade-offs and costs/benefits of implementing advocacy strategies.

Joel Charney, Refugees International

43. Joel acknowledged the tough challenges facing NGOs who adopt advocacy goals. He indicated that framing the issue as an absolute trade-off between advocacy and operationality is a false dichotomy based on false assumptions. To question whether maintaining operations is worth not speaking out is to ignore that advocacy is not the same as campaigning.
44. Joel argued that humanitarian actors have an obligation to witness to violations. The simple presence of humanitarians is in itself an intervention, and humanitarians have an obligation to pass along the information they receive and provoke action as required. Joel further reiterated that local populations often ask humanitarians to speak out and report on what they see.
45. Joel noted that advocacy can take many forms, including:
- Engaging with perpetrators of abuses at local level;
 - Presenting information to representatives of powerful institutions with capacity to intervene or leverage perpetrators;
 - Channeling information to agencies with mandates to conduct public advocacy; and
 - Linking field experience with international campaigns, either through the individual agencies or as part of a larger effort.
46. Looking at past examples of NGOs who decided to terminate operations due to host-government abuses, Joel noted that the decision to pull out had limited impact in altering the political reality. Joel argued that a decision to withdraw should be based on humanitarian criteria rather than advocacy criteria.

Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, OCHA

47. Hansjoerg agreed that the choice between operationality and advocacy is a false dichotomy. Both are needed in any intervention.
48. Hansjoerg also noted that the U.N.’s presence in a country is the result of political imperative. When mandated, the U.N. must intervene.
49. He looked to Jan Egeland as a positive example of someone who was able to exercise both aspects successfully. Egeland’s successes were rooted in a firm methodology that was truthful and sensitive to local perceptions. Egeland conveyed his own observations following personal visits to the field but he was also keenly aware of and sensitive to the redlines for the various parties and avoided reckless language and actions.
50. Hansjoerg noted that emergency responders all play various roles and not every relief worker or office head can act in the same manner. However, the burden of advocating must be shared by

multiple actors in affected areas. Humanitarian assistance happens in a political environment. Advocacy is part of a dialogue with both beneficiaries and political actors.

General discussion

51. The discussion covered the following:

- Abby began the conversation by noting that the trade off is rarely between full operationality or advocacy. Rather, organisations face more subtle choices such as how much staff time and resources to devote to particular outcomes.
- A question was raised as to whether any systematic studies on the trade-off exist. The perception of such trade-offs is widespread, but the reality is that many situations do not involve such a dichotomy. More study is needed to understand how to best employ advocacy strategies and why different actors make different choices. (The motivations of humanitarian actions are diverse including humanitarian considerations as well as fundraising and visibility issues.) There has been no systematic study and cases are usually anecdotal.
- An issue was raised as to whether there should be operationality at all costs. This requires an analysis of how effective the humanitarian response is. However, the impact of withdrawals have not been very strong, e.g. MSF in Ethiopia in the mid-80s and MSF/Oxfam/CARE in North Korea.
- There was consensus that harassment towards advocating organisations is connected to a strategic approach by a particular party to limit international criticism and intentionally create the impression that intervening organisations must remain quiet. Often, a government will target small organisations that do not bring in as much money as larger groups.
- The group noted that advocacy occurs on many different levels from high-level interactions to every day communication and contact with locals. A strategic, limited threat by a particular humanitarian organisation can be very effective against a political actor. However, advocacy requires simplification of message and unity among the various humanitarian actors to put forward a common message.
- Although groups may pay a price for various forms of advocacy, costs are often temporary and reversed after a period of time.
- The group noted that Protection Working Groups can be a useful forum for determining who is in a position to respond. A need exists for the international community to use working groups, UN Security Council meetings, and other procedures more systematically and strategically.
- The success in gaining access to the Nuba Mountains was put forward as model example. However, success occurred because of two years of hard work, hours of preparation, intimate knowledge of the local context, and dedicated staff resources. Specific strategies included:
 - A full time staff member who focused solely on the one issue;
 - Placing the issue consistently on the schedule of the UN Special Envoy;
 - A letter writing campaign to the Sudanese government;
 - Forwarding copies of the letters to decision makers in foreign capitals and following up with the decision makers to explain the cause for the letters;
 - Regular communication with all of the relief agencies working in the Nuba Mountains;

- Decision by all of these organisations to collectively pull out from the government controlled areas of the Nuba Mountains in the absence of access to SPLM controlled areas; and
 - Successful inclusion of Nuba Mountains issues in Senator John Danforth's four pronged agenda.
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- Concerns were raised that speaking out about an issue rarely leads to change. Furthermore, NGOs have an obligation to consider the effect of their departure upon beneficiaries. Advocacy should not be done by all staff, only those with an appropriate level of experience and in relevant positions.
 - A speaker suggested that the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami marked a turning point in the recognition that natural disasters also involve protection issues.
 - The group noted that different organisations often pursue different strategies. What is considered an acceptable level of harassment for one organisation might be too much for another. NGOs usually assess each situation on a case-by-case basis.
 - The question was raised as to whether the notion of doing advocacy represents a cultural shift, particularly for large, government-funded, American NGOs. The speaker noted that NGOs are each struggling with how to include advocacy and the type of advocacy desired, but often lack the experience and knowledge to do the needed political advocacy.
 - Hansjoerg closed the session noting that advocacy often depends on a common understanding, definition, assessment methodologies, and tools available to responders. All in all, successful advocacy relies on strong reporting and monitoring capacities, including processes for generating data and crunching numbers. Information is a powerful tool and needs to be available to decision makers and political leaders.

Sara Pantuliano closed the session by thanking OFDA/OTI hosting the event and more importantly for the financial support to the study. She also acknowledged the support of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the roundtable meeting held in Geneva in January ([click here](#) for the summary). She said that the discussion from both events will feed into the final Protection in Practice report due to be published by mid 2007.