Results-Based Protection[i]

On-Line Discussion Forum

Designing for Results:

The top five characteristics of a protection program designed to bring about results

Summary and Analysis

I.   Background and Objectives

The Results-Based Protection Program hosts an online platform (http://protection.interaction.org) that serves as a point of reference and site for discussion on results-based approaches to protection. As part of the online platform, discussion forums are used as a space to solicit the contributions of key stakeholders, including practitioners and specialized experts, to develop the key elements of results-based protection.

The objective of the "Designing for Results" discussion forum was to elaborate on the unique aspects, including characteristics and practical approaches, of a results-based approach to designing programs to enhance protection. In the discussion, participants were asked to highlight key criteria, tools, methods, strategies, and examples of programs designed to show results[1].

Key Questions
- What unique characteristics are included during program design that contribute to protection outcomes?
- What are the challenges and opportunities in practically applying these criteria to program designed to achieve and demonstrate results?
- What are examples of programs designed in line with a results-based approach? What about them are *results-based*?
- By what process was a causal logic or context-specific theory of change used in helping to design a program? Did it help shape your program to achieve results?
- How was the engagement of affected populations used to inform program design? What was the process and did it lead to any change in the program design or underlying causal logic?

II.   Top Characteristics: Summary and Analysis of the Discussion

This discussion revealed three characteristics of design that may contribute to protection outcomes. Although the objective of the discussion forum was to identify five top characteristics, not all the examples and characteristics that emerged supported a results-based approach to protection. This

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[1]   Results-Based Protection refers to "results" as the measureable components of an intervention that contribute to and include the outcome or impact (intended or unintended, positive or negative). Perspectives vary greatly. NGOs, UN agencies, and other actors may understand results in a very different way. For examples, see FINAL Consultation Results and Consultation Findings from the first phase of the Results-Based Protection Program.

summary, therefore, highlights the three top characteristics of designing for results which were highlighted in the course of the discussion.

1. The Entry Point for Design: A Problem-Solving Approach

The design of a results-based response is heavily dependent on a comprehensive protection analysis that includes the perspective of the affected population. This analysis should enable a clear articulation of the patterns of risk and the protection standard that needs to be addressed.   A thorough protection analysis enables a problem-solving approach as the entry point to program design rather than using predetermined activities as a starting point. A problem-solving approach entails expressing the context-specific steps required to address specific patterns of risk. Programs are designed not exclusively by way of activities per se, but by the methods that can inform the appropriate action. The approach allows for a fluid and adaptable process. Some of methodological steps in design should include:

- Deciding what information is needed to determine appropriate action
- Identifying how to engage with an affected population throughout the program cycle and the methods and resources required to do so
- Establishing methods for communicating with affected populations (CwC) and articulating what the flow of information is needed in order to support protection outcomes
- Identifying community-led solutions
- Developing a theory of change or causal logic for the sequence of steps leading to the desired outcome
- Determining what relationships are needed to bring about the protection outcome
- Establishing relationships and partnerships and how these will be supported
- Determining the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in decision-making, monitoring and reviewing the response

A methodological approach to design allows multiple actors, including the affected population, to shape the activities appropriately and inform the response. This is not to say that pre-defined activities are entirely irrelevant, but such activities must be used as means to continually refine articulation of the problem and lay a foundation to address it. In other words, an activity itself may not lead to results, but an activity may form part of a method which enables the response to yield results.

An example of this was illustrated by a program in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) that involved setting up community level protection committees in a context of ongoing armed conflict. The committees served as an entry point to identify and address protection issues. When populations were displaced and dispersed as a result of armed clashes and attacks on civilians in their villages, the committee structures were able to regroup and network with other members. This was not a predetermined set of activities that the implementing organization proposed, but rather it created the conditions for affected populations to mobilize and acquire necessary information to make informed decisions in response to whatever risks arose in the course of the conflict.

2. Flexibility

A second characteristic to design is flexibility. This was expressed through several examples both in terms of scope of the program but also in terms of donor requirements and expectations.

The first characteristic (problem-solving) underscores and supports a program that not only accounts for a changing environment but enables an adaptable approach in order to address risk. Flexibility in design was described in terms of:

Structure
- Creating conditions that enables the affected population to identify the necessary measures to create solutions themselves as situations, and their access to information, evolves.
- Allowing the structure of the response to evolve (i.e. informal meetings might become a committee or evolve into early warning groups, or return to neighbor-led one-on-one forms of communication). How communities organize themselves will depend on the context and the changes within the crisis. The design of the program should allow for shifts in the approach and structure.
- Adapting the agency's role throughout the response from implementer to convener, capacity-builder or other role, depending on the dynamics of the crisis, the roles of other actors, and the changing context of affected populations.

Monitoring
- Building into program design a means for continuous analysis of the risks being experienced by the affected population and the protection priorities.
- Deliberate reviews with multiple stakeholders (beyond the implementing program team) to learn from and adapt the response.
- Consistently reviewing assumptions within the theory of change to ensure adjustments to the causal logic of the response.

Funding
- Securing multi-year funding from individual donors to undertake planning beyond narrow and short term windows.
- Donor conditions attached to grant agreements allow for flexibility in design and approach.

Internal Mechanisms
- Internal mechanisms, policies, and resources (human, financial) allow for and can support shifts in priorities, objectives, and approaches.

An example of flexibility was illustrated by a program in Kenya that intentionally enabled community-protection committees to define their priorities through an on-going process of risk analysis. Through this analysis, the project aimed to reduce the barriers faced by refugees in accessing services, increasing the capacity and willingness of key actors to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of refugees, and creating linkages between refugee communities and key actors for dialogue and joint planning to reduce protection risks. The project was carried out over 2.5 years that included a review process with multiple stakeholders. Stakeholders included a diverse selection of individuals from the refugee community, local partners, UNHCR, and the Kenyan Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA). This periodic review meant that these stakeholders were more responsive to community-defined priorities. This enabled the response to adapt to the changing context and be shaped by a diverse set of actors.

3. Designing for Contribution

Many examples within the discussion highlighted activities undertaken in isolation from other actors (particularly other actors such as peacekeeping and political missions and the diplomatic community—even other humanitarian agencies were omitted) and/or events that may have contributed to a reduction in risk.

Although potentially complementary initiatives were only minimally highlighted, what the examples did bring out was a strong emphasis on mapping the protective environment to understand the multiple layers of the crisis, the particular risk to be addressed—including the threats, vulnerabilities, and capacities surrounding the risk—and articulating the various methods to bring about the desired changes which would reduce risk.

Several questions were raised about how humanitarians address the threat, often framed in terms of the "perpetrator" of the abuse or source of protection concern. The analysis of the discussion showed that it was not so much a gap in whether or not humanitarian actors understand threat, but rather what are the actions needed and how can different actors contribute to or mobilize others towards appropriate action to address the threat?

The same concern was raised about identifying community-based or self-protective mechanisms to address a protection issue. It was not so much as identifying these solutions, but again, what are the actions needed by different groups to better support and contribute to community-led solutions?

What these questions and concerns seem to raise is that, if we better understand the risk patterns and the factors that contribute to risk, are we also breaking down the multiple measures needed to bring about the desired reduction in risk? In doing so, can we identify the contribution required by different actors and articulate the necessary plan of action—or protection strategy—that can contribute to a protection outcome? As part of program design, how do we mobilize the necessary stakeholders (ourselves included) to take up measures that contribute to the overall protection strategy? Do our program designs reflect the required contribution and that of others?

Program design should incorporate and elaborate on the interconnectedness of the various modes and multiple levels of operation—advocacy, negotiation, community mobilization, service provision, integrated or multi-sectoral programming, campaigning, etc.—necessary to bring about the desired changes in each component of risk. Questions were raised about how we define advocacy and how it serves to address the reduction of risk. Others asked whether we were clear on what the pressure points are that both motivate and influence change at various levels. In addition, how is our contribution--and the ultimate desired outcome –enhanced or diminished because of the contribution (or lack thereof) made by others?

Results-based program design can tease out necessary contributions of other actors alongside the agency's intended contribution to achieve the reduction of risk. In other words, multiple contributions can be made in concert with one another within the scope of a comprehensive and possibly multi-sectoral response. Rather than designing in silo, the program design needs to account for the contributions of multiple actors in relation to other pieces of the response.

Although designing for contribution needs to be further analyzed as a key characteristic of a results-based approach to protection, the discussion did highlight a few aspects of contribution that need to be defined within the response:

- The causal logic or theory of change, that can be traced back to the protection analysis and underpins the protection strategy, should articulate the various factors that contribute to the risk and the multiple contributions required by different actors to address the risk. (What assumption is the agency making about its contribution and how is this linked to the contribution (or lack of) made by other actors?)

- Articulate the role of the implementation agency to address and reduce the different components of risk as identified in the protection analysis (Convener? Capacity-Builder? Negotiator? Facilitator? Service Provider? Etc.).

- Understand the sequencing within the response, by different contributing actors, that is needed to address the risk. This should be factored into the design phase of an agency's specific response.

- Identify the level of engagement as it relates to the necessary contribution of multiple actors within the protection strategy to address the risk. Is the contribution the agency is making at the community level, institutional level, national/political level, international level? How is the decision to contribute at a specific level complemented or conflicted by the actions of others?

- Through a comprehensive protection analysis and interagency strategy process, determine the most appropriate method that can contribute to the reduction of risk.

- Elaborate within the design how the contribution by the implementing organization is measured in relation to other contributing factors (by other actors, decisions, events) that are necessary to address the risk.

III.   Other observations and gaps

The analysis of the discussion pointed to only three specific characteristics of design that seemed to fulfill a results-based approach to protection. However, a few other observations emerged from the discussion.

1. The importance of protection analysis as outlined above within a problem-solving approach calls for meaningful engagement with affected populations. Engaging with the affected population is not simply a talking point, but an indispensable action fundamental to achieving results which demands significant investment. The process throughout the response can be done both rapidly and extensively. The critical piece to this is that it must be done deliberately throughout each stage of the program cycle. It must be seen as a necessary relationship that is established and cultivated throughout the response.

2. In order to clearly define objectives, milestones and benchmarks, following a robust protection analysis, the protection standard(s) to be met must be identified and a baseline against the standards established. This enables the standard to be met to be contextualized. For example, it

is well-known that voluntary population movements must be underpinned by free and informed decisions. The context-specific requirements for people to make decisions which are free and informed are essential to create conditions conducive to voluntary movements. Articulating the protection standard in a context-specific way is fundamental to subsequently identifying the role other actors need to play. Both the protection standard and the baseline should be expressed within a theory of change and the protection strategy as part of the design of the response.

3. To achieve results, analysis, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation must be supported by internal policies, processes, resources (human and financial), capacity, communication, and strategy if the key characteristics of results-based protection are to be realized in practice.

In addition, it is notable that a need for a protection strategy did not surface as an essential piece of the design process. Broadly speaking, "protection strategy" refers to multiple objectives and actors working collectively to decrease identified risks. In order for the protection strategy to be results-based, it needs to be traced back to the original protection analysis and monitored to determine the changes within the protection priorities that were originally identified. The overarching strategy—if done effectively— should reflect the risk and desired change in terms of the required actions necessary to achieve this change and subsequently the contributions by different actors should be expressed more methodically. We marked this as a gap necessitating further discussion given the linkages between a protection analysis and program design—particularly as it relates to the contributory characteristic.

IV.   <u>Recommended resources</u>

A few participants provided additional resources, tools, and reports to help further explore aspects of program design. These included:

- **Community Perceptions of Protection in Kenya and Timor-Leste:** http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-46/community-perceptions-of-protection-in-kenya-and-timor-leste

One participant noted the importance of engaging with affected populations to better understand the perceptions of protection as understood by affected populations. This required nuanced engagement and response.

- **Outcome Mapping and Harvesting methodologies**: www.outcomemapping.ca

In the discussion around the contribution of advocacy, a participant highlighted Outcome Mapping and Harvesting methodologies as strong M&E approaches for tracking changes in behavior of different actors (i.e. 'boundary partners') that a program is trying to influence. It can also be a potential means of engaging staff in the development of a theory of change.

V.   Participants and Methodology

1.   Participants

Participants included members of the Results-Based Protection Learning & Steering Group (LSG), field and technical staff of LSG members, as well as identified HQ staff and program design practitioners from the broader NGO community. Individuals invited to participate in this discussion were practitioners with considerable experience in protection program design, program management and/or monitoring and evaluation.

The Designing for Results discussion forum brought together 41 participants from 18 international NGOs working in 20 countries.

Location (by region)
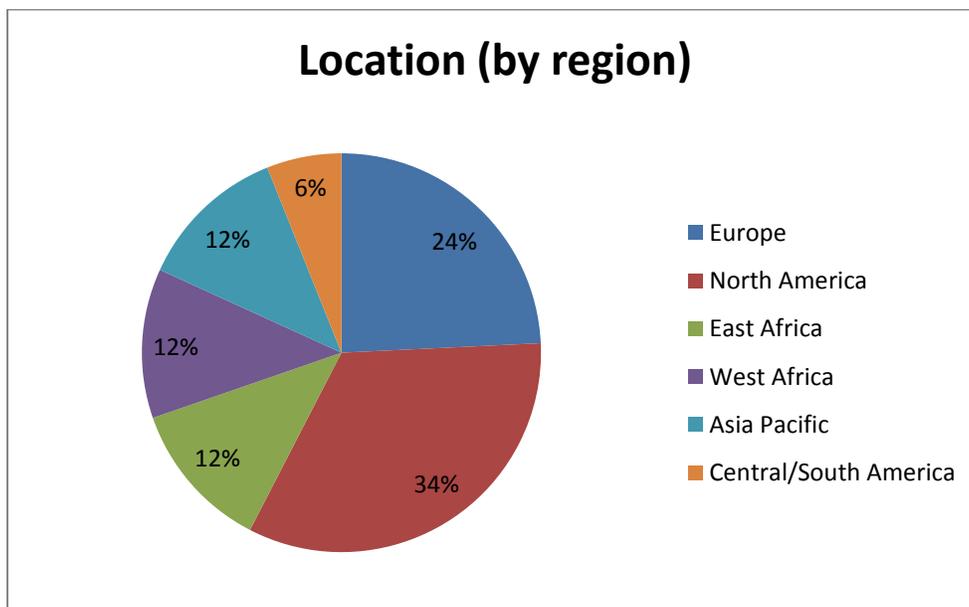
Of the 41 participants, 16 contributed to the discussion by sharing examples, raising questions, and/or challenging participants to think more critically about whether or not the examples shared took on a results-based approach to protection.

2.   Methodology

The aim of the discussion was to identify, through shared experience, what top characteristics of program design contribute to protection outcomes. Analysis of the discussion involved coding and classifying information in thematic areas arising from discussion points and the examples provided by the participants. These were then further broken down into levels of process, approach, coordination, and policy. The charting of information captured nuances arising from the discussions, including gaps and questions left unanswered. Through the analysis of these details, the Results-Based Protection Program team was able to determine whether the elements of design supported a results-based approach to protection.

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