Session 3A: Identification and Documentation

The Identification and Documentation panel, led by Rebecca Symington from UNICEF, discussed the practical ways that humanitarians can identify and protect unaccompanied children, focusing on the essential information needed for identification and analysis and the existing tools to record and document the information. Speakers also stressed the importance of establishing protocols in particular locales that define the roles and responsibilities of those involved, which result in better services to protect children.

- **Tiziana Clerico from UNHCR** started the discussion by providing an overview of challenges from a UNHCR perspective, describing the ways UNHCR is looking to address gaps and challenges and highlighting the tools developed for this purpose, including the newly developed “Heightened Risk Identification Tool”.

- **Sister Virginia Hasson of Jesuit Refugee Services** presented the NGO perspective on assisting unaccompanied children in various settings, including camps, urban areas, and rehabilitation centers for children associated with armed groups. She also reviewed good practices to help identify children that allow NGOs to contribute to the process and coordinate with other actors.

- **Severine Chevrel from the Inter-Agency Group on the Protection of Children** discussed an interagency tool developed to strengthen the management of separated and unaccompanied children. She described the type of information the tool captures and how the information supports tracing efforts, the provision of care and services to children, and overall case management.

Questions from the audience included a request for clarification on the distinction between UNHCR’s “Heightened Risk Identification Tool” (a tool that identifies not only children but elderly and women who are at heightened risk) and the Inter-Agency’s “Protection Information Management System” (which is a case management tool exclusively focused on children). One person stressed the importance of understanding the difference between “unaccompanied” and “separated” and the implications for taking appropriate action. Also discussed was the importance of defining the purpose of collected information and its use clarified in order to ensure better outcomes. One audience member expressed a concern that the panel was focusing too much on refugees and not enough on other populations of concern such as migrants. Panel members noted the concern and emphasized the need for those involved in these issues to be proactive and creative in reaching out to all possible high risk individuals. Involvement of schools in the identification of vulnerable children was also discussed as well as the need to coordinate with parts of governments which play a role in border control and asylum issues. Finally, the need for training to support the use of the different tools was strongly emphasized and identified as a requirement in order to support the protection of children. One questioner suggested that these kinds of identification tools are not commonly used as a training tool for law enforcement officials who are often the first to encounter unaccompanied and separated children in developing countries. Panelists agreed.
Panel Recommendations:

- **Develop fair and effective and child sensitive asylum procedures.** More specifically: access to the territory, proper identification and registration, relevant information on their rights, given in a language which is appropriate to the age, maturity and background of the child and by a person with expertise in age and gender appropriate interviewing and communication skills.

- **Identification is a continuous process.** States, UN, partners and all relevant actors must put in place systems foreseeing early and continuous identification to ensure that children are identified as children and as children at heightened risk and be properly identified, documented and protected.

- At country level, implementation of agreed inter-agency tools to gather and share information such as inter-agency registration and other forms, database, information sharing protocols and SOPs to ensure efficient collaboration and coordination.

- Establish data protection protocols ensuring confidentiality and data security are in place and adhered by all.

- Build capacity to use these tools at country, regional and global level.

- Using the data to respond to immediate and long term needs of children as soon as possible and help with future programming and planning.

Governments and the humanitarian community need to ensure that sufficient resources and appropriately trained staff are available to meet identification and documentation needs in mixed migrant movements.

Panel on humanitarian emergencies and in mixed migrant movements.

Moderator: Rebecca Symington, rsymington@unicef.org, 212-326-7441

Notetaker: Katherine Perkins, perkinskk@state.gov, 202-663-1487