**Gender Dimensions of Operating in Complex Security Environments**

**This morning I would like to kick start our discussions by focusing on these key areas**

1. **The context of operating in complex security environments – why, who and how?**
2. **The gender dimensions in these situations with a focus on both the humanitarian community and the affected population**
3. **What should be done to address this?**

**The Context**

Complex security environments that exist today are not necessarily from "traditional warfare" between two states but are increasingly a result of conflict between warring factions within a state or across boundaries.  The actors are not typically soldiers but paramilitary or civilians taking up arms.  Many are rooted in ethnic, racial and tribal conflicts and may be aggravated by economic disparities, poverty and even environmental issues including climate change effects.  The resulting proliferation of small arms contribute significantly to these complex environments.  The breakdown or paucity of the security sector in these instances perpetuates the cycle of violence.

As a result, the majority of casualties in these complex environments are the civilian population.  Men who are caught in this environments are typically the main bulk of casualties but women are affected in being victims of secondary casualties, violent acts including sexual violence and increased domestic violence.

▪ **The last decade has seen an increasing concern with the causes and drivers of violent conflict.** Whilst these vary and change over both time and space, there has been increasing recognition that conflict and security are intrinsically linked to development processes. This has led to the development of new approaches to stabilising violent contexts, building peace and protecting civilians.

Donor governments, UN agencies and NGOs are seeking to align traditionally distinct policy spheres to more effectively support transitions from war to peace. Yet, in practice, there is a recognition that **engagement in conflict-affected states is not working as well as it should and more needs to be done**.

**The Gender Dimensions**

*Gender means the roles, relationships, experiences and expectations that are attributed to men, women, girls and boys on the basis of their sex. These different roles and relationships are socially constructed, that is, they are influenced by local contexts and other forms of social differentiation, such as age, ethnicity, class, caste, religion and socio-economic status, and are an important basis for understanding the dynamics and impact of conflict.*

Gender analysis is important for peacebuilding, because violent conflict affects and engages men, women, boys and girls in different ways. Their different roles, needs and priorities must be taken into account when responding to conflict and building peace.

Women and men are both affected by conflict, but due to gender inequalities and the lack of structures and norms to protect them, women are often more vulnerable and bear the brunt of many of the harmful consequences of armed violence. In addition to physical insecurity, the many challenges that women face in post-conflict environments include extreme poverty, the destruction of social networks and coping mechanisms, limited options for employment and livelihood-generation, and exclusion from political and decision-making structures. Without addressing these various physical, economic, and socio-political insecurities experienced by women, the attainment of other peacebuilding and development goals will be compromised.

The term gender is often incorrectly seen as being synonymous with women. The origins of gender approaches to conflict analysis come from the women's movement, and traditionally these approaches have involved empowering women and encouraging their participation at multiple levels in order to achieve equality. This is important as women's rights and their role in building peace have often been undermined or ignored.

However, it is also important to resist stereotypes of women as victims or men as aggressors. In reality, both men and women have multiple and complex in conflict and peacebuilding. Therefore, the understanding these different roles and ensuring that both men and women are active participants is vital in any efforts to build an inclusive, sustainable and locally-owned peace.

**Gender Dimensions – Humanitarian Workers**

In 2008, 260 humanitarian aid workers were killed, kidnapped or seriously injured in violent attacks – the highest yearly toll on record. The majority of these attacks took place in just three countries: Sudan, Afghanistan and Somalia. Kidnappings in particular have increased since 2006, increasing 350% compared since 2006. The fatality rate of aid workers from malicious acts alone surpassed that of United Nations peacekeeping soldiers in 2008. In the most violent contexts for aid workers, politically motivated attacks have risen relative to common crime and banditry, as international aid organisations are perceived as part of Western geopolitical interests.

This HPG Policy Brief analyses 12 years worth of data on attacks on aid workers. The figures are examined by location, tactics, and the types of organisation and staff affected. The sharpest increases in attack rates have been suffered by international (expatriate) staff of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). UN aid agencies have seen attack rates rise mainly for their national staff members and local contractors, particularly truck drivers. Despite the recent upswing in international staff attacks, the long-term trend suggests the casualty rate of national staff is rising faster than international staff. The International Committee of the Red Cross is the only humanitarian organisation examined to have a decrease in attacks against the organisation in the past few years, although it has by no means been immune.

The report concludes that despite improved and professionalised security management, humanitarian organisations are unable to secure their personnel in a small number of the most dangerous operational settings, particularly Afghanistan and Somalia, where they have been identified as legitimate targets by armed groups pursuing broad political aims. The report cites field-level analysis from aid agencies in Afghanistan attesting to the rapidly deteriorating security environment for aid workers and their increasing difficulty in negotiating access to populations in need. The report recognises the trend of aid organisations

attempting to disassociate themselves from political actors and reinforce the principles of humanitarian independence and neutrality, but at the same time warns that in these most highly contested political/military environments this approach will not necessarily achieve security for aid workers on the front lines.

What this report and others on this issue does not state is the gender risks among humanitarian workers. This is something we do need to look into but to also recognize that this may vary depending on context and location. I know that Martin will speak of his experience in Pakistan which will shed some light on the issue in that context.

This year, OCHA has convened a study on Operating in Complex Security Environments with a focus on capturing what have been the lessons learnt and what are the best practices that can be replicated in different settings. This is very important and timely as we face the challenges ahead. As I speak, Adele Hammer one of the researchers is in DRC and Abby Stoddard is on her way to OPT. What is important is that the study also looks at the gender dimensions – are male and female humanitarian actors at different level of risks in different settings? Does gender play an important role in gaining access to affected populations especially the marginalized, often women? How does one create an "optimal" environment to achieve that?

**What should and can be done to address gender dimensions?**

In a multi-agency article, 'Women, men and gun violence: options for action', which forms part of a larger publication on directions for the reduction of small arms control. In this piece the authors emphasise a gender equity approach to reduce risks and bolster resilience to insecurity and violence. A number of issues are explored such as:

- Men, masculinities, and guns: the largest numbers of acts of violence are committed by men
- Women's multiple roles: women play multiple roles in times of war and unique roles in the aftermath
- National gun laws and consequences for safety: gun laws can have important and positive consequences when analysed from a gender perspective

- Building gender-aware programmes: Policy analysts, researchers and programme planners often speak exclusively to men about finding solutions to security problems.

Recommendations include:

- Fully meet existing international norms relating to gender and gun violence: There are numerous international standards that protect women's rights to equality, non-discrimination, and to protection against gender-based violence
- (Restrict the acquisition of guns and ammunition by those who commit intimate partner or family violence)
- Train law enforcement officials to better understand the small arms issues related to the prevention of gender based violence
- Include the perspectives of men and women in the development of policies to prevent gun violence.
- Research with partners in conflict zones and academic institutions to develop a gender-based understanding and analysis of local contexts, issues and needs at practical and policy levels.

What we need is a "new" business model. Not so new in itself but a revamp on the way we do our work in the humanitarian sector.

The first requirement of this new business model is a comprehensive risk framework. We often find ourselves having to engage in an enterprise of risk management with incomplete information about how things will unfold. Such uncertainties are only being exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. We must plan to be ready for events for which we cannot plan.

The second requirement is to rework the balance between crisis response and the upstream and downstream issues of prevention and recovery. More resources are needed both to reduce risk in the first place, and reduce the risk of relapse after a crisis occurs. The default mode of the current humanitarian model in general is external assistance; the default mode of a new vulnerability and protection model should be self-reliance.

The third requirement of this new model is to enhance the capacities, readiness and resilience of exposed societies so they can better handle extreme events. Ensuring that civil society and local communities are involved

will not only make response efforts faster, but more efficient as their involvement will make it possible to identify and meet the diverse needs of various groups in affected communities, groups differentiated, for example, by gender, age, and social class.

The fourth requirement is to engage the private sector more fully, not just as a source of donations but also as a source of key skills and technologies, during and after crises. We commend the World Economic Forum's initiative on the private sector in humanitarian relief as well as other efforts to incentivise appropriate and beneficial private-sector investments in risky regions.

The fifth requirement of the business model is to link the humanitarian concern to broader development issues, strengthening social safety nets and supporting resilience. This requirement will necessitate unprecedented collaboration between humanitarian and development actors and interests.

Finally, as cross-border challenges will grow, regional organisations backed by the UN will need to be able to mediate and mitigate these problems as they arise.

These six requirements should be examined, assessed and fleshed out by those engaged in the pressing problem of meeting the increased humanitarian caseload.