

Third Meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points

Preventing Atrocities: Capacity Building, Networks and Regional Organizations

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The third meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points covered numerous aspects essential to operationalizing and implementing the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) at the national, regional and international level. The following are six key recommendations for states to consider:

1. Establish and support the work of a national R2P Focal Point.
2. Develop a plan of engagement with different ministries and departments within your government to deepen the process of operationalizing R2P. The plan should focus on strengthening domestic resilience and enhancing collaboration. Consider the formulation of a National Action Plan on R2P.
3. Identify and strengthen the R2P components within capacity building programs and development assistance, human rights work and the training of security and military forces.
4. Deepen cooperation within the Global Network of R2P Focal Points by convening focused, thematic meetings of relevant working-level practitioners to discuss technical aspects of operationalizing R2P.
5. Express commitment to mass atrocity prevention at the international level, including through participation in the annual United Nations (UN) General Assembly Interactive Dialogue on R2P.
6. Cooperate with other state and civil society initiatives and collaborate on joint objectives for mass atrocity prevention.

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INTRODUCTION

On 11-12 June 2013 in Accra, Ghana, the governments of Denmark and Ghana, in association with the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, co-hosted the third annual meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points. This was the first meeting of the Global Network to be held outside New York. The location proved instrumental in securing strong regional participation. Senior representatives of more than 35 countries and 3 regional organizations attended the meeting. In addition, the UN Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and former Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Professor Edward C. Luck, were also in attendance.

This document provides a summary of key issues discussed in Accra and recommendations on how to further strengthen the role of R2P Focal Points, their Global Network and relevant regional organizations in preventing mass atrocities. Specific topics explored during the meeting in Accra include the relationship between R2P and capacity building, human rights and training of military and police forces. As on previous occasions, participants agreed that each state has to identify their own R2P needs and design an appropriate country-specific strategy. The following text should be read accordingly.

OPERATIONALIZING THE WORK OF THE R2P FOCAL POINTS AND THE GLOBAL NETWORK

This section of the meeting built upon earlier recommendations regarding the appointment of a R2P

Focal Point. The session also distinguished between different stages in the process of appointing and working as a R2P Focal Point. Participants agreed that during all phases working on R2P issues requires training of relevant staff across all government agencies.¹

Before appointing a R2P Focal Point

Profile of the R2P Focal Point

The role of the R2P Focal Point is to integrate atrocity prevention within both domestic and foreign policy. The balance between these elements will be determined by the national context and priorities. For mass atrocity prevention to gain traction within national institutions it is important that the R2P Focal Point be positioned within government.² The R2P Focal Point should have sufficient influence and access across their national system to be able to promote R2P broadly and to meaningfully engage with relevant operational mechanisms for preventing and halting mass atrocities.

Institution or individual as the R2P Focal Point

Every government has to assess which option best suits their national context. The appointment of a senior-level official as the R2P Focal Point can reflect a government's commitment to R2P, provide authority and ensure visibility. If an institution functions as the R2P Focal Point, such an approach may increase the sustainability of the position, facilitate the emergence of standard operating procedures and enhance capacity to reach across ministries as well as engage external actors. Most states have chosen to appoint an individual senior-level government official situated within a relevant ministry as a R2P Focal Point.

Relationship between R2P Focal Points and other initiatives on mass atrocity prevention

The appointment of a R2P Focal Point in countries that are already engaged in other efforts on mass atrocity prevention should be undertaken in tandem to avoid unnecessary duplication. For example, in the case of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the national coordinator for the committee on the prevention

of genocide has been co-appointed as the Democratic Republic of the Congo's R2P Focal Point.³

The first 100 days after appointment as R2P Focal Point

Engaging the government as a whole

Experience from already appointed R2P Focal Points indicates that as a first step it can be useful to conduct consultations across various ministries and departments. Such consultations raise awareness about R2P and its operational meaning for the relevant country. They can also help to identify existing activities and programs which contribute to mass atrocity prevention in order to strengthen these initiatives and avoid duplication. Structural gaps and weaknesses in government capacity can also be identified.

Demystifying R2P and its implementation by highlighting where the government is already engaged in mass atrocity prevention can be a first step towards creating joint ownership. Several recently appointed R2P Focal Points commented from experience on identifying existing programs regarding human rights, good governance, international justice, etc. and explained how these related to "upholding R2P." This process enabled broader cooperation across government.

Making it work as R2P Focal Point

National Action Plan

After initial consultations across the government, developing a National Action Plan for R2P could provide an opportunity to initiate strategic actions to link the national and international dimensions of mass atrocity prevention. This could involve identifying R2P-priorities and resources for one's country, applying a R2P lens to relevant existing programs and determining R2P-related responsibilities and timeframes at the national level. A National Action Plan on R2P can identify reviewable benchmarks and send a clear message to relevant actors that preventing mass atrocities is a priority for the government as a whole.

¹ For further clarification on the appointment of a R2P Focal Point, please see the list of recommendations provided by the Global Centre for R2P: <http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/recommendations-r2p-national-focal-points.pdf>.

² Some examples for where states have placed their R2P Focal Point include: Director of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Head of Legal Services, Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Justice Ministry; Chairperson of a national institution established to promote national peace efforts; Chief Director, Internal or Home Ministry; Senior Adviser in the Office of the President or the Prime Minister.

³ Other examples include Switzerland, where the Special Envoy and head of the Task force for Dealing with the Past and Prevention of Mass Atrocities, located within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, is the R2P Focal Point. In the United States, the director for War Crimes, Atrocities and Civilian Protection, Multilateral and Human Rights, located within the National Security Council in the White House, is the R2P Focal Point.

R2P Focal Points and linkages with civil society

Civil society can play an early warning role regarding mass atrocities and provide important input for identifying country-specific R2P issues. Over time R2P Focal Points should develop a positive working relationship with civil society and eminent personalities (individuals in public life that have accumulated political and social capital) to strengthen the country's work on R2P. Such actors can play a role in situations when tensions are high. For example, the important role of civil society in potentially easing tensions after disputed elections was remarked upon by several participants.

Operationalizing the Global Network of R2P Focal Points

Future contributions by the Global Network

The network can serve as a tool for both structural and situational (crisis specific) cooperation. Structural cooperation could take the form of capacity building. This may take place, for example, through the sharing of intellectual resources and operational best practices. In situations where the threat of mass atrocities appears imminent, R2P Focal Points could be called upon as interlocutors for their own country or region to provide advice and policy options. The Global Network is a means through which a community of practitioners committed to mass atrocity prevention can be further developed.

Putting the Global Network into practice

Working together as R2P Focal Points on sensitive issues requires trust and a common understanding of the network's value. More meetings, including at the regional level, will be necessary to deepen this process. One tool to address specific R2P issues could be the establishment of topical working groups that could meet at the working/expert level to discuss and develop operational aspects in greater depth.

Connecting the Global Network to related efforts

The Global Network of R2P Focal Points and partners from the genocide prevention community have come together to form a joint platform for Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes (GAAMAC). The first meeting of GAAMAC will take place in early 2014. It will bring together R2P Focal Points and representatives from the genocide community to discuss concrete steps on how to jointly advance mass atrocity prevention.

THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN PREVENTING MASS ATROCITIES

Regional organizations and their current relationship to R2P

The regional organizations represented at the meeting included the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and European Union (EU). Information was also received about relevant work in the Latin American region.

African Union

Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act of the AU endorses the principle of non-indifference regarding genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. This has informed the AU's engagement in Darfur and elsewhere.

Economic Community of West African States

Normative instruments adopted by ECOWAS since 1999, including the Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, encapsulate R2P. Additionally, ECOWAS member states subscribe through their AU membership to the norm of non-indifference regarding mass atrocities.

European Union

Through its work on conflict prevention and early warning the EU addresses many of the indicators that potentially lead to mass atrocity crimes. Additionally, the EU fully endorses R2P as a developing norm.

Neither the AU, ECOWAS nor the EU have appointed a R2P Focal Point within their organization. Conflict prevention remains their primary framework, and they have yet to adopt a R2P lens when addressing situations where populations are at risk of mass atrocities.

Steps forward

- It was suggested at the meeting that regional organizations should consider appointing a R2P Focal Point to institutionalize mass atrocity prevention and R2P in the day-to-day operations of the organization. The appointment of a R2P Focal Point would serve a number of key purposes: it would underscore the organization's commitment to R2P, establish a contact point for other actors working on preventing atrocities, including national R2P Focal Points from within the organization's member states, and task a

specific person to help the organization strengthen its own R2P efforts.

- Regional organizations should urge their member states and relevant sub-regional organizations to appoint a R2P Focal Point to strengthen their work on R2P.
- As forums for dialogue and through peer review exercises, regional organizations can help to assess the status of R2P-related national institutions within their member states.
- Regional organizations should enhance the capacity of their member states to prevent and address mass atrocities, including through training on R2P matters and ensuring accountability for mass atrocity crimes through the strengthening of national judicial systems.
- Regional organizations possess a particular understanding of the social, cultural and historical landscape of their region. They therefore have a special position from which to design and implement regional strategies to prevent mass atrocities, including through the establishment and operationalization of effective early warning systems.
- Given the limited capacity of many countries, regional organizations could play a robust role in leading on the foreign policy aspects of R2P implementation, especially in connection with country-specific crises.
- Effective synergies need to be developed between the UN, regional and sub-regional organizations regarding their work on R2P. This should include the sharing of lessons learned from past cases.

R2P AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building forms an integral part of both the first and second pillar of R2P. Generally speaking, capacity building spans the areas of development, conflict prevention, stabilization and peace-building. The prevention of mass atrocities, however, requires a targeted approach to capture the dynamics of mass atrocity crimes. R2P Focal Points can help to initiate

R2P-related capacity building through their own government.

How to identify core priorities for building R2P-related capacity

In order to focus on R2P-specific needs, capacity building can make use of tools that focus on mass atrocity risk factors. These include the “Analysis Framework” developed by the Office of the UN Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide and the “Mass Atrocity Toolbox on Prevention, Reaction, Rebuilding” in Gareth Evans’ book “The Responsibility to Protect, Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once And For All.”⁴

How to initiate R2P-related capacity building

In light of resource constraints it was recommended that individuals focus efforts on one area of capacity building, such as the rule of law and good governance. This would help develop tools and working methods that fit a particular institutional structure and could subsequently be applied to other areas. The R2P Focal Point should seek to engage with on-going capacity building efforts that are relevant to R2P in order to advance a more holistic approach.

Areas relevant for R2P-related capacity building

The areas that participants identified as especially relevant for R2P-related capacity building include security sector reform, strengthening the rule of law and fighting impunity for mass atrocity crimes. More specifically, relevant R2P-related measures include, in no particular order: strengthening national judicial systems to address mass atrocity crimes, addressing minority rights as well as institutional and structural discrimination to curb the potential of violent extremism, analyzing root causes that could trigger ethnic or religious conflict in a given country, building national as well as regional capacity to deploy assistance to populations at risk of mass atrocities, training security services and other relevant actors on R2P-related issues and improving effective border control to stop proliferation of arms as well as groups perpetrating mass atrocities across borders.

⁴ Office of the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, “Analysis Framework,” available at: http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/osapg_a_nalysis_framework.pdf. Gareth Evans, *The Responsibility*

to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and For All, Brookings Institution Press, 2008.

R2P AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The relationship between R2P and human rights is complex and needs further exploration. Some mass atrocity crimes arise from grave human rights violations, while others occur as violations of international humanitarian law. Fundamentally, however, R2P's first pillar builds upon existing national human rights commitments. Therefore the application of a "R2P lens" when working on human rights issues could assist with regard to effective prevention of mass atrocity crimes.

UN Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council and its various mechanisms, including special rapporteurs, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and commissions of inquiry, form an important arena to advance work on R2P issues. As appropriate, discussions on R2P matters should take place in Geneva to further explore and explain R2P's linkages with human rights. R2P Focal Points can facilitate such a process by raising awareness about R2P matters among human rights colleagues and ensuring a consistent message on R2P issues in both New York and Geneva.

Universal Periodic Review and R2P

The UPR provides a space for a national dialogue between the government, civil society and other stakeholders. In this context the inclusion of R2P-related information in country reports or R2P-related questions during the review can help to assess national institutions and relevant legislation from a mass atrocity prevention perspective. It is important to note that the current UPR procedure is not equipped to capture acute warning signals that are particular to the imminent threat of mass atrocity crimes.

R2P AND THE TRAINING OF MILITARY AND POLICE FORCES

Military and police forces are especially relevant to upholding R2P. There are both national and international aspects regarding training to prevent mass atrocities and protect populations. These efforts cut across all three pillars of R2P.

Need for R2P-specific training and guidance

R2P and the protection of civilians are related but separate concepts that present challenges for security forces tasked to protect populations at risk. This includes identifying specific populations who are threatened by mass atrocity crimes. Importantly, from the practitioner's perspective, these protective challenges have not yet been translated into concrete training material, curricula or tailored operational approaches. Lessons learned from past experiences with mass atrocity situations need to be more effectively incorporated into future operations.

R2P mandates and Protection of Civilians mandates

Specifically protecting populations through UN peacekeeping missions and intervening in situations where mass atrocities are occurring can be two very different matters. There is a need for a greater understanding of what UN Security Council mandates that specify "protection of civilians" mean versus those that entail a "responsibility to protect" populations from the four mass atrocity crimes.

Recruitment considerations

Training of military and police at the national level is part of a wider security sector agenda. The recruitment policy for the security sector must reflect the diversity of a national population. Security forces must be able to play their essential function in upholding a country's primary responsibility to protect.

CONCLUSION

Overall the Accra meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points was an overwhelming success. R2P Focal Points and other high-level practitioners within government shared the challenges and experiences of working to implement R2P in their government and region, as well as through their multilateral interactions. The ability of states to meet and interact about such an important issue on a cross-regional, north-south basis was rewarding for all involved. The organizers and participants look forward to the next meeting of the Global Network in 2014.