

Reporting by Session Note-takers at the 2019 Annual Consultations with NGOs

Date:	5 July 2019
Session Title:	Protection Capacity
Moderator:	Diana Essex-Lettieri, Asylum Access
UNHCR focal point:	
NGO focal point:	
Major points arising from speakers and discussions	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are numerous and diverse strategies to support States with protection capacity. We collectively need to provide innovative and concrete ideas, reflecting a range of national systems. 2. Joint and effective advocacy is key — especially with governments that haven't adopted a comprehensive approach to refugee protection. And such advocacy needs to include the refugee voice. 3. Unhindered access to independent legal assistance is a fundamental right — and pro bono assistance is a critical component of that. Without access to legal assistance, asylum-seekers often don't know their rights or understand the process or criteria applied to their claims. 	
Recommendations/Conclusions/Decisions on the way forward	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UNCHR and NGOs should establish means of including refugee communities in the ACSG. Refugees need a formal seat at the table. 2. UNHCR should clarify the methods by which NGOs of all types and sizes can feed into the ACSG. 3. UNHCR should work to avoid the perception of a paternalistic approach, whereby the global north is seen to be teaching/imposing its systems on countries in the global south. 	
Top two quotes from the session	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training for public defenders and federal judges is critical. No one should make decisions based on ignorance. 2. When we talk about "state" capacity, we should really be thinking in terms of "national" capacity — we need an inclusive and whole of government approach. 	
Any general points regarding UNHCR-NGO partnerships	
<p>The questions and comments reflected a clear concern regarding States that are not protection-friendly or have no desire to improve their protection capacity and may therefore be unwilling to accept advice and support from NGOs. We need to seriously consider protection capacity in difficult environments.</p>	