

Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation

Annual Meeting of Frontline Humanitarian Negotiators
5-6/12/2017, Geneva, Switzerland



“Navigating the Perfect Storm: Constraints and Opportunities for Humanitarian Negotiation in South Sudan”

Tuesday December 5th, 2017 – Duration: 1h30

Objective: South Sudan, a multi-ethnic landlocked country in northeastern Africa, has been plagued by a plethora of challenges since gaining independence in 2011. Armed conflict, inter-communal tensions, high poverty levels, an unstable economy, poor infrastructure, and climatic shocks; To sum it all up, some observers have referred to the humanitarian crisis in the country as a “perfect storm” of difficulties. One could assert the same for the specific challenges that humanitarian negotiators face in this context. In view of the enormous humanitarian needs and prevalent insecurity, the stakes for humanitarian negotiations are high in South Sudan. Humanitarian negotiators are grappling with serious impediments to access and a ‘principles versus pragmatism’ dilemma in which compromises on humanitarian principles appear necessary in light of operational realities. The panel will delve into these dilemmas and seek pathways to navigate the myriad of challenges faced, while also highlighting opportunities for humanitarian action in the country.

Invited panelists:

- **François Stamm**, Head of Delegation for South Sudan, ICRC
- **Duk Stephen**, Programme Coordinator, UNIDO
- **Rehan Zahid**, Special Assistant to the Executive Director, WFP
- **Raphael Veicht**, Head of Mission for South Sudan, MSF-CH
- **Mark Stevens**, Special Advisor for North East Africa, Samaritans’ Purse

- Facilitation: **Marika Guderian**, Special Advisor to the Chief of Staff, WFP

Format of the discussion: During this panel session, the five panelists are invited to make a short intervention (5-7 minutes each) that outlines the challenges and opportunities that frontline negotiators face in South Sudan. The panel aims to trigger a rich discussion among practitioners present in the audience regarding their specific needs, dilemmas and challenges when negotiating in this context. The discussion should also aim at reflecting on the possible tools and policy instruments that could be developed in order to support frontline negotiators.

Expected outcome: A critical debate among practitioners on the practical challenges and dilemmas faced in their operational context. The discussion shall also focus on the identification of possible tools and/or policy instruments that the Centre of Competence could support.

Suggested questions for the discussion:

- ➔ What are the main access constraints that you face in your daily operations?
- ➔ What role do political or military actors play in these constraints?
- ➔ What are the key challenges and dilemmas you face in engaging political and military counterparts in dealing with these constraints?
- ➔ What are potential opportunities for engaging with various armed actors to gain better acceptance, access and protection to populations in need?