

Summary of Global Protection Forum Session 1

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From Ukraine to Afghanistan to Yemen and Sudan and most recently in Gaza, civilians continue to pay the highest price when critical civilian infrastructure, such as education or health care, are under attack. Across Cluster operations, attacks against health care are a grave threat to everyone living in areas affected by conflict. The impact of the attacks on health care workers and facilities are simply devastating.

It is clear that not all Governments and armed actors are able, or willing, to comply with their obligation under international law to protect health care. Communities have played a significant role to ensure the protection of health care, as do civil society networks and local actors. Where there are gaps, humanitarian protection and health teams have implemented protection centered health interventions to help reduce the impact. The Syria Protection Cluster, the Health Cluster, UNIDOR and IRC in South Sudan, ICRC in Colombia, and WHO in Yemen spoke to the collaboration between health and protection teams, and what it takes to prevent and mitigate impacts of attacks on health care.

The promising practices shared during the session included the use of existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms on attacks on healthcare (for instance the [WHO SSA, Government led mechanisms](#) and the [Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition](#)), community-led, governmental and interagency early warning mechanisms, engagement and confidential dialogue with armed groups on the legal framework related to the protection of healthcare, and contingency planning to mitigate risks towards healthcare exposed to attacks and security threats. The different speakers also outlined the challenges, and what still needs to be done by humanitarian and protection actors to urgently to strengthen the collective response:

- More data sharing and joint analysis between health and protection actors to facilitate a common and evidence-based understanding of the issues.
- Stronger collaboration between health and protection for joint action to help to reduce violence and respond to the needs of health workers and communities.
- Increased resources to end violence and reduce the impact of this violence on health workers and communities.

This issue cannot be addressed by just one actor alone. Sustained partnerships between national and international NGOs, UN Agencies, ICRC, as well as between Protection and Health actors and constant engagement with those affected, wider communities, national authorities and donors are essential. The [Joint Operational Framework](#) established by the Health and Protection Cluster is an example of a vehicle for such collaboration.