

Summary of Global Protection Forum Session 3

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Emphasis has also often been placed on the role of external actors to provide support and assistance to affected communities when duty bearers are failing in their responsibility to protect.

However, the capacities of communities themselves in actively contributing to their own protection has often been less understood and less visible – not always appearing as part of formal funding strategies and response plans across the humanitarian sector, but nevertheless playing a vital role in supporting protection outcomes for those faced with crisis.

Over the past number of years this is however starting to shift, and protection actors have been seeking to really build on and advance the participation and leadership of communities. Local actors and communities must play a more prominent role in protection efforts to effectively reduce protection risks. A truly inclusive, community-led response is crucial.

Community-led approaches offer a pathway for advancing prevention and response to protection risks by giving control of decisions and resources to community groups as agents of their own protection. Many community-based protection actors are the ones with the needed contextual knowledge, the relationships of trust with parties to the conflict and community members, as well as the proximity and access needed to support the protection in some of the most difficult operating environments.

In Ukraine, communities on the ground were the first one to deliver humanitarian assistance, organise evacuation, and welcome people in shelters. In Somalia, READO are documenting behaviour change in the community, with local leaders advocating to support a rights-based approach, and an increasing focus on addressing GBV. In DR Congo, information to the population on their rights during raising awareness sessions are organised with together with communities. Maps of services available are shared with communities, that can be used in case of protection needs.

Community and local actors cannot and should not always have to do it alone and the broader sector, including international protection actors and allies, must support greater risk management and risk-sharing, amplifying, and accelerating impacts, as well as ensuring needed funding and resources are dedicated not only to response but also to preventing harm before it happens.