



Global Protection Cluster

2024

GLOBAL PROTECTION  
FORUM REPORT



Shaping the Future of Protection with Communities at the Centre





# GLOBAL PROTECTION FORUM 2024

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF PROTECTION WITH COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE

## Introduction

The 2024 Global Protection Forum took place from **November 4 to 13, 2024**. Organized by the Global Protection Cluster (GPC), in collaboration with a broad network of partners, the forum serves as a platform for dialogue, learning, and collaboration on critical protection issues in some of the world’s most challenging contexts.

Through seven virtual events, the forum created a platform for key stakeholders — protection partners, field practitioners, donors, Member States, academics, and others — to discuss how our behaviours, policies, and practices could evolve to better prioritise communities at the heart of protection efforts.

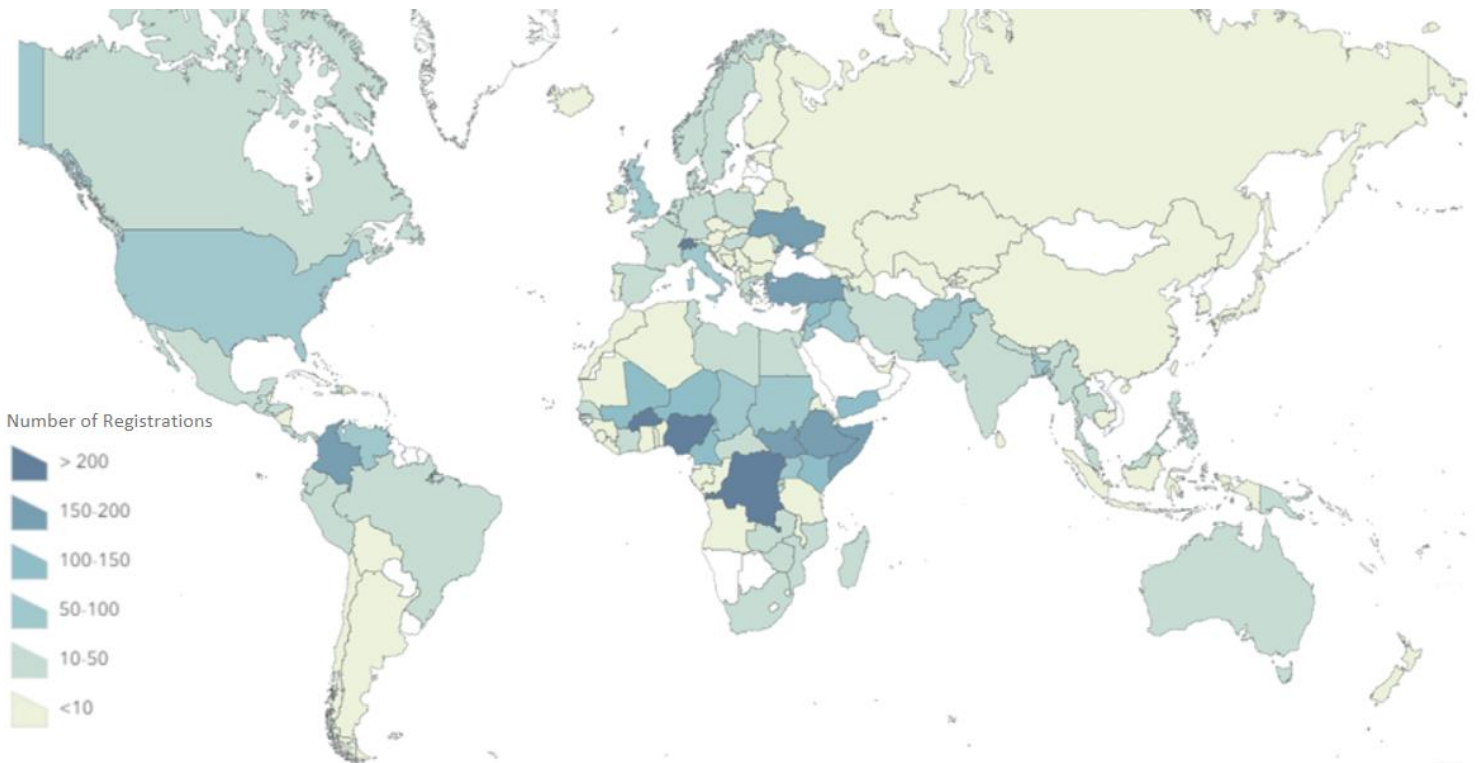
To ensure accessibility and inclusivity, simultaneous interpretation in **Arabic, French, and Spanish** enabled active participation from field colleagues and local actors worldwide.

## Participation and Reach

The forum recorded strong participation, with an average of **650 participants per session** and a cumulative attendance exceeding 4,500 across 150 countries, reflecting the broad reach and engagement of the forum.

Registrations surpassed 5,100 globally, with Sub-Saharan Africa being the most represented region, accounting for over 45% of all registrations, followed by Europe (20.4%) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (13.1%). Several countries stood out with significant engagement, including the Democratic Republic of Congo (390 registration), Nigeria (214), Burkina Faso (212), Switzerland (212), Somalia (191), Ukraine (190), Colombia (186), and South Sudan (170).

The map below highlights the global coverage of the forum, illustrating the distribution of registrations across participating countries.

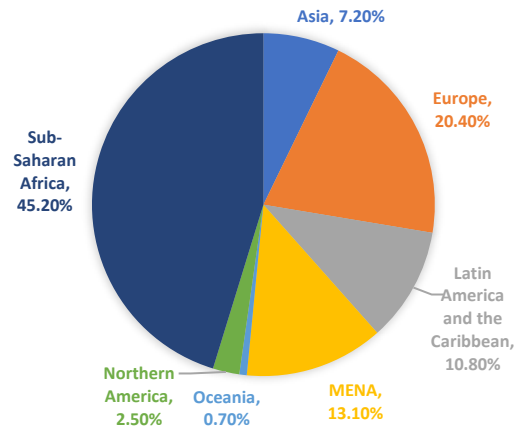


The forum drew a diverse range of participants, reflecting the multi-stakeholder nature of global protection efforts, with:

- 35% from international organisations or UN agencies
- 31% from international NGOs
- 23% from local NGOs
- 3.6% from government
- 2.3% Red Cross and Red Crescent
- And the remaining were independent/consultants (1.2%), academia (0.7%), the private sector (0.5%) and other (1.6%).

This broad representation underscores the collaborative nature of the forum, bringing

together voices from various sectors to discuss the future of protection.



### Special Focus: Shaping the Future of Protection with Communities at the Centre

The theme of this year’s Global Protection Forum, *Shaping the Future of Protection with Communities at the Centre*, sought to address the evolving challenges and opportunities faced by protection clusters, practitioners and affected communities. In an era of rapid changes in the global protection landscape – shaped by conflict, displacement, climate shocks, and protracted crises – this theme underscored the critical need to prioritise communities as the cornerstone of all protection efforts.

At its heart, the theme aimed to reinforce the principle that effective protection is rooted in active engagement with communities. It emphasised the importance of listening to those most affected by crises and ensuring their voices, needs, and capacities shape the design and implementation of protection interventions. By doing so, practitioners and clusters can better respond to local realities, foster resilience, and build trust with the people they serve.

The forum provides an invaluable opportunity for the global protection community to convene, share experiences, and discuss the complex issues confronting the sector. Participants joined from diverse operational contexts, from frontline humanitarian responses to long-term solution efforts, all representing a shared commitment to placing communities at the centre of protection work.

### Agenda

- Week 1:**
- [Session 1](#): Dilemmas and Opportunities in Humanitarian Frontline Responses
  - [Session 2](#): The Continuity of Protection in Humanitarian Coordination Transitions
  - [Session 3](#): From the Ground Up: Learning from Locally-Led Efforts to Strengthen the Protection of Civilians
  - [Session 4](#): Community-Led Advocacy - Self-Protection and Accountability
- Week 2:**
- [Session 5](#): A People-Centred Approach to Protection
  - [Session 6](#): Strengthening Legal Aid and Access to Justice in Humanitarian Settings
  - [Session 7](#): Housing, Land and Property: Integrating Protection for Durable Solutions





## Opening of the Forum

Monday, 4 November

The 2024 Global Protection Forum was opened officially with remarks by Ruvendrini Menikdiwela, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection at UNHCR, and Josep Herreros, Coordinator of the Global Protection Cluster (GPC).



Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR, **Ruvendrini Menikdiwela**, made an opening address that reflected on the magnitude of global protection challenges in recent years.

Ruven highlighted that 2024 has seen unprecedented pressures on protection actors, who are currently facing 62 conflicts impacting 92 countries. These conflicts have led to severe suffering for civilians and created significant obstacles for humanitarian workers. She emphasised the growing need for adaptable, community-centred protection responses as traditional strategies are increasingly tested by the complexity and scale of global crises. Finally, Ruven urged participants to critically reflect on their role and effectiveness, posing a guiding question for the forum:

***“Are we, as a protection community, doing enough to support those at the frontline?”***



As the Coordinator of the GPC, **Josep Herreros** thanked all the attendees for joining the opening of the forum and introduced the main focus for the forthcoming two weeks – *placing communities at the centre of protection*. He acknowledged the increasing urgency of these topics over the past year, given the upscale of multiple emergencies globally, and continued high levels of needs in protracted crises in countries such as Yemen or Afghanistan.

Over 75% of protection clusters are currently dealing with armed conflict and violence. This is pushing communities and protection partners to the limit of their capacity. However, despite facing such difficult challenges, Josep highlighted the resilience of the protection community, and commended the strong turnout of colleagues and members of the community, committed and ready to learn and share experiences from all over the world.



## SESSION 1: Dilemmas and Opportunities in Humanitarian Frontline Responses

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### Session 1: Dilemmas and Opportunities in Humanitarian Frontline Responses

Monday, 4 November

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The opening session of the Global Protection Forum, which was attended by 834 people, was moderated by **Lisa Monaghan**, Interagency Field Support with the Global Protection Cluster. Lisa introduced the topic of the session “Dilemmas and Opportunities in Humanitarian Frontline Responses” and highlighted that the overwhelming impact of violence on protection in several countries this year reminds us of the importance of frontline protection responses. She highlighted the role of communities and first responders as the backbone of the response systems and emphasised the importance of working closely with these community-based responders

**Aribani Ibachi Witanene**, Head of The Protection of Civilians at International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) spoke about the evolving nature of modern warfare, describing a shift towards urban conflict, proxy wars, and the weaponisation of technologies such as AI and cyber tools. He illustrated how these trends will lead to increasing infringements of international humanitarian law (IHL), highlighting the increased targeting of civilian infrastructure and medical facilities in recent years. Aribani shared recent examples of hospitals being deliberately targeted despite their IHL-protected status, and the devastating impact of cyberattacks on critical infrastructure. He highlighted the ICRC’s efforts to adapt by developing digital tools to monitor violations and by engaging with tech companies to address ethical concerns in the development of AI-driven weapons. He urged humanitarian actors to incorporate digital risk management into their strategies, emphasising the interconnectedness of digital and physical safety. Aribani called for renewed global leadership to enforce IHL and safeguard both civilians and humanitarian workers in these evolving contexts.

**Josué Fidele**, National Protection Officer at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), spoke about the devastating impact of gang violence in **Haiti** and the challenges displaced individuals face in accessing essential services. He explained that escalating gang violence has forced countless Haitians to flee their homes, often with minimal resources and without crucial identification documents. The crisis, worsened by the 2021 assassination of Haiti’s president, has driven the nation into deeper instability. While many displaced individuals seek protection in the Dominican Republic, a significant number are deported back to Haiti. However, returning to their original communities often remains impossible due to the persistent threat of gang violence, leaving them unable to resettle safely once back in Haiti. Josué also emphasised the difficult conditions within temporary shelters for internally displaced persons (IDPs), which are often also under threat from gangs themselves. These shelters lack adequate security, further exacerbating limited access to vital services such as sanitation, healthcare, and education, and creating an environment of ongoing instability and fear. Josué highlighted IOM’s



initiatives to provide emergency shelter and psychosocial support but stressed that these efforts are insufficient without systemic changes.



**Participants** (from left to right): **Top Row:** Lisa Monaghan (GPC), Aribani Ibachi Witanene (ICRC), Josué Fidele (IOM). **Middle Row:** Valérie Svobodová (UNHCR), Darren Clark (NP), Shaza Ahmed Mohamed Khair (NADA) and **Bottom Row:** Katia Bonté (GARR).

**Shaza Ahmed Mohamed Khair**, Executive Director of Nada Elazhar Organization for Disaster Prevention and Sustainable Development (NADA), highlighted the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in **Sudan's** conflict zones. She explained how sexual violence has become a deliberate tactic of war, targeting women, girls, and marginalised groups to instil fear and control. Shaza shared a powerful example of a young survivor who, despite severe trauma, was unable to access support due to societal stigma and conservative norms. She described NADA's efforts to offer emergency healthcare, psychosocial support, and legal assistance to survivors, often under extremely challenging conditions. However, she acknowledged the limitations of their reach, citing insufficient funding and a lack of safe spaces for survivors. Shaza called for greater international support to integrate GBV prevention into all humanitarian programs and emphasised the importance of tackling deep-seated cultural taboos that silence victims. She also urged governments and global stakeholders to enforce accountability for perpetrators to end the cycle of impunity.

**Valérie Svobodová**, Assistant Representative for Protection with UNHCR in **Afghanistan**, and former Protection Cluster Coordinator, expanded the conversation on protection by emphasising its importance in disaster response as well as conflict settings. She pointed out that while protection is often discussed in strategic documents, its implementation in emergencies remains inconsistent and sometimes deprioritized. Valérie advocated for a shift in perception, urging humanitarian actors to treat protection as a core component of emergency response rather than a secondary concern. Drawing on her field experience, she emphasised the vital role of protection analysis in identifying risks and trends, which not only guides protection actors but also informs other clusters and decision-makers. Valérie highlighted the need for better pre-positioning of resources and deeper collaboration between humanitarian actors and local communities to enhance resilience. She stressed the need for long-term strategies, such as integrating protection into disaster risk reduction plans, to mitigate

vulnerabilities before crises strike. She concluded with a call for stronger coordination between protection actors and the community to deliver effective services in both conflict and disaster contexts, emphasising that frontline response must prioritize community input and action.

**Darren Clark**, Protection Advisor at Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) in Ukraine, spoke on the need to adapt protection models to the local needs in conflict zones, recommending a shift from traditional international protection models. In **Ukraine**, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) collaborates closely with local Ukrainian organizations rather than maintaining a high-profile international presence, as this has proven more effective in sensitive frontline areas like Kherson. Darren explained that international organizations, due to their visibility, can sometimes attract additional attention, endangering both volunteers and civilians. For this reason, creating partnerships with local volunteer organizations has become vital to Ukraine's protection landscape. Darren provided an example of a Ukrainian volunteer network that used encrypted messaging apps to coordinate protection for civilians trapped in conflict zones, showcasing the power of locally-led solutions. He also highlighted the emotional resilience of these volunteers, many of whom operate at great personal risk without formal training. Darren called for international organizations to empower local actors with funding, technical support, and a collaborative approach that adapts to local realities rather than imposing external methods.

**Katia Bonté**, Coordinator of GARR (Groupement d'Appui aux Rapatriés et aux Réfugiés - Support Group for Repatriates and Refugees) in **Haiti**, spoke about the increasing challenge concerning both the economic and social reintegration of returnees. Many of these individuals arrive back in Haiti with no resources, no identification, and little chance of reintegration. She shared the story of a young deportee who, after being separated from her family, struggled to access education and faced exploitation in informal work. She stressed that reintegration policies and robust funding are necessary to provide these individuals with the resources to rebuild their lives and access basic services, employment, and education. She described GARR's work in providing legal aid, temporary shelters, and advocacy for migration reform but emphasised the overwhelming scale of the crisis. She called for increased advocacy to address restrictive migration policies that often lead to deportations and limit support for returnees. She stressed that sustainable solutions must focus on creating opportunities for dignified livelihoods in Haiti to break the cycle of forced migration.

### **Questions and Concluding Reflections:**

In response to a few of the questions shared by online attendees, the panellists shared some final remarks – especially regarding leadership and advocacy in protection. Valérie Svobodová emphasised the importance of systematic advocacy to hold governments accountable, calling for a proactive approach to coordination. She cautioned against viewing protection as a “tick-box” activity and argued that real leadership should prioritise tangible protection outcomes. Darren Clark echoed Valérie's sentiment, citing frustrations from grassroots actors who often feel disconnected from the broader coordination system. He emphasised again that the international community must shift towards adapting to the needs of local actors on the ground. Aribani Ibachi Witanene called for renewed leadership from states and international organizations in enforcing compliance with IHL. He stressed that while laws exist to protect humanitarian workers and civilians, weak advocacy and disregard for these laws have led to deteriorating conditions on the ground.

The session closed with a call to action for greater flexibility in funding and pre-positioning resources to aid local and national organizations in responding more effectively to emergencies. Panellists agreed that sustainable progress requires better synergy between communities and humanitarian actors, and stronger accountability for the international system to genuinely support and prioritise frontline responders.



## SESSION 2: The Continuity of Protection in Humanitarian Coordination Transitions

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### Session 2: The Continuity of Protection in Humanitarian Coordination Transitions

Tuesday, 5 November

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The theme of the second session of the forum, which was attended by 798 people, was “Continuity of Protection in Humanitarian Coordination Transitions”.

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**Caelin Briggs**, Head of Interagency Coordination and Protection Policy at NRC and Co-Chair of GPC SAG, moderated this session. Caelin opened the session by defining humanitarian coordination transitions. She explained that these transitions often involve shifting from emergency humanitarian clusters to development-oriented systems or locally led structures. These transitions can be triggered by improved situations, strengthened national capacities, or decreased funding. Caelin highlighted the importance of learning from past transitions and ensuring the continuity of protection for vulnerable populations.

**Matthew Chrastek**, Director of Libya INGO Forum (LIF), discussed the complex transition process in Libya, where LIF navigated the deactivation of the humanitarian protection cluster at the end of 2022. In **Libya**, protection coordination moved from a centralised approach under the cluster system to a Nexus model, incorporating both humanitarian and development objectives. To ensure continued attention to protection issues, INGOs pushed for dedicated coordination spaces. For example, they organised protection-focused events with UN agencies to highlight Libya’s ongoing protection crisis, underscoring the need for continued, centralised coordination. A temporary “Protection Cell” was also created in 2023 to support coordination, conduct protection assessments, and advise on where protection functions should fit within the new Nexus structure. Matthew underlined the importance of establishing safe spaces for protection coordination, making sure funding and capacity are in place, and involving INGOs early in planning to smooth transitions and uphold protection standards.

**Toloe Masori**, former UNHCR Senior Protection Cluster Coordinator in **Iraq**, described the country’s transition during her time there in 2022 when clusters were deactivated. Toloe highlighted challenges in a country where some needs may have decreased since 2017, but where unresolved protection issues persisted, especially regarding civil documentation. The main transition outcomes included the creation of a “Protection Platform”, co-led by UNHCR and OHCHR, which was established in late-2022 to focus on advocacy and coordination among INGOs and national actors. Another major objective was addressing civil documentation issues for vulnerable populations, particularly IDPs and those with perceived affiliation with extremist groups. Toloe emphasised that Iraq’s government lacked readiness and funding allocation for protection, which hindered full ownership of transition responsibilities. She recommended early, sustained involvement of local actors and capacity-building for local NGOs,





arguing that transition planning should begin in emergency stages rather than post-crisis. This would help local organizations sustain protection efforts once the international cluster system phases out.



**Participants** (from left to right): **Top Row:** Caelin Briggs (NRC), Matthew Chrastek (LIF), Toloe Masori (UNHCR); **Bottom Row:** Christophe Reltien (ECHO), Sasha Galkin (R2P), Reina S. Bermudez (CHRP)

**Christophe Reltien**, former ECHO Head of Office in Iraq, and currently Head of Office in South Sudan, provided a donor perspective, describing how ECHO (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) funded the “Protection Platform” to address protection needs following cluster deactivation in **Iraq**. Christophe described how ECHO prioritised advocacy with Iraqi authorities regarding closure of the remaining IDP camp, as they were concerned about the impact this would have on the most vulnerable populations. Christophe highlighted Iraq’s complex context, post IS-conflict, where some traumatised communities were still perceived as being “IS-affiliated” and therefore remained marginalised. ECHO ultimately focused on civil documentation as a key protection intervention, as ID cards would enable these populations to access essential services and integrate more fully into society. He also recommended that future transitions focus on select, high-impact areas and include sustained government engagement. Christophe pointed out that ideal conditions are rare in transitions, and thus, focusing on one area with committed resources is often more effective than attempting an all-encompassing approach.

**Aleksandr (Sasha) Galkin**, President of Right to Protection (R2P) in **Ukraine** discussed his country’s ongoing humanitarian response within a protracted conflict, emphasising the importance of early planning for eventual transitions. Despite the absence of a formal transition, R2P, as a national NGO co-leading the protection cluster, is positioning itself to address future coordination gaps. He spoke about the need for both area-based and cluster-based coordination to address diverse needs in different regions of Ukraine. Local actors have already created informal coordination systems with local authorities, which can facilitate future transitions. Sasha also spoke about the role of the Government and Civil Society in coordination – where in fact, past efforts to hand over cluster responsibilities to Ukrainian authorities were hindered by insufficient resources and inconsistent political support. A successful transition will require buy-in from local government entities at high levels, a clear transition plan, and dedicated resources. Sasha recommended that transition planning should be data-driven and should always involve local actors from the start, to build a foundation that includes state institutions and local NGOs, readying them for a future where international actors may no longer lead the coordination.

**Reinna S. Bermudez**, Chief of the Centre for Crisis, Conflict, and Humanitarian Protection at the Commission on Human Rights of the **Philippines**, presented insights from her country, where the government leads the protection cluster in coordination with UNHCR. She highlighted the role of national human rights institutions in maintaining protection standards and rights advocacy in crisis situations, especially during transitions. The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in the Philippines works as an independent watchdog, monitoring human rights adherence during humanitarian response. Reinna explained how the CHR advocates for legislative protections, such as the internally displaced persons (IDP) protection bill. This advocacy aims to institutionalise protection for vulnerable populations, ensuring that government-led humanitarian responses maintain a rights-based approach. Reinna emphasised that human rights remain paramount even in crises. The CHR's consistent local presence has established a reliable framework for protection, supporting displaced and marginalised communities even if clusters eventually phase out.

### **Cross-Cutting Themes and Closing Remarks**

Panellists unanimously agreed that transition planning should begin at the start of humanitarian responses. Establishing coordination structures that local actors can sustain after cluster deactivation requires a long-term approach, ideally with an “exit strategy” from day one. This also includes involving local actors, NGOs, and government entities early on. Building trust and capacity with these stakeholders is essential, especially in contexts where local government resources are limited or interest in protection may wane post-crisis. Funding and resource gaps mean that donors must be strategic, prioritising relevant context-specific sectors like civil documentation in Iraq or protection monitoring in Libya. Panellists also agreed that national human rights institutions can be critical allies during transitions, ensuring marginalised groups' rights remain a priority as protection clusters phase out.

The session concluded with an encouragement to continue learning from each other's experiences. Panellists suggested that further developing practice notes and sharing insights could help others navigate the complexities of humanitarian protection transitions, ensuring protection for vulnerable populations remains a priority through each phase.



## SESSION 3: From the Ground Up: Learning from Locally-led Efforts to Strengthen the Protection of Civilians

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### Session 3: From the Ground Up: Learning from Locally-Led Efforts to Strengthen the Protection of Civilians

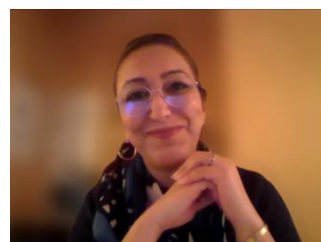
Wednesday, 6 November

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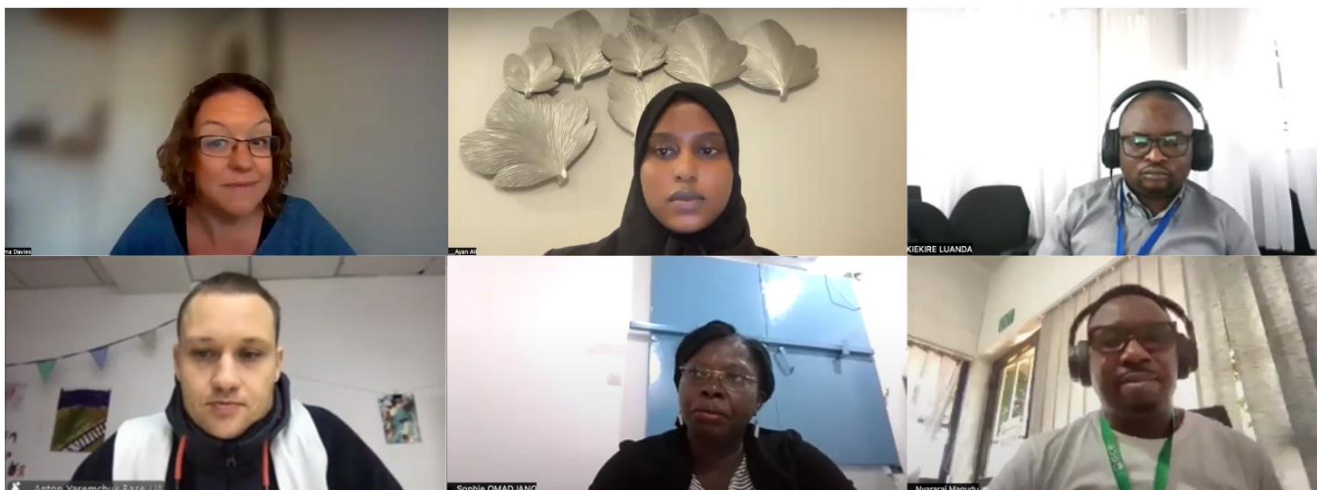
The session, which was co-organised by the GPC, OCHA and Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), began with opening remarks by **Houda Chalchoul**, Senior Legal Officer with UNHCR's Division of International Protection. She emphasised the essential role of local actors in protection of civilians' efforts and outlined the session's objectives. These included examining the approaches, strategies, and impact of locally-led initiatives in protecting civilians during armed conflicts. Key considerations included leveraging trusted relationships, understanding local dynamics, navigating ethical dilemmas, and adapting to evolving and complex conflict dynamics. The session was also introduced as a platform to discuss how international and national protection actors, donors, and allies can effectively support, scale, and coordinate with locally led efforts.

**Gemma Davies**, Senior Research Fellow with ODI's Humanitarian Policy Group, moderated this session. She opened by providing an overview of the evolving challenges in protecting civilians in conflict-affected regions, and underscored the necessity of integrating grassroots perspectives, innovative practices, and interdisciplinary solutions to build more resilient and effective systems of civilian protection. She highlighted the diversity of the panellists' expertise, and the importance of their experiences in informing global strategies and driving meaningful, community-centric change.

**Ayan Abdirashid Ali**, an Australian-Somali Researcher and Lawyer in training, presented her research on traditional **Somali** laws of war, which emphasise traditional norms of restraint and protection. She spoke about the *Bir Ma Geydo* principle, which roughly translates to "those spared from the spear", an ancient Somali customary code that forbids harming non-combatants, especially women, children, and the elderly, during conflict. This traditional system is enforced by elders including clerics, clan leaders, nabaddoon (peace-seekers), ula guduud (the red cane men or knowledgeable elders), and poets, who are highly respected figures within Somali communities, providing a powerful social and moral framework for restraint in conflict situations. Ayan emphasised that these customary norms, passed down orally, are more effective at regulating behaviour than formal legal systems in areas where state governance is weak or absent. Despite ongoing conflicts, these norms have shown remarkable resilience. She advocated for greater recognition and support from international actors to



strengthen such indigenous frameworks and enhance civilian protection. However, Ayan acknowledged the challenges these traditions face. Armed groups may reject or disregard these norms, and external forces, such as international military actors might disrupt these indigenous systems. By reinforcing local traditions and values that support civilian protection, Ayan explained that communities gain culturally legitimate and durable methods to address violence. This approach not only fosters community solidarity but also provides a form of protection that is difficult for external forces to undermine.



**Participants** (from left to right): **Top Row:** Gemma Davies (ODI), Ayan Abdirashid Ali (University of Adelaide), Elourd Luanda (SOPROP); **Bottom Row:** Anton Yaremchuk (Base UA), Sophie-Lin Omadjang (UNHCR), Nyararai Magudu (GCR).

**Elourd Luanda**, Programme Manager at Solidarité pour la Promotion et la Paix (SOPROP), described the highly complex security landscape of the **Democratic Republic of Congo** (DRCongo), where over 100 armed groups operate, many committing violence against civilians. SOPROP operates under constant security risks, striving to empower communities to develop self-protection strategies. A cornerstone of SOPROP’s work is training local leaders in community-based early warning systems. These systems enable communities to quickly report imminent threats and initiate protective measures and actions, such as establishing safe havens or coordinating evacuations. SOPROP also collaborates closely with local authorities to strengthen communication channels and build capacity. This involves educating civilians on protection strategies and approaches and fostering dialogue between communities and local authorities to improve mutual understanding and cooperation. Despite facing significant challenges, including restricted access to certain conflict zones, limited resources, and the risk of being perceived as threats by armed groups, SOPROP continues to make significant impact. Its initiatives empower communities to take proactive roles in their own safety, fostering local networks of trust and heightened awareness. By strengthening early warning systems, SOPROP enhances communities’ ability to respond to threats, increasing resilience and reducing casualties. Ultimately, SOPROP’s efforts contribute to greater civilian agency and protection in some of the DRCongo’s most volatile regions.

**Anton Yaremchuk**, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Base UA, shared valuable insights into the work of his organisation in **Ukraine’s** conflict-affected eastern regions. Base UA focuses on civilian evacuations and delivering humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable populations. Anton highlighted that many civilians – often unable to evacuate due to disabilities, financial limitations, or the fear of leaving their lifelong homes – remain in dangerous areas. While these individuals are often portrayed as “refusing to evacuate”, Anton highlighted that, in most cases, their choices stem from vulnerability rather than reluctance. He emphasised the resilience of these communities, which adapt by creating



support structures amid ongoing conflict. Although formal humanitarian coordination is in place, Anton noted that Base UA remains adaptable to meet urgent, emerging needs—a flexibility essential in Ukraine’s unstable context. He also emphasised the necessity of increased international support for coordination and long-term reintegration efforts for displaced individuals. Base UA’s approach includes continued post-evacuation support, such as assistance with community integration and psychological care. Despite limited resources and restricted access, Base UA has successfully evacuated thousands; saving lives, promoting resilience, and empowering evacuees to rebuild and integrate into safer communities.

**Sophie-Lin Omadjang**, Senior Protection Officer at UNHCR in Chad, highlighted the key protection in the context of Chad. **Chad** is a fragile security enclave surrounded by six countries (Sudan, Nigeria, Niger, Central African Republic, Cameroon, and Libya) that face varying levels of instability at their borders. The country is hosting over one million displaced individuals, contributing to a significant protection crisis. According to Sophie, the continuous and massive influx of refugees has hindered the effective implementation of response plans. The proliferation of firearms in the region is further complicating the situation, leading to frequent violations of the civilian and humanitarian principles of asylum, camps, and sites. In response, UNHCR Chad has implemented a series of community-based protection programs designed to facilitate peaceful coexistence between displaced populations and host communities and established measures to ensure their safety and improve cooperation between all stakeholders. Among the notable initiatives, this involves creating mixed peace committees comprising representatives from both groups, to build mutual trust and establish local mechanisms for conflict resolution. Through these committees, communities are encouraged to develop early warning systems to identify and address potential conflicts proactively. In addition to the trained committees’ members, as part of the early warning mechanisms, security guards and the DPHR (Department of Protection of Humanitarian and Refugee Workers) are key to ensure timely responses to the communities’ alerts. Safety and security partners as well as the committees received trainings on protection principles, the civilian and humanitarian nature of asylum, camps, and sites and on protection risk identification and assessments. Forcibly displaced persons and DPHR were also consulted then provided with necessary equipment needed for alerts, patrols, and proper communication channels and tools (e.g., vehicles, motorcycles, fuel, registers, pens, phones, whistles, etc.). Additionally, forcibly displaced communities use Feedback Centres (CIF) to report protection risks, to ensure that potential threats are identified and addressed in a timely manner. Sophie-Lin noted that these collaborative platforms not only provide protection but also promote sustainable integration, as they encourage open dialogue and cooperation. However, funding limitations remain a persistent challenge for UNHCR in Chad, particularly as the number of displaced people continues to rise. The scarcity of resources means that critical protection services, such as early warning systems and community peace-building initiatives, are often under-funded and unable to reach all vulnerable populations.

**Nyararai Magudu**, Technical Director at Girl Child Rights (GCR), **Mozambique**, provided context on Mozambique’s ongoing conflict and its impact on civilian populations. GCR has developed a series of early warning and response systems that rely on informal local networks for rapid information-sharing on security threats. Nyararai explained that these networks, which often include local leaders and community members, use basic technology such as mobile phones to spread warnings about impending attacks. GCR supports these local efforts by providing communication tools and training leaders to handle security information responsibly and efficiently. In addition to early warning, GCR facilitates community-led dialogue sessions to foster unity and resilience, which are essential in the fragmented environment of Mozambique’s conflict zones. The remoteness of certain conflict-affected areas in Mozambique makes communication and resource delivery difficult. Additionally, the

organisation faces limitations in terms of funding and technological infrastructure, which are crucial for enhancing the efficiency and reach of the early warning systems. The locally driven early warning system allows communities in Mozambique to prepare and respond to imminent threats, saving lives and reducing panic in times of crisis. GCR's support helps establish a sense of agency within communities, empowering them to make informed decisions about their safety and navigate the challenges posed by insurgent activity. Finally, Nyararai acknowledged the critical role the Protection Cluster plays in linking local and national community-level protection initiatives to inform both the protection strategy and the operational response of protection partners. He called for increased support for local activists and national organizations, emphasizing the need to recognize them as equal partners to ensure their voices shape policies and influence decisions. He also called for further strengthening of early warning systems by providing resources for training and enhancing information-sharing technology to enable community-based responders to act more effectively in anticipation of emerging threats.

### **Attendee Interaction and Closing Remarks**

All panellists highlighted the value of local knowledge, norms, and practices in protecting civilians, especially where state and international protection efforts are limited. There was significant interest in the online chat on Ayan Ali's work and interest in learning more about the significance of these customs. Many speakers also underscored the efficacy of community-driven early warning systems in alerting civilians to imminent threats. In DRC and Mozambique, local networks have developed informal communication systems to warn communities of potential conflict escalation. These mechanisms were seen as vital in mitigating harm, with panellists advocating for more robust investment in these local capacities. The panel also discussed the limitations of existing international coordination structures in responding to the needs of local protection actors. Anton Yaremchuk's remarks emphasised the lack of flexible, localised coordination in Ukraine, highlighting the need for international actors to support locally led evacuations and long-term reintegration efforts. In Chad, Sophie-Lin Omdjang advocated for greater funding to enhance local capacity-building and material resources.

A recurring theme was the critical role of trust and community agency in protection efforts. Local leaders, who are deeply respected, hold unique positions to mediate, prevent conflict, and protect civilians. The panellists emphasised that local actors' proximity and trust within communities often make their interventions more effective than those led by outside organizations.

Closing remarks were made by **Tiffany Easthom**, Executive Director of Nonviolent Peaceforce. She emphasized the importance of inclusivity and collaboration in addressing the challenges highlighted during the session. Tiffany encouraged ongoing dialogue and commitment to actionable solutions, urging stakeholders to remain focused on the shared goal of creating safer and more resilient communities. She concluded with a call for all attendees to turn insights from the forum into transformative action.





## SESSION 4: Community-Led Advocacy: Self-Protection and Accountability

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### Session 4: Community-Led Advocacy - Self-Protection and Accountability

Thursday, 7 November

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The fourth session of the Global Protection Forum, titled “Community-Led Advocacy - Self-Protection and Accountability,” was attended by 599 people.

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This session took the form of a *talk-show*, hosted by **Yasmine Chawaf**, Protection Advocacy Coordinator at Oxfam. It included live discussions with a panel of experts, audience contributions, and online chat interactions. Yasmine opened the session by highlighting the essential role of affected communities in leading advocacy for their rights and protection. She emphasised the importance of local ownership and the need to amplify voices from communities directly impacted by crises.

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During the talk-show, the panellists were asked to share examples of community-led advocacy efforts to reduce protection risks in their areas of work. They were also asked about the types of environments that enable successful community advocacy, how organizations can best support these community initiatives, and effective ways for communities to measure the impact of their advocacy.

**Jihan Takla** and **Sarah Makhlouf**, the Protection Manager and Senior Protection Officer of Utopia, described two community-led campaigns in **Lebanon**. The first was a campaign for increased medical access for people with disabilities and elderly individuals in Tripoli. Women and youth groups organised outreach to Social Development Centres and local health providers to highlight the need for accessible medical facilities. Another campaign, “Sawarbina” (“We Grew Up Together”), aimed to address rising tensions between Lebanese and Syrian residents. Through this campaign, Lebanese and Syrian women organised events, including joint kitchen activities, and circulated messages of unity to build social cohesion and reduce hostility between communities. Jihan suggested that organizations should use their influence to amplify local voices and create enabling environments rather than imposing top-down structures. She noted that local NGOs often have built-in trust with communities, which allows them to access communities and engage them more directly. INGOs, she suggested, should use their reach to elevate these local voices on an international stage while allowing local organizations to take the lead. Sarah highlighted the need for flexible success indicators tailored to each community’s unique understanding of impact. She emphasised that communities often have their own methods of tracking success, which may not align with conventional NGO metrics. For example, in Lebanon, success might be measured by improved access to services or stronger inter-community relationships over time, which can be more organic and gradual.





**Participants** (from left to right): **Top Row:** Yasmine Chawaf (Oxfam), Jihan Takla and Sarah Makhoulf (Utopia), Lina Rebollo Quiñonez (Apoyar); **Bottom Row:** Augustin Titi Rutanuka (CEDIER), Lauren Spink (CIVIC).

**Lina Rebollo Quiñonez**, Deputy Director of Projects at Apoyar ONG, discussed the leadership courses that APOYAR provided in **Colombia**, particularly focusing on empowering women in conflict zones. These courses teach community members about their rights and advocacy skills, enabling them to engage with local governments and protect themselves against violence. In Arauca, a region with a heavy presence of armed groups, these community-led networks have allowed residents to organise early-warning alerts and rapid responses to safety threats, such as child recruitment. Lina suggested that environments where women and youth have access to leadership training are more conducive to successful advocacy, as these groups often bring diverse perspectives and play active roles in protecting the community. In terms of measuring impact, Lina recommended that communities use baseline surveys and perception studies to measure changes in their safety and protection environments over time. This approach allows communities to capture shifts in their protection landscape, such as reductions in specific threats or increased trust between local authorities and residents. She also suggested that NGOs could support communities by providing simple tools for tracking these perceptions over time.

**Augustin Titi Rutanuka**, Director of CEDIER (Centre for the Integral Development of the Rural Child), shared how community organizations in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** have mobilised to enhance civilian safety around market areas. In response to attacks on women and girls, local groups collaborated with the military to secure safer travel routes on market days, collecting small community contributions to incentivize continued military support. Another initiative by these community structures focused on facilitating the return of displaced individuals to their villages after negotiations with armed groups led to the restoration of safer conditions. Augustin highlighted the critical role of “moderate” leaders within communities who bridge divides between factions, enabling dialogue and creating temporary peace corridors that help communities sustain communication and organise protection efforts in conflict zones. He emphasised that international organizations should prioritize building the capacity of local protection groups by equipping them with tools for risk assessment, humanitarian negotiation, and incident monitoring. Such support strengthens community-led efforts to address threats over the long term without reshaping these groups to resemble INGOs; rather, the goal should be to empower them within their unique contexts. CEDIER has worked to equip local protection groups with documentation tools, helping them systematically track protection incidents. By using data matrices, communities can analyse trends, monitor progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of their advocacy, leading to impactful, context-specific strategies for risk reduction.

**Lauren Spink**, Senior Research Advisor at CIVIC (Centre for Civilians in Conflict) discussed how civil society organisations in the **Sahel** approach protection concerns with language and methods that resonate locally and avoid confrontation with authorities. Recognising the region's political sensitivity, these groups steer away from terms like "international humanitarian law," instead using advocacy language that fosters dialogue with state actors. CIVIC has also supported conversations between security forces and civilians to build mutual understanding and reduce risk. Lauren highlighted political will and accountability mechanisms as critical for effective advocacy. Where security forces and government officials are open to dialogue and recognise their legal obligations, advocacy efforts are more likely to succeed. Such an environment enables communities to build accountability relationships and promote safer interactions. To ensure community voices are safely heard at higher levels, INGOs can create secure platforms, acting as intermediaries to protect communities from risks tied to speaking out. Lauren also emphasised the value of INGOs fostering cross-community coalitions, allowing groups facing similar protection challenges to connect, share insights, and strengthen their networks.

### "Outside Callers"

During the session, three online participants requested to join the talk-show and share their views on this topic. **Omar Ghraieb**, a Policy and Campaigns Officer from Oxfam working in **Palestine**, critiqued the traditional "capacity-building" approach of INGOs, which often views local organisations as less capable. He argued this mindset can lead INGOs to impose frameworks that undermine the autonomy and strengths of local advocacy efforts. Instead, Omar emphasised that INGOs should treat local organizations as equal partners, ensuring transparency and complementarity to respect and enhance local agency. Next, **Mahmoud Aswad**, from Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights in **Syria**, discussed the challenges of advocacy in high-conflict zones and stressed the need to localise both funding and expertise. Due to the protracted nature of the conflict, local organizations have developed extensive knowledge and skills, but they often lack sustainable funding. Mahmoud urged international donors to invest in building the capacity of local organizations in a way that promotes long-term sustainability.

Towards the end of the session, **Eugène Imani Muhindo**, the National Coordinator of AACO in **North Kivu**, spoke on sustaining advocacy and protection in conflict areas. He described initiatives to foster peaceful coexistence between displaced and resident communities through dialogue, helping to ease tensions over scarce resources and reduce targeting of displaced individuals. Additionally, Eugene highlighted the role of voluntary community committees in managing security alongside the military, serving as communication channels that help maintain stability and allow daily activities to continue despite ongoing challenges.

### Online Participation and Conclusion:

All online attendees were invited to share insights, via an interactive Mentimeter exercise, on how INGOs can maintain the grassroots essence of community-led advocacy. Key responses underscored the importance of fostering trust, avoiding "NGO-ising" communities, respecting local knowledge, and supporting organic advocacy that reflects each community's unique context. By promoting complementarity and listening to community insights, INGOs can play a constructive role in protecting and advancing community-led initiatives.

The session concluded with Yasmine thanking the speakers and attendees for their insights and contributions. She emphasised that these discussions would continue within the Advocacy Working Group and the Community-Led Protection Task Team to further explore and strengthen NGO-community partnerships for effective, sustainable advocacy.



## SESSION 5: A People-Centred Approach to Protection

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### Session 5: A People-Centred Approach to Protection

Monday, 11 November

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The fifth session of the Global Protection Forum, which was attended by 635 people, focused on the theme of “A People-Centred Approach to Protection.”

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The session was moderated by **Mirela Shuteriqi**, Director of Policy and Advocacy at ICVA (International Council of Voluntary Agencies). Mirela emphasised that humanitarian work must prioritise the protection of affected individuals by listening to them, building any protection intervention together and remaining accountable to them throughout the implementation and beyond. The discussion explored some critical challenges in adopting this people-centred approach and highlighted solutions, including the importance of fostering fair and sustainable partnerships with local NGOs and addressing intersectionality in vulnerabilities, looking at experience of protection work with groups such as children, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals, etc.

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**Michael Muwairwa**, Director of Knowledge Development and Innovation at TPO **Uganda**, discussed his organisation’s approach to creating community-centred projects and their results. TPO Uganda, which focuses on mental health, psychosocial support, and child protection, involves community members from the initial design through to the implementation phases. Michael explained how input from communities, including young people, help them build trust with the communities and shape successful programming. He referred to specific examples, like when, based on the committee suggestions, TPO Uganda integrated mental health support with parenting skills training, helping families address trauma while building nurturing environments for their children. TPO Uganda also utilises varied feedback mechanisms, including suggestion boxes, community volunteers, and regular feedback sessions. TPO Uganda interventions reflect the Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability, prioritising both learning and adaptation based on the lived experiences of those affected.

**Larysa Bayda**, Head of Programs at the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities (NAPD) in Ukraine, highlighted the challenges that people with disabilities face in **Ukraine** amid ongoing crises, emphasising that a lack of disability awareness often leads to critical oversights in humanitarian aid. She explained some of misconceptions among humanitarian actors at the beginning of the intervention especially when it came to recognising the intersectionality between the various vulnerabilities. Not all disabled people face the same situation and needs. In the early months of the intervention for example, because of lack of understanding, many elderly persons with disabilities faced limited access to humanitarian aid. NAPD collaborated with international actors, including UN agencies and humanitarian clusters, to ensure adjustments, such as accessible distribution sites,



alternative information formats, tailored food and hygiene supplies, etc.. Larysa emphasised that inclusivity requires daily commitment and must involve direct input from disability rights organisations to effectively address gaps in humanitarian response and ensure equitable access to rights and services for all.



**Participants** (from left to right): **Top Row:** Mirela Shuteriqi (ICVA), Larysa Bayda (NAPD), Danilo Manzano (Diálogo Diverso); **Bottom Row:** Michael Muwairwa (TPO Uganda), Dr. Aisha Thawab (ADO), Andri van Mens (Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands)

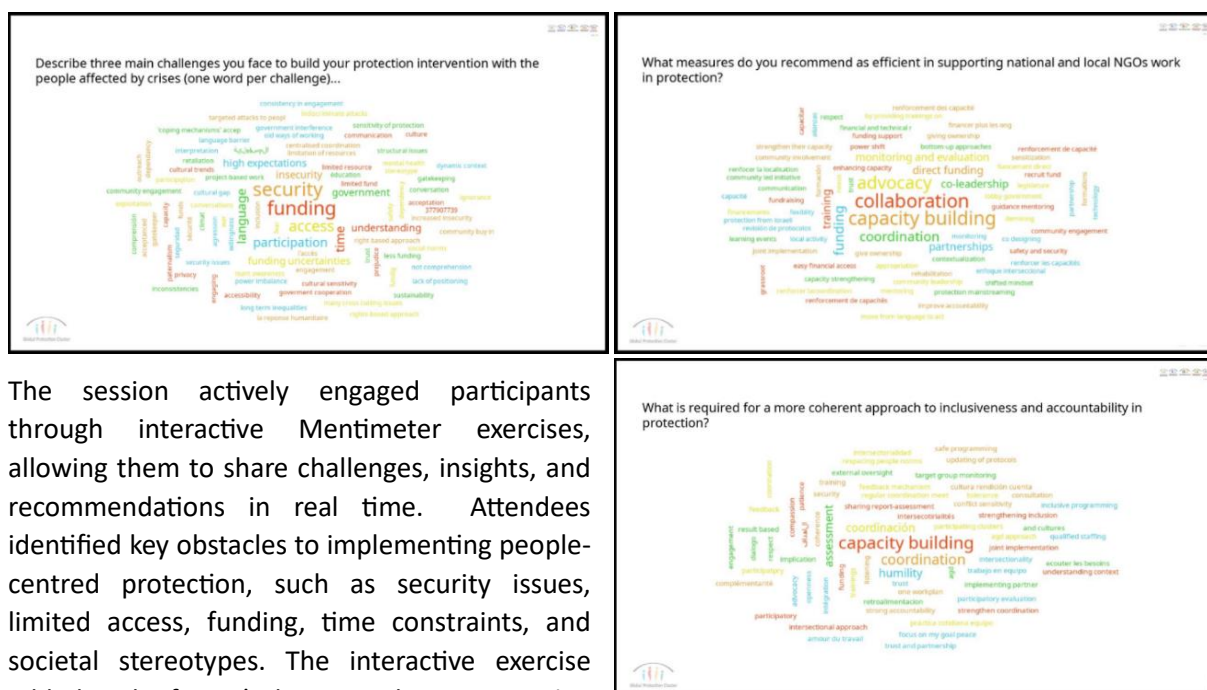
**Danilo Manzano**, Co-Founder & Director of Diálogo Diverso, discussed how his organisation’s work supports LGBTQI+ migrants and forcibly displaced people in **Ecuador** and other parts of Latin America. He outlined the additional risks LGBTQI+ people face, including discrimination and legal exclusion, which exacerbate their vulnerability during displacement. Diálogo Diverso provides essential services such as medical support, legal assistance, and psychological care, while also creating safe spaces that foster a sense of belonging. Danilo explained that the organisation is predominantly staffed by LGBTQI+ individuals, allowing for better outreach, understanding, and responses within their programs. To address knowledge gaps, Diálogo Diverso developed training materials on LGBTQI+ migration and safe space practices for humanitarian partners. Although collaboration with international organisations has strengthened Diálogo Diverso’s impact, regional legal disparities and limited awareness of LGBTQI+ needs continue to present significant challenges.

**Dr Aisha Thawab**, Chairwoman of Abs Development Organization for Women and Children (ADO), highlighted the worsening conditions for **Yemeni** women as a result of ongoing conflict, with increased rates of forced and child marriages and pervasive gender-based violence. Founded in 1996, ADO has long advocated for women’s rights and economic empowerment, helping women achieve greater self-sufficiency. ADO offers economic programs and protective services for women, seeking to mitigate the impacts of the conflict. However, Aisha expressed frustration with the disparity between international organisations’ commitments to supporting women-led initiatives and the limited funding and security support available to implement them. She called for genuine backing from donors to strengthen women’s inclusion in humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts, emphasising that without targeted support, Yemeni women face the risk of further marginalisation. Aisha stressed the critical need for localisation to empower women leaders in protection programs effectively.

**Andri Van Mens**, Counsellor for Humanitarian, Migration, and Health Affairs at the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, made the closing remarks of the session and offered a donor perspective on people-centred humanitarian action. He noted that the Netherlands supports long-term partnerships with local and international humanitarian organisations to foster

inclusive, sustainable development. Andri acknowledged the complex, intersectional needs of vulnerable groups in crises' contexts, including women, people with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ individuals. By supporting local capacity building, the Netherlands aims to ensure that affected communities have a greater role in designing and implementing humanitarian projects. Andri also highlighted the importance of learning from local organisations' experiences, using these insights to refine global humanitarian strategies and advocacy efforts. Addressing growing humanitarian needs and limited donor resources, he emphasised that protection must be seen as both a humanitarian and preventive measure, advocating for greater collaboration across sectors to protect civilians and uphold international norms.

### Online Participation



The session actively engaged participants through interactive Mentimeter exercises, allowing them to share challenges, insights, and recommendations in real time. Attendees identified key obstacles to implementing people-centred protection, such as security issues, limited access, funding, time constraints, and societal stereotypes. The interactive exercise added to the forum's discussion by incorporating diverse perspectives, discussing common challenges across contexts and highlighting the need for further exchanges and sharing of good practices.

### Conclusion

Speakers highlighted the importance of inclusivity and intersectionality in humanitarian action, stressing that siloed approaches limit effectiveness. Instead, they referred to holistic frameworks implemented in complementarity by various actors as the best way forward to address the diverse vulnerabilities of affected individuals and the intersectionality between them. Localisation and collaboration with affected communities and people was highlighted as essential for sustainable protection efforts. Participants shared actionable recommendations, such as the need for donors to offer direct funding, and participatory mechanisms that allow local NGOs to lead and adapt interventions based on real-time feedback from communities and their members. Mirela Shuteriqi closed the session by reinforcing the need for greater collaboration between donors, governments, and humanitarian actors to ensure that protection work remains centred on the needs of affected individuals. She noted that sustaining a people-centred approach requires both adherence to international law and a commitment to participation and inclusive practices that elevate the voices of vulnerable groups.



## SESSION 6: Strengthening Legal Aid and Access to Justice in Humanitarian Settings



### Session 6: Strengthening Legal Aid and Access to Justice in Humanitarian Settings

Tuesday, 12 November

EN

The sixth session of the Global Protection Forum, which was attended by 490 people, brought together legal and humanitarian protection experts to address the theme of strengthening legal aid in humanitarian settings.

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The session was moderated by **Martina Caterina**, co-chair of the Task Team on Law and Policy (TTLP) at UNHCR. Martina opened the session by sharing background on the TTLP's role as a global coordination platform that unites UN agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders committed to developing legal and policy solutions for crisis-affected populations. She emphasised the forum's goal of enhancing the integration of legal aid in humanitarian responses, making it clear that addressing legal needs is fundamental to upholding the rights and dignity of people affected by displacement and conflict. The session introduced a newly launched publication by the TTLP on [Strengthening Legal Aid and Access to Justice in Humanitarian Settings](#), which serves as a practical resource with strategies and best practices for implementing effective legal aid programs in crisis contexts. Following Martina's introduction, the session transitioned to presentations from each speaker, who shared their insights and examples of legal aid initiatives across different humanitarian settings.

**Corita Tassi**, Thematic Expert on Protection and Gender at ECHO, discussed the foundational role of legal aid in humanitarian responses aimed at ensuring access to justice. Corita stressed that legal aid is often overlooked in the initial phases of crisis response, seen as secondary to immediate life-saving interventions. To address this gap, she advocated for the inclusion of an analysis of legal frameworks as part of risk assessments and the need for humanitarian actors to coordinate with development stakeholders in this area. She highlighted that conducting a comprehensive analysis of national legal frameworks can reveal context-specific barriers to access to rights including access to justice, informing targeted legal aid interventions. Corita also underlined the importance of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, noting that humanitarian actors should engage actively with local governments and other stakeholders to create sustainable legal protections for affected populations.

**Katrien Ringele**, co-chair of the Task Team on Law and Policy (TTLP) with NRC, provided an in-depth overview of a TTLP-led project launched in 2021 to develop a coordinated approach to legal aid in humanitarian contexts. The project, Katrien explained, aimed to improve the protection work of field clusters by creating tools, including the [Legal Aid Analysis Framework](#), to guide the identification and analysis of the legal aid landscape in a given country of operation. This project spanned four phases: developing analytical tools, training humanitarian actors, field-testing these tools in pilot programs, and documenting successful practices in a [final report](#). Katrien shared key findings from the project,



which highlighted effective methods for integrating legal aid into emergency responses, developing partnerships, and reaching hard-to-access populations. Her recommendations stressed the importance of localised and multidisciplinary approaches, noting that embedding legal aid within protection strategies can greatly enhance coordination and expand access to justice for displaced populations.



**Participants** (from left to right): **Top Row:** Martina Caterina (UNHCR), Corita Tassi (ECHO), Katrien Ringele (NRC); **Middle Row:** Lorena Nieto (UNHCR), Baba Kura (Nigerian Bar Association), Kathrine Starup (DRC), **Bottom Row:** Stefano Consiglio (IDLO)

**Lorena Nieto**, Senior Protection Cluster Coordinator with UNHCR for Northwest Syria, presented a detailed case study of legal aid efforts in a complex and high-risk setting. She described the establishment of a coordinated legal aid network in **Northwest Syria**, a region where legal systems are fragmented, and resources are limited due to ongoing conflict. Lorena shared that, prior to the establishment of this network, legal aid was not systematically provided, and organisations hesitated to address legal needs due to concerns about potential sensitivities with donors and authorities. To address these barriers, the Protection Cluster along with all the AoRs developed a unified legal strategy, involving a network of 125 lawyers who engage on a number of areas such as civil documentation, property registration, guardianship, and domestic violence. The team also advocated for and supported the integration of legal aid within other sectors, including health and shelter, to comprehensively address issues such as property rights and child protection. Lorena highlighted that legal aid was also used as a tool to foster community understanding of the rule of law, essential for peace-building and future reconstruction efforts. Through multi-year funding and consortium partnerships, these efforts have provided legal services to over 62,000 people, significantly increasing both the scope and visibility of legal aid in the region.

**Baba Kura**, from the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) – a UNHCR partner and member of the Protection Cluster, discussed the role of the Association’s Access to Justice Project in supporting communities affected by Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast **Nigeria**. This project, which began in 2017, offers free legal services to internally displaced individuals, focusing on criminal defence, family law, and property rights. Baba explained that the project includes mobile court sessions in displacement camps, which

allow people to access legal services without leaving the safety of the camps. The project also assists displaced individuals in obtaining crucial documentation, such as birth certificates and indigene certificates (certificates of origin), which are required for accessing services and employment. Additionally, the NBA conducts advocacy with local authorities to ensure that detained individuals have access to legal representation, addressing issues like arbitrary detention and human rights violations. Despite challenges related to security, limited resources, and the prioritisation of basic needs over legal concerns, the NBA's Access to Justice Project has reached thousands of people, providing essential legal support to those in need. In so doing, the organisation complements well the efforts of other protection and legal aid partners, including from an important system-strengthening perspective.

**Stefano Consiglio**, Programme Development Officer at the International Development Law Organisation (IDLO), focused his presentation on IDLO's work to improve access to justice through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Centres in **Somalia**. The ADR Centres use community-run customary and informal justice (CIJ) mechanisms to directly provide justice through processes that incorporate elements of conventional ADR, while also maintaining alignment with customary law (*Xeer*), Shari'a law, and statutory legal frameworks. Stefano shared three best practices from the ADR centres in Somalia: utilising ADRs as referral pathways for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), establishing mobile ADR centres for hard-to-access or nomadic populations, and promoting inclusivity of women and vulnerable groups in ADR processes. He emphasised that the ADR centres act as service hubs, connecting survivors of GBV to medical and legal services and ensuring representation for women, youth, IDPs, and minority clans within ADR processes. Stefano concluded that these centres are vital in Somalia's legal landscape, allowing crisis-affected populations to access justice in areas where no formal court system may exist, while also bridging the gap between formal and customary justice systems. Stefano shared several extra examples and materials in his presentation – listed below:

- [Inclusive Practices in Alternative Dispute Resolution](#) (2024).
- [Reflections from the Field: Applying the Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation Approach in CIJ Settings](#). Strengthening the Social Contract Through Access to Justice in Somaliland | IDLO (2024)
- [Diverse Pathways to People-Centred Justice: Report of the Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice and SDG16+](#) | UNDP (2023)
- [Women's Participation and Leadership in Customary and Informal Justice Systems](#) (2023)
- [Enabling Access to Justice for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence Against Women in Somaliland](#) (2023)
- [Strengthening Climate Justice in Somaliland: The Role of ADR Centres](#) | IDLO (2023)

**Katherine Starup**, Head of the Protection Unit at the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), highlighted the role of legal analysis and research in building an evidence base for effective legal aid interventions, sharing examples from **Libya**, **Tunisia**, and **Latin America**. She explained that the DRC used the Legal Aid Analysis Framework (LAAF) to conduct systematic assessments of legal needs, their consequences, and the capacities of legal aid providers in each of these regions, identifying specific barriers and gaps. In Libya and Tunisia, where humanitarian coordination structures are limited, the LAAF facilitated partnerships with government, NGOs, and local institutions, enabling a coordinated approach to legal aid. In Latin America, DRC conducted a [regional legal analysis](#) that identified context-specific issues and recommendations, which informed programming and advocacy efforts. Katherine emphasised that the LAAF's standardised approach allows organisations to share resources, data, and recommendations,



making it a valuable tool for improving access to justice in both humanitarian and development settings.

### Mentimeter Insights and Online Engagement

The session included real-time polling via Mentimeter, which provided insights into online participants' perspectives on legal aid in their settings. The first poll revealed that legal aid is highly relevant to the majority of respondents' work. However, though many noted that it was only somewhat prioritised in the latest Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) for their specific country of operation. This varied by country, and although online participants from Ukraine, Nigeria, and Somalia indicated that legal aid has received attention in their contexts, others reported limited prioritisation, highlighting the need for increased advocacy and resources to ensure access to justice in other regions.



The online Q&A addressed various topics, including how organisations can support local actors in providing legal aid, strategies for securing sustainable funding, and methods for including marginalised populations in legal processes. Participants asked about strengthening local capacity, to which speakers responded by emphasising the importance of collaborative partnerships, particularly with community leaders and informal justice actors. When asked about sustainable funding, speakers discussed the value of consortium models and multi-year commitments from donors, which improve the long-term viability of legal aid initiatives. Finally, participants raised concerns about ensuring access for vulnerable populations, such as women, children, and minorities. Speakers shared examples of inclusive practices, including the appointment of women adjudicators in ADR centres and the training of local paralegals from marginalised communities, which help make legal aid accessible to all.

### Conclusion of Session

The session underscored that legal aid is a fundamental area of humanitarian action and must be embedded within humanitarian responses across sectors (not just protection), as it is critical to upholding rights and enabling people to navigate crises with dignity and security. As such, legal aid interventions also are at the interface of humanitarian, human rights and development action. Through case studies and examples, the speakers illustrated innovative approaches for integrating legal aid into humanitarian strategies. The discussions, enriched by online audience participation, highlighted the importance of cross-sector collaboration, sustainable funding, and locally-driven solutions. The session concluded with a call for continued advocacy, learning, and coordination to prioritise legal aid as a core component of crisis response frameworks, ensuring that it reaches those most in need and strengthens the protection landscape globally.

## SESSION 7: Housing, Land and Property: Integrating Protection for Durable Solutions

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### Session 7: Housing, Land and Property: Integrating Protection for Durable Solutions

Wednesday, 13 November

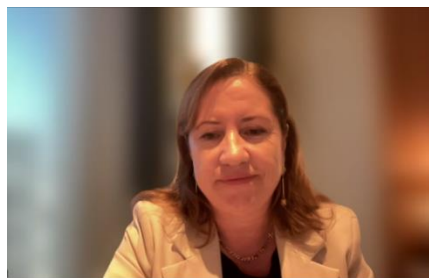
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The seventh and final session of the Global Protection Forum, which was attended by 542 people, focused on the theme, “Housing, Land and Property: Integrating Protection for Durable Solutions.”

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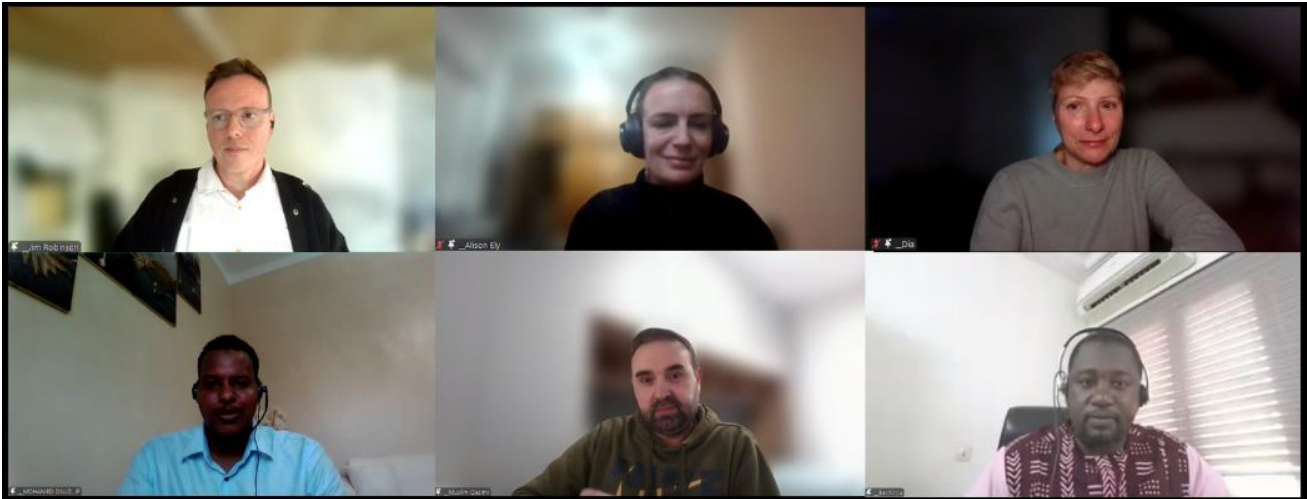
**Paula Gaviria Betancur**, Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), opened this final session by emphasising the importance of durable solutions as a pathway to restoring the rights of displaced persons. She discussed the urgent need for integrated Housing, Land and Property (HLP) responses, especially given the growing number of IDPs globally. Paula highlighted that displacement frequently results from, or exacerbates, loss of housing and land rights,

often undermining the potential for long-term solutions. She emphasised that a coordinated response across sectors, supported by political will, is crucial to preserving the social contract between governments and displaced persons. Drawing from her experiences with IDPs, she shared case studies illustrating how HLP rights, when ignored, can lead to cycles of displacement and instability. Paula concluded by calling for governments to uphold their obligations to displaced persons, noting that respect for HLP rights not only aids in the immediate recovery of individuals but also reinforces the social contract, promoting trust between citizens and states in post-conflict societies.

**Jim Robinson**, Co-Coordinator of the Global Housing, Land and Property Area of Responsibility ([HLP AoR](#)), set the framework for the discussion, emphasising that secure housing, land, and property are fundamental to human dignity and protection. He outlined the objectives of the session, inviting participants to explore how HLP intersects with humanitarian assistance, development work, peacebuilding efforts, and environmental resilience. Jim emphasised that HLP rights encompass much more than physical structures. HLP is about accessing housing and land safely and securely, without fear of forced eviction, and the ability to secure livelihood opportunities and to thrive. He invited panellists to discuss specific challenges in their contexts, especially those that arise from integrating HLP considerations across sectors, urging them to provide actionable insights that could be applied by other practitioners facing similar challenges globally.

**Miradije (Dia) Hodza**, Information, Counselling and Legal Awareness (ICLA) Specialist with NRC and co-chair of the [Gaza HLP Technical Working Group](#), detailed NRC’s approach to HLP in Gaza. She explained that due to the volatile situation, the organisation has focused on emergency response while also seeking to address structural HLP concerns. Miradije highlighted NRC’s collaborative work in securing

legal assistance to help individuals obtain land documentation and address issues related to inheritance, which are often critical in restoring housing rights after displacement. She discussed challenges specific to Gaza, such as frequent forced evictions and high-density living, which complicate efforts to ensure tenure security. Miradije also spoke about public awareness initiatives, including educational materials on tenant rights and working with community members on how to navigate Gaza’s complex HLP landscape. She stressed that while emergency needs often take precedence, planning for long-term HLP recovery is also crucial in Gaza’s context to prevent recurrent cycles of displacement.



**Participants** (from left to right): **Top Row:** Jim Robinson (HLP AoR), Alison Ely (NRC), Miradije Hodza (NRC); **Bottom Row:** Mohamed Daud (Juba Foundation), Muslim Qazimi (UN-Habitat), Bachirou Ayouba Tinni (UNHCR)

**Alison Ely**, the Sub-National Coordinator of the Shelter Cluster in **Gaza** with NRC, elaborated on the structural and legal challenges of HLP response within Gaza, which has experienced extensive destruction and displacement due to ongoing and recurring conflicts. Alison highlighted that many affected residents lack formal documentation, which complicates both short-term shelter solutions and long-term property restitution efforts. She discussed the development of practical guidelines, known as the “[Do’s and Don’ts of shelter and land rights](#)”, aimed at educating displaced persons on safe renting practices and rights enforcement. Alison described how the Shelter Cluster collaborates with local organizations to draft emergency shelter standards that account for complex cultural and legal realities. She emphasised that even in the absence of formal government stability, preparing guidelines on equitable rent practices and safe tenure arrangements offers a pathway for displaced residents to achieve some level of housing security.

**Mohamed Daud**, Project Manager at the Juba Foundation in **Somalia**, provided an overview of Somalia’s unique challenges, including climate-driven displacement and recurring armed conflict. Mohamed detailed the foundation’s approach to integrating early warning systems, capacity building, and HLP education in local communities. He shared that due to limited awareness of HLP rights among displaced Somalis, their organisation places significant focus on community engagement and education. Working with NRC and local governments, the foundation provides services such as dispute resolution, legal assistance, and land documentation. Mohamed highlighted that one of their main achievements has been in supporting local authorities to understand HLP rights, enabling them to better serve displaced populations. The foundation also emphasises the need for sustainable solutions that allow IDPs to pursue livelihoods, noting that secure HLP rights are integral to achieving economic stability and community cohesion in Somalia.



**Muslim Qazimi**, acting Head of Country Programme in UN-Habitat Iraq and Yemen, discussed HLP rights in post-conflict areas with a focus on the Yazidi minority in **Iraq**. Muslim outlined a multi-tiered strategy that begins with a comprehensive needs assessment, followed by targeted advocacy for legal reforms, and finally the issuance of occupancy certificates. He highlighted a significant achievement for the Yazidi community: the passing of a decree that officially recognises their land rights. Muslim described how this legal recognition has helped many Yazidis reclaim their ancestral land and rebuild their communities, despite decades of systemic discrimination. His team worked closely with community leaders and religious authorities to ensure that HLP initiatives respect the unique cultural and religious context of the Yazidis. Muslim emphasised that building trust with affected communities and fostering local representation in HLP planning processes are essential for the successful and sustainable reintegration of displaced populations.

**Bachirou Ayouba Tinni**, Assistant Protection Officer with UNHCR **Niger**, discussed how the recent adoption of the Kampala Convention has transformed HLP protections for IDPs in the country. Bachirou highlighted that by working with municipal governments and community leaders, UNHCR has helped integrate HLP education and awareness into local governance structures. He shared examples of ongoing training programs for local authorities on the importance of HLP rights, which help mitigate land disputes and social tension between displaced persons and host communities. Bachirou noted that Niger's nomadic populations present a unique challenge for HLP planning, as they face periodic displacement due to both conflict and climate change. He concluded by emphasising the importance of building capacity among local leaders to uphold HLP rights in a culturally sensitive manner, which in turn helps reduce tensions and fosters resilience in communities facing protracted displacement.

### Online Interactions and Questions

The session's online audience engaged in the Q&A and chat features, raising pertinent questions on gender-sensitive HLP approaches, the role of customary law, and local, community-driven dispute resolution. Panellists responded by reiterating the importance of inclusive and gender-sensitive programming that recognises the unique challenges faced by women and other marginalised groups in accessing HLP rights. Panellists also discussed the integration of customary law into HLP frameworks, especially in contexts where formal legal mechanisms are limited. The audience's active participation highlighted a strong interest in practical tools and case studies that could serve as models for addressing complex HLP issues.

### Closing Remarks:

**Zoë Pelter**, Policy Specialist at UNDP's Governance, Rule of Law, and Peacebuilding Hub, closed the session by synthesising the day's insights, highlighting the role of HLP rights in achieving durable solutions for displaced persons. She praised the forum's focus on holistic approaches that encompass emergency response, development planning, and long-term peacebuilding. Zoë emphasised that sustainable solutions are possible



only if HLP protections are integrated from the outset, supported by cross-sector collaboration among humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors. She reaffirmed UNDP's commitment to building resilient systems that uphold HLP rights as a foundation for stability, and she encouraged continued dialogue and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders in high-risk areas.

## THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR ORGANISERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

### International NGOs

Centre for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)  
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)  
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)  
Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP)  
Oxfam

### National NGOs

Abs Development Organization for Women and Children (ADO) - Yemen  
Apoyar - Colombia  
Base UA - Ukraine  
Centre for the Integral Development of the Rural Child (CEDIER) – DR Congo  
Diálogo Diverso - Ecuador  
Girl Child Rights (GCR) - Mozambique  
Groupement d'Appui aux Rapatriés et aux Réfugiés (GARR) - Haiti  
Juba Foundation - Somalia  
Nada Elazhar Organization for Disaster Prevention and Sustainable Development (NADA) - Sudan  
National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities (NAPD) - Ukraine  
Right to Protection (R2P) - Ukraine  
Solidarité pour la Promotion et la Paix (SOPROP) - DR Congo  
TPO - Uganda  
Utopia - Lebanon

### United Nations

International Development Law Organisation (IDLO)  
The International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)  
United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

### Red Cross and Red Crescent

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

### Networks and Coordination Platforms

GPC Advocacy Working Group  
GPC Community-Led Protection Task Team  
GPC Task Team on Law and Policy  
Global Gender Based Violence AoR  
Global Housing, Land, and Property AoR  
International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)  
Libya INGO Forum (LIF)

### Donors and Member States

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)  
Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations

### Protection Clusters and Sectors

Iraq  
Occupied Palestinian Territories  
NW Syria  
Sudan  
Ukraine

### Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council

Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons

### Other

Centre for Crisis, Conflict, and Humanitarian Protection at the Commission on Human Rights (CHRP) – Philippines  
Nigerian Bar Association (NBA)  
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)  
University of Adelaide