

Minutes of Monthly National Protection Cluster Meeting
29th January 2025 10:30 - 12:00

Agenda Items	KEY POINTS RAISED	ACTION POINTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordination Team Updates <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) PoC SG Report Inputs b) Operational Guidance Note on Principled Return to Area of Origin or Habitual Residence c) Service Mapping System d) GPC Mission to Sudan – Terms of Reference (TOR) 2. Area of Responsibility (AoR) Updates 3. Update from Al Jazeera <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Return Update and Response 4. Open Discussion on the Implications of USAID's Temporary Suspension on Protection Interventions in Sudan 5. Any Other Business (AOB) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) CBP Documents b) 5Ws 	<p>Coordination Team Updates</p> <p>PoC SG Report Inputs: The Protection Cluster has provided inputs for the UN Secretary-General’s annual report on the protection of civilians. Despite a tight turnaround, extensive consultations were conducted with AoR leads, cluster staff, and inter-cluster coordination groups, including WASH, Nutrition, Health, Access Working Group, and OCHA.</p> <p>The submission highlights key protection concerns, including harm to civilians and infrastructure due to urban warfare, explosive weapons, and landmines. It also addresses humanitarian access challenges, attacks on aid personnel, forced displacement, and the worsening situation of persons with disabilities. Additionally, the report underscores the regional impact of displacement, increased sexual violence, and the deteriorating humanitarian situation due to targeted infrastructure attacks, particularly on water and energy systems.</p> <p>The inputs were widely consulted and finalized within one week.</p> <p>Operational Guidance Note on Principled Return to Area of Origin or Habitual Residence: the note is being developed in response to the increasing return of displaced populations, particularly to states such as Sennar and Aljazera. Many individuals are returning to their areas of origin, despite ongoing security concerns and inadequate conditions for sustainable reintegration. The primary drivers of premature return include the lack of services and humanitarian assistance in displacement sites, leaving many with no viable alternative.</p> <p>The guidance note aims to assist humanitarian actors to engage with national and authorities based on protection principles and key advocacy lines. A zero draft was developed as a foundation for structured dialogue and advocacy, ensuring that returns adhere to protection principles and preconditions necessary for safe and dignified reintegration. Extensive feedback was received from SAG last week, which shifted the draft toward a more operational focus. While the guidance will include key recommendations for both authorities and humanitarian partners, it is essential to establish stronger linkages between short-term humanitarian interventions and mid-to-long-term development intervention. The feedback highlighted the importance of integrating a human-development nexus approach to ensure returns are sustainable and not purely driven by immediate considerations. Additional feedback is expected this week, which will help refine the document into a more comprehensive and actionable tool. Once finalized, the updated draft will be shared with SAG for further review and validation.</p>	<p>PPT meeting Presentation</p>

	<p><u>Service Mapping System</u> The coordination team announced the finalization of the Protection Cluster’s service mapping tool, incorporating feedback from the last meeting. The tool ensures confidentiality while enhancing service referrals and coordination. IMOs, presented the tool, explaining its interactive GIS-based functionality for tracking general protection services across Sudan. The dashboard currently features only general protection services, with data collected in the last quarter of 2024. Services related to GBV, Mine Action, and Child Protection will be handled as per respective AoR IM units.</p> <p>The tool provides an overview of available services by location, organization, and type. Sensitive information, including focal point details, remains hidden, with access granted upon request through a secure system. To improve accessibility and security, each organization will soon have dedicated accounts if there is a possibility within the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) portal, allowing direct access without requesting data manually. Until then, the current email-based access request system will remain in place. The tool serves as a referral mechanism and a gap analysis tool, helping identify service shortages and strengthening evidence-based donor engagement. A quarterly update cycle will ensure the data remains accurate and relevant.</p> <p>Key concerns raised included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the tool remains user-friendly in low-connectivity areas. • Improving referral pathways and integrating sub-national coordination structures. <p><u>GPC Mission to Sudan – Terms of Reference (TOR)</u> A Global Protection Cluster (GPC) mission to Sudan is planned from February 22nd to March 1, 2025, involving AoR colleagues and key protection actors. The mission aims to strengthen coordination, response, and engagement among cluster members and partners, focusing on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advocacy & Protection Visibility – Elevating protection concerns at the global level. 2. Humanitarian Access – Addressing challenges related to access and operational constraints. 3. Resource Mobilization & Donor Engagement – Exploring funding solutions amid severe shortages across the Sudan humanitarian response. 4. Strategic Support & Localization – Promoting sustainable, localized response mechanisms. 5. Returnees & Displacement Dynamics – Assessing challenges and needs of returnees, particularly in Madani and other critical areas. <p>Missions will meet with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) • National & International NGOs (SAG members & partners) • Donors & UN agencies • Sudanese Government representatives (HAC & other key authorities) <p>Efforts are ongoing to secure visas and logistical arrangements for mission participants. The finalized agenda for the Protection Cluster engagement is expected by tomorrow. However, uncertainties remain regarding mission</p>	<p><u>Service Mapping Link and Dashboard</u></p> <p>https://globalprotectioncluster.org/publications/2087/infographic/humanitarian-dashboard/sudan-protection-cluster-services-mapping</p>
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	feasibility due to ongoing visa restrictions and BHA issues . Updates will be shared as soon as available.	
Area of Responsibility (AoR) Updates	<p><u>CP AOR Update:</u></p> <p>The Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) provided an update on key activities and initiatives. Muthu Karuppasamy Kannusamy shared that the CP AoR strategy for the next two years has been finalized and will be circulated to partners today. The CP AoR successfully collaborated with the Education Cluster during the first round of national exams to mitigate protection risks for students crossing lines of control to attend exams in government-held areas. Two KoBo tools were developed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An observation tool to assess protection risks for students. 2. A tool to map available child protection services at exam locations. <p>Findings from this exercise have been compiled, and mitigation measures were implemented to improve student safety. Lessons learned will inform preparations for the next round of exams, with a continued focus on preventive measures and coordination at the subnational level.</p> <p>Service Mapping & Referral Pathways for Child Protection, CP IMOs presented updates on the CP AoR service mapping tool, launched in December 2024. The tool includes both online and offline data collection mechanisms to accommodate partners operating in low-connectivity areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It maps child protection service delivery points, including child-friendly spaces and case management services. • Partners can choose to display or restrict sensitive information such as focal points' names and contact details. • The next round of data collection will further refine service mapping, ensuring that all available child protection services are accurately reflected. <p>The Protection Cluster IM team and CP AoR will explore the possibility to integrate protection service mapping tools, with a single access point for all protection-related referrals and analysis.</p> <p><u>GBV AOR Update:</u></p> <p>Introduction & New GBV AoR Coordinator. The coordination team welcomed Esmeralda, the newly appointed GBV AoR Coordinator, who is expected to arrive in Port Sudan this week. She will be permanently based in Sudan, ensuring a more responsive and engaged presence. Esmeralda will be reaching out to partners for bilateral meetings in the coming weeks.</p> <p>GBV Service Mapping & Referral Pathways The GBV service mapping and referral pathway update is 99% finalized, with 705 GBV response services validated across Sudan, provided by 223 service providers. This required extensive bilateral engagement with service actors to confirm service types and accessibility.</p>	<p>GBV AOR to circulate the GBV</p>

	<p>However, confidentiality and security concerns remain a significant challenge for sharing referral pathways publicly. Due to ongoing risks faced by service providers, full details cannot be openly shared. Instead, updated focal point contacts for each state will be disseminated through the Protection Cluster as an alternative means of facilitating referrals.</p> <p>Two-Year GBV Strategy & Task Forces. The GBV AoR two-year strategy has been finalized and will be disseminated in the coming two weeks. Additionally, three new national-level task forces have been established:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Management Task Force • Advocacy Task Force • Prevention Task Force <p>First meetings will take place next week, with Terms of Reference and work plans expected to be shared by mid-to-late February 2025.</p> <p>Joint Legal & Social Protection Analysis. A desk analysis is underway in partnership with the Child Protection AoR, focusing on the legal and social protection needs of children born as a result of rape. The analysis will focus on identifying gaps in legal frameworks, policies, and protection mechanisms to strengthen support for both children and their mothers (GBV survivors).</p> <p>Male Survivors of Sexual Violence & Health Sector Engagement. A separate assessment is being conducted on the specific needs of male survivors of rape, with a particular focus on health service providers. This is being done in collaboration with the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Working Group. The aim is to strengthen the response capacity of the health sector, while reaffirming that GBV programming remains primarily focused on women and girls, who are disproportionately affected.</p> <p>Global Advocacy & Sudan HNRP Launch. GBV AoR Co-Coordinator Shaza, also the Executive Director of NADA, has been invited to speak at the global launch of the Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) on February 17, 2025. She will highlight the critical role of Women-Led Organizations (WLOs) in the humanitarian response. A link to the event will be shared once available.</p> <p>Collaboration with Mine Action. The GBV AoR acknowledged recent collaboration with Mine Action colleagues in multiple states, where joint awareness-raising sessions have been conducted. These sessions focused on GBV risk awareness for mine action teams, and Mine Action response awareness for GBV partners, including training on referral pathways and handling disclosures of GBV survivors. The collaboration has been positively received and will continue to be strengthened.</p>	<p>AoR state focal point contact list for referrals.</p> <p>GBV AOR to coordinate with the CP AoR on the desk analysis of children born from rape.</p> <p>GBV AOR to share the Sudan HNRP launch event link when available.</p>
<p>Update from Al Jazeera Return Update and Response</p>	<p><u>Update from Al Jazeera -Return Update and Response:</u></p> <p>Protection Cluster Coordinator for the Eastern States, provided an update on IDP return movements to Al Jazeera State. Following the government's announcement of return plans, registration processes for IDPs have</p>	

commenced in different states.

Three main access routes to Al Jazeera were highlighted:

- Via Sennar State – Now open for civilian movement.
- Between Madani and Gadarif – Primarily for military movement, with exceptions in specific areas.
- Via the Nile River – Fully open for civilian movement.

Since January 25, IDP registration for return has increased, with community participation through return committees. However, actual return movements remain minimal, as several areas remain restricted, and the return process to Madani City itself has been put on hold due to recent security incidents.

Spontaneous returns are being observed in southern Al Jazeera localities, with IDPs returning on their self-organized rather than through government-organized transport. Reports indicate approximately 15,000 families have returned, though mostly outside Madani itself, and many face severe challenges, particularly families with school-age children and those with medical conditions.

Key Protection Concerns

- Mine contamination & explosive remnants of war (ERW): IDPs are crossing unsafe areas, particularly via Afara Road, increasing risks.
- Security incidents: Reports of retaliatory shelling and human rights violations based on tribal and ethnic affiliations pose risks to returnees.
- Limited public services: Lack of schools, healthcare, and basic services is a major barrier to return.

Protection Cluster Response

The Protection Cluster is leading efforts to provide safety messaging and awareness to communities on key protection risks, mine awareness, and access to services. Partners are working to:

- Deploy child protection and GBV actors to support returnees.
- Expand service mapping and referral pathways for return areas.
- Engage local NGOs and social workers to conduct assessments where access remains restricted.

Ongoing Coordination & Next Steps

- Local NGOs are on standby to conduct assessments once security conditions improve.
- Discussions are ongoing with donors regarding potential funding reallocation to support return interventions.
- Emergency response teams are being engaged to provide initial assessments and possible service support.

Discussion & Key Questions

- Local responders & emergency rooms: There are local actors still present in Al Jazeera who have remained operational. The cluster will explore engagement with emergency response teams and local

	<p>social workers to support mine awareness messaging and broader humanitarian efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return feasibility: While returns are being encouraged, the security situation and destruction of infrastructure pose major challenges. A collective effort from humanitarian actors is needed to ensure safe, voluntary, and dignified return processes. 	
<p>Open Discussion on the Implications of USAID's Temporary Suspension on Protection Interventions in Sudan</p>	<p><u>Open Discussion on the Implications of USAID's Temporary Suspension on Protection Interventions in Sudan</u></p> <p>The meeting addressed the USAID stop-work orders issued across multiple humanitarian sectors, including protection interventions in Sudan. This follows the U.S. State Department's 90-day review process to assess funding waivers for select activities.</p> <p>While the USAID Administrator recently issued a statement on exemptions for life-saving activities, there is still uncertainty about how this applies to protection interventions. The Protection Cluster is closely monitoring developments and coordinating with the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) and other humanitarian actors for further clarification.</p> <p>Impact on Protection Programming A quick analysis by the Protection Cluster indicates that approximately 40% of Sudan's protection funding is sourced from USAID/BHA, meaning the suspension will significantly impact services. Several INGOs are already discussing potential program closures. However, ethical concerns were raised about how to handle suspensions responsibly, ensuring proper service handovers and risk mitigation.</p> <p>A suspension impact assessment tool has been developed and shared with INGOs and UN agencies receiving USAID funding. The tool aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map the geographic and financial impact of suspended programs. • Identify key services at risk of discontinuation. • Assess the potential for partial continuation of services. • Estimate the number of affected populations. • Document immediate and long-term protection risks due to funding cuts. <p>The primary goal of this exercise is to generate evidence-based advocacy to engage donors and humanitarian leadership on the critical protection gaps arising from the suspension. The Protection Cluster will compile and analyze submissions by next week, after which findings will be shared with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) for coordinated global advocacy. • Donors and humanitarian agencies to explore alternative funding solutions. 	<p>Suspension tool and final product to be shared with Donors and Partners.</p>

AOB	<p><u>Community-Based Protection Network Guidance Note</u> The Community-Based Protection Network (CBPN) Guidance Note has undergone extensive revisions following feedback received in December. The team is currently incorporating suggestions and aims to finalize the document by the first week of February.</p> <p>Once completed, the document will be circulated to all partners, with a dedicated discussion planned to ensure alignment with ongoing initiatives. The key objective is to avoid duplication, enhance collaboration, and strengthen local protection networks in 2025. The guidance note will serve as a technical reference for partners focusing on prevention, response quality, and community engagement.</p> <p><u>ActivityInfo & 5W Reporting – Training & Focal Point Updates</u> <i>For 2025, ActivityInfo will be the sole reporting platform for protection partners. Any questions or technical issues should be directed to Claude or the coordination team.</i> The first ActivityInfo training session was conducted on Sunday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intended audience for these sessions are focal points responsible for partner reporting. • To ensure clarity, the coordination team will reach out to each organization separately next week to verify reporting focal points and determine if reporting will occur at the country or field level. <p>Upcoming Training Sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arabic session: Tomorrow at 10:00 AM • English session: Tomorrow at 2:00 PM • Invitations will be sent today—partners must ensure they are registered to receive the invite. <p><u>Mailing List Update & Subscription Renewal</u> Partners who are not receiving emails from the Protection Cluster should update subscription using link shared by Protection cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mailing list was last updated yesterday. • If you have been removed, re-subscribe using the provided link or contact the coordination team. • The subscription deadline has been extended by one week. <p><u>Next Meeting – Face-to-Face Session in Port Sudan</u> The next Protection Cluster meeting will be held in person in Port Sudan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners currently in Port Sudan are encouraged to attend in person at either the DRC or UNHCR offices. • Remote participants can still join virtually. 	

	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final reminder for INGOs to complete the suspension impact assessment tool as soon as possible. <p>Next meeting Wednesday 26th February 2025.</p>	
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