South Sudan Protection Cluster
Key messages on Protection

11 March 2025

Key Message 1 - Protection has Life-Saving Impact

- **Protection remedies, mitigates and prevents direct loss of life and harm.** It enhances conditions that ensure the physical, material and legal safety of people experiencing or at risk of abuse, violence and exploitation. It protects dignity and avoids long-term harmful impact on communities.

- **Fulfilling the *leaving no one behind* commitment.** Protection reaches those most at-risk of abuse, violence, exploitation and exclusion, and who, due to their specific situations and/or vulnerabilities, may not be able to reach and seek assistance. Protection actors actively support humanitarian actors to identify those in a community who are experiencing the greatest vulnerabilities, what capacities exist and what kinds of humanitarian assistance and support is needed to effectively respond. Mobile protection teams and community-based case management models enhance service accessibility in hard-to-reach areas.

- Where **no action** is swiftly taken **to address protection threats and risks**, communities are at a significantly **higher risk of death, injuries, trauma and exclusion** than when there are a protection interventions and when protection is at the core of humanitarian assistance.

- **Protection is an enabler of effective humanitarian action and is central and critical to all humanitarian operations (Centrality of Protection).** The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) recognizes that protection is one of the main purposes and intended outcomes of humanitarian action. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) states that "*Protection of all persons affected and at risk must inform humanitarian decision-making and response (…). It must be central to our preparedness efforts, as part of immediate and life-saving activities, and throughout the duration of humanitarian response and beyond.*"

- **Lack of consideration for protection in lifesaving emergency interventions is detrimental to the entire humanitarian response and, ultimately, affected populations**. This, in addition to recognizing that protection risks are often the very drivers of humanitarian needs in emergency situations.

- **Protection Cluster, in addition to ensuring the effective coordination of the protection response**, also plays a key role in advising and supporting humanitarian leadership, other sectors and actors in identifying and addressing critical protection risks in a coherent and collective manner.

- **Protection is inherently interlinked with other sectors of the humanitarian response.** Gaps in service provision, limited or constrained access to essential services such as food, shelter, or health challenge the resilience of affected populations and often amplify existing or create new protection risks.

- **Protection interventions and actions contribute directly to early recovery and durable solutions** frameworks to foster longer-term changes *(see chapter 3 for specific messages on the Impact of Protection on Social and Economic Stability and Durable Solutions)*.

Key Message 2 - Protection Coordination is Crucial in Emergency and Transition Settings

- Protection Cluster coordination mechanisms **enhance the effectiveness and impact of collective efforts** to better protect, and support affected populations, including by avoiding duplications and lessening the burden on and potential harm to affected populations. They play an essential role in **leading, collating, harmonizing and disseminating** information through protection risks analyses that serve the entire humanitarian community, planning and response plans.

- In situations of cluster transition or deactivation, the Protection Cluster plays a critical role not only for the protection sector but for the **entire humanitarian system**. As highlighted in the [IASC Guidance on Cluster Transition and Deactivation](#) Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations are amongst the most critical principles and considerations to be respected. The Protection Cluster is essential to enable **effective protection risks analysis and support arrangement to address residual protection risks**.

- During cluster transition/deactivation the role of protection is critical to safeguard people's rights and dignity throughout the process. Carrying out **protection risk analysis** and **monitoring risks** is important to identify population groups or geographical areas that might experience more pronounced risks, such as exclusion or discrimination.

Key Message 3 - Protection plays a Crucial Role in Social and Economic Stability and Durable Solutions

Protection fosters stability and resilience, reducing future displacement risks
- By ensuring displaced people and displacement-affected communities have access to life-saving interventions and basic services, while their rights are being protected. The Protection Cluster and their partners protection interventions make direct contributions to social cohesion and prevent cycles of displacement.
- Early protection interventions, including risk identification, protection analysis and advocacy, help address and reduce grievances, mitigate tensions, and inform policies and actions that help governments and partners implement targeted strategies that prevent future displacement crises and reinforce stability.
- By strengthening national protection systems through capacity building and other initiatives, the Protection Cluster and its partners create more resilient institutions, contributing to local, national and global peace, security, and sustainable development.

Protection activities enable economic recovery and long-term development
- Securing housing, land, and property rights, promoting access to legal/civil documentation, and ensuring freedom of movement, allow displaced populations to (re)integrate into local economies, reducing dependency on aid.
- Protection efforts support access to education and livelihoods, enabling self-reliance and economic contributions that benefit national economies.
- Protection analysis helps identify barriers to economic inclusion, participation and empowerment, ensuring that solutions are tailored to address vulnerabilities and promote economic inclusion.

Protection is essential for achieving durable solutions for IDPs
- Durable solutions can only be sustainable if protection concerns are identified and addressed from the onset of displacement. Ensuring legal access to documentation, security of tenure, and justice mechanisms is crucial for IDPs to rebuild their lives.
- Protection-led approaches, guided by protection analysis, facilitate safe, voluntary, and dignified return, local integration, or resettlement, ensuring that IDPs are not left in protracted displacement.
- By conducting protection analysis and risk assessments, the Protection Cluster identifies the key challenges and opportunities for durable solutions, ensuring that interventions are evidence-based, context-specific, and aligned with national development priorities.
- By integrating protection into durable solutions planning, humanitarian and development actors lay the groundwork for long-term social cohesion, economic inclusion, and national stability.

Life-Saving Protection Interventions in South Sudan

- **Protection Monitoring and Analysis – evidence-driven action saves lives.** Protection monitoring systems, real-time data and analysis, combined with community engagement efforts, enable the identification of high-risk areas and factors driving violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation experienced by children, men and women. It helps detect emergent or changing trends related to serious protection and rights violations (e.g. forced recruitment, abductions, indiscriminate attacks, presence of explosive ordnance), often before they escalate and prevent atrocities. Protection Cluster and partners are often the first to alert on, document and report on serious risks and human rights violations (e.g. via Protection monitoring, CAAC/MRM, MARA, etc.), and to identify which groups and individuals are particularly vulnerable, excluded and in need of tailored assistance. Due to its direct engagement with communities, it identifies existing coping and response mechanisms, allowing humanitarian actors to enhance proactive prevention, immediately mobilize and inform effective and well-targeted humanitarian responses and advocacy while preventing further escalation and secondary harm. Similarly, humanitarian actors rely on risk assessments to ensure safe access to aid.

Protection monitoring and analysis provides context specific security assessments, allowing agencies to adjust operations and prevent aid worker targeting, attacks on convoys, or restricted access due to armed group presence.

- **Protection Advocacy:** Protection Cluster and partners engage in robust, evidence-based public and private advocacy with duty bearers and other relevant stakeholders to raise the protection risks faced by people affected by conflict and crisis and to influence policy and practice in support of their safety. Such advocacy efforts are done with a range of protection and humanitarian actors and affected communities themselves and can galvanize concrete action by duty-bearers to stop harmful actions and ensure active measures that enhance protection, including improved humanitarian access and response, legal reforms and protection-focused policies and funding. Advocacy and engagement based on solid monitoring and reporting of serious violations also supports longer-term deterrence, compliance with legal frameworks and norms and accountability.

- **Protection Services and Referrals – Survivor-centered care is a lifeline:** Survivor-centered services and community-based protection programs work together to prevent further harm and revictimization by ensuring survivors' access to basic and specialized services, including legal assistance, medical care, and economic support, while also strengthening social safety nets, peer networks, and justice mechanisms that provide long-term protection and stability.

- **Community-Based Protection**: In practice, communities are the first responders to humanitarian crises. Investment in community mechanisms and local protection responses are critical to enhance their self-protection capacities and mitigate harm in life-threatening situations. Community-based groups also serve as a bridge between humanitarian response and affected communities. They are essential in activating early warning systems, providing frontline response, community watch groups and peer-support structures that enable people to respond immediately to protection threats before external assistance arrives and enable timely referrals to life-saving essential services.

- **Humanitarian Negotiations & Mediation:** the Protection cluster and its partners are engaging in negotiations with a range of stakeholders in support of protection outcomes. Such negotiations may be done when required with armed actors to facilitate access to besieged communities or to enable safe passage for civilians to nearby markets and clinics. Other negotiation efforts may focus on engaging with local authorities to enable needed permissions and acceptance of protection and humanitarian interventions in an area. Many local protection actors are also advancing critical mediation and peacebuilding efforts, that contribute to reduced levels of inter-communal tensions and the effective prevention of escalating further violence and abuse.

- **Gender-Based Violence:** In emergency contexts identifying high-risk areas and factors contributing to GBV as well as support to health service providers with relevant supplies such as for clinical management of rape is critical and to ensure that appropriate interventions are accessible.

- **Legal Identity and Civil Documentation:** Lack of legal identity and civil documentation expose civilians to protection risks and human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, statelessness, and denial of essential services. Protection actors support direct access to civil documentation for IDPs, returnees, those forcibly evicted and other excluded groups to ensure access to legal aid, birth registration, education, housing/land/property registration and nationality determination, among others, while enhancing individuals' coping capacities and resilience.

- **Family Tracing and Reunification:** Family separation exposes separated women and unaccompanied children to abuse, disappearance, exploitation, recruitment, among others. The first hours following displacement are essential to family tracing efforts, which can in turn prevent long-term impact and violations towards those separated.

- **Information to Support Life-saving Decisions:** Lack of access to accurate information (including due to dis- and misinformation) can lead to violations of rights and increases exposure to life-threatening situations, including unsafe migration choices, human trafficking, and return to unsafe areas. Protection actors ensure crisis-affected populations receive verified, timely, lifesaving information on security risks, legal rights, and services. Timely dissemination of information through community radio, mobile messaging, and digital

platforms, among others, ensures that communities receive real-time alerts on conflict zones, disasters, and humanitarian aid, enabling them to make life-saving decisions and avoid dangerous situations.

- **Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) activities mainstreaming and integration through HNRP objectives:** PC and AoRs play a key role in integrating and strengthening MHPSS in the humanitarian response and nexus to development and solutions as part of their mandate. MHPSS activities aim to improve mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of a target population.

South Sudan Protection Cluster Key Examples:

South Sudan Multi-Partner Protection Risk Monitoring:
The South Sudan Protection Cluster runs a multi-partner flexible Protection Risks Monitoring system (PROMO), coordinated through a dedicated working group. The system combines primary and secondary data collection, adapting tools and mechanisms to each area and existing partners ongoing data collection. It provides monthly updates on several administrative divisions' situation across 15 risks and their worst consequences. It is critical to HCT-led discussions on durable solutions, transitioning and strategic liaison with development actors. The system feeds the entirety of Protection Cluster's analysis needs, including HNRPs, substantially reducing Information Management related tasks and allowing pooling of resources and data.

4W Service Mapping and Referral Mechanisms:
SSD PC ensures complementarity of service mapping and referral mechanisms among the whole spectrum of protection services, particularly to ensure effective case management and individual protection assistance.

South Sudan Collective Analysis and Protection Analytical Update (PAU):
The Cluster ensures that AoRs, key operational partners (such as SAG members) and relevant stakeholders (i.e. other clusters colleagues or actors with useful data and information) at least four times a year undertake a collective analysis of the protection context and linkages to protection risks. The result of this analysis is shared and discussed during Protection Cluster meetings with operational actors to inform the collective response and coordination of service delivery by protection actors, and to elevate certain issues to the HCT or for advocacy. This collective also serves as the basis for the Protection Analysis Updates (PAU), as a flagship regular publication of the Protection Cluster. It provides collectively agreed key messages and recommendations to internal and external audiences. The collective analysis and PAU also serve as a useful reference for briefings to the HCT, ICCG, and donors, helps inform and update severity mapping, PIN and other assessments for the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), and feed into Human Rights mechanisms and reviews of Peace Operations mandate.

Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) integration:
Protection Cluster and its AoRs included MHPSS activities/components in designing their target activities and priorities for 2025 based on the protection indicators (GP-5 indicators, CP-3 indicators, GBV-2 indicators).