



FUNDING ANALYSIS AND PROTECTION RISKS

UNDERSTANDING THE LINK AND THE COST OF INACTION

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Executive Summary

Humanitarian crises in 2025 have been marked by rising levels of violence, coercion, and deprivation, driving protection risks to unprecedented levels. Across 18 crisis-affected countries, 229 million people face serious threats to their safety, dignity, and fundamental rights. Recent subnational assessments conducted in those 18 countries, reveal that in 39% of the 125,200 subnational areas analysed, civilian populations are experiencing severe to extreme levels of protection risks.

The current funding available for protection does not match the scale of existing protection risks. In 2024, the funding gap amounted to 51%, and projections for 2025 suggest a wider gap — with some crises facing a potential shortfall of 86%. This is more than a financial shortfall; it represents a systemic failure to respond to life-threatening risks. While the full impact remains to be seen, early projections already raise serious concerns.

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) has analysed what could happen if protection funding is reduced by 30% or 50% compared to 2024. The findings are alarming: Between 7.5 million and 12.6 million people could be affected, with 4,400 to 5,000 communities stand to lose the protective presence and connective infrastructure that enable them to act, speak, and organize around their own their safety, such as community-led or social cohesion interventions. Moreover, 2.3 million to 3.5 million people may be left without access to vital information—compromising their ability to make informed decisions and access life-saving assistance.

The consequences of funding shortfalls extend well beyond service reductions—they directly increase exposure to harm. The GPC's projection analysis shows that early warning systems, risk monitoring and data collection and other interventions aimed at not only responding to, but also preventing and mitigating protection risks will be severely reduced. The weakening of case management and support networks will leave affected populations with fewer avenues to access justice, legal protection, and life-saving assistance.

An analysis of 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRPs) showed that activities included under life-saving Strategic Objectives (SOs) address 33% of protection risks classified as severe and 11% of those classified as extreme, including gender-based violence, the presence of explosive ordnance/mines, child recruitment, movement restrictions & displacement, psychosocial distress, and theft & forced eviction. However, many key activities to address protection risks are either in the protection-specific SOs or fall outside the scope of HNRPs.

The 2025 humanitarian response stands at a crossroads. If we collectively fail to address the protection risks that populations face, millions will remain trapped in cycles of violence, exploitation, and deprivation and resulting humanitarian needs. Protection cannot be an afterthought. It must be at the core of humanitarian prioritization, ensuring that interventions are driven by the severity of risks and resulting needs. The cost of inaction is not just a gap in resources—it is a failure to protect those most at risk. The insights from the analysis suggest that:

- There is a critical need to use locally defined protection risk severity as a key driver of humanitarian prioritization—beyond formal life-saving classifications—to ensure that the most serious threats are not overlooked, and that collective action effectively addresses the most critical protection risks.
- Critical protection activities that mitigate severe risks can fall outside life-saving approaches, with the analysis raising questions about how these essential activities will be maintained or through what alternative delivery strategies.
- Similarly, systems critical to preventing violence—such as early warning, monitoring, and community-based protection—are likely to be disproportionately impacted, reducing the capacity to detect and address threats in time.

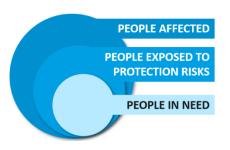
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Protection Risks and Humanitarian Needs

Protection risks — defined as the actual or potential exposure to violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation — generate humanitarian needs by undermining the safety, dignity, and rights of affected populations.

Building on the understanding that protection risks drive humanitarian needs, Protection Clusters coordinated two interlinked joined-up analyses: one focused on the presence and severity of 15 commonly agreed protection risks¹, and another on the humanitarian protection needs that result from those risks. To assess the impact on people, two specific definitions guide the analysis:

- A) People exposed to protection risks are a subset of people affected by the crisis whose life is directly affected by current violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation in the form of protection risks severity².
- **B)** People in need of protection [humanitarian protection assistance]: individuals, across all population groups and considering their age, gender and diversity, exposed to protection risks in the areas affected³:
 - 1. whose safety constraints limit their ability to move freely and access public spaces,
 - who cannot perform practices that ensure physical, emotional, psychological, and social safety, such as social interaction, educational pursuits, economic engagement, and healthcare, and
 - who are deprived of their rights, including adequate access to essential services and justice, considering their age, gender, and diverse needs.



Overview of Protection Risks

229M
PEOPLE EXPOSED
TO RISK

Protection risks across crisis-affected countries have reached unprecedented levels, with millions facing compounded threats to their safety, dignity, and fundamental rights.

39%
OF SUB-NATIONAL AREAS REPORTING

EXTREME RISK

The latest data from the Global Protection Cluster indicates that 229 million people are currently exposed to serious protection risks in 18 countries⁴.

While not all may require an urgent humanitarian response, many of those risks can be prevented or mitigated — underscoring the need to prioritize those most at risk of severe harm. Protection partners conducted assessments across 125,200 subnational areas, revealing that 39% (49,446 out of 125,200 areas) of those are classified at severe or extreme⁵ exposure to protection risks.

¹ <u>Protection Risks Explanatory Note</u>, GPC, 2022.

² Methodology for Calculating Protection Severity and Estimating PiN, GPC, 2024.

³ <u>Joint and Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) 2 Technical Manual,</u> OCHA, 2024.

⁴ The methodology to assess the severity of protection risks and calculate the people exposed to protection risk have been introduced in the second quarter of 2024 and it could be applied only in countries where the conditions were favorable to use it for the HNRP 2025. The countries covered by the analysis are: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria (NW), Ukraine, Venezuela.

⁵ There are 5 severity levels in protection risks analysis: 1. Minor; 2. Stressed; 3. Moderate; 4. Severe; 5. Extreme

The humanitarian crises of 2025 are being driven by four cross-cutting trends, as identified through field-based analysis by protection partners and documented in Protection Analysis Updates (PAUs)⁶ throughout 2024.

- Violence Armed conflict and protection risks related to direct violence against civilian populations are increasing in both frequency and intensity, disproportionately impacting women, children, and marginalised communities.
- Worsening Forced and Harmful Situations Protection systems are being put under increased pressure, while
 forced displacement, forced recruitment, exploitative labour, and child, early & forced marriage continue to
 rise.
- **Restricted Humanitarian Access** Bureaucratic barriers, security threats, and deliberate obstruction are preventing aid workers from reaching people in need.
- Tightened Movement and Rights Restrictions Curfews, border closures, blockades, siege-like situations and administrative constraints are isolating communities, cutting them off from assistance, justice, and advocacy while suppressing civil liberties.

The map below provides an overview of the combined severity of the 15 protection risks⁷ monitored by Protection Clusters, and an indication of the percentage of subnational areas⁸ in the country where population is exposed to severe or extreme levels of violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation.

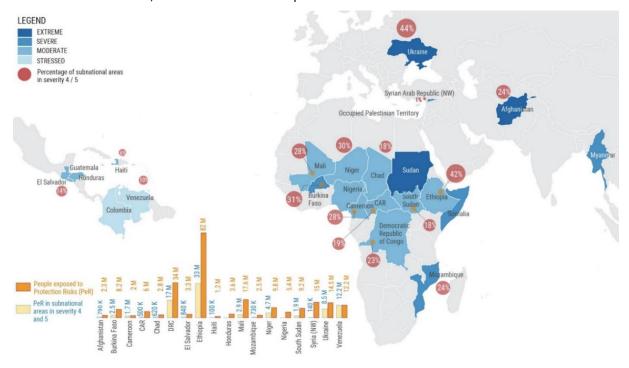


Figure 1 | Protection Risk Severity Assessment Oct-Dec 2024

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⁶ Protection Analysis Updates, GPC, 2024.

⁷ The severity of protection risks is calculated on the basis of common agreed criteria for each of 15 protection risks, available here.. As a reference, the general criteria for severity 5 (extreme) refers to Most severe situations, characterized by extreme harm or damage resulting from direct actions or indirect influences from non-state and state actors, including state's failing to prevent violations. These risks pose an imminent and grave threat to the lives, safety, and well-being of individuals or groups, demanding immediate and comprehensive action to mitigate their impact. No guarantee of rights due to breakdown of the rule of law, protracted impunity and/or systematic failure to ensure accountability, remedy/redress, prevent, and protect.

⁸ This highlights only the areas where the combined severity of all 15 protection risks is classified as severe or extreme, serving as a proxy for the most critical situations of violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation. However, individual severe or extreme protection risks are more widespread both within and across countries.

Priority Protection Risks

The impact of today's humanitarian crises must be measured not only by funding shortfalls or reduced protection activities in Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRPs), but also by the escalating severity of protection risks and their direct, life-threatening consequences on affected populations. As highlighted in the latest Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO), crises are not merely about resources shortages—they are defined by life-threatening risks that require urgent, sustained intervention, irrespective of funding constraints. Without immediate attention to the threats, vulnerabilities and capacities that drive them, escalating risks will continue to erode rights, safety, and dignity. Affected populations will remain exposed to immediate danger, enduring cycles of harm, and long-term, life-threatening consequences. This will deepen and perpetuate humanitarian needs, trapping communities in unresolved crises without durable solutions.

The latest protection risk severity assessment – coordinated by Protection Clusters and partners – was conducted between September and December 2024. While this assessment offers a strong snapshot of the protection landscape heading into 2025, conditions across many crisis-affected countries continue to deteriorate. The table below shows the severity ranking given by operations to the 15 risks. It additionally shows the top 5 priority risks flagged by each operation.

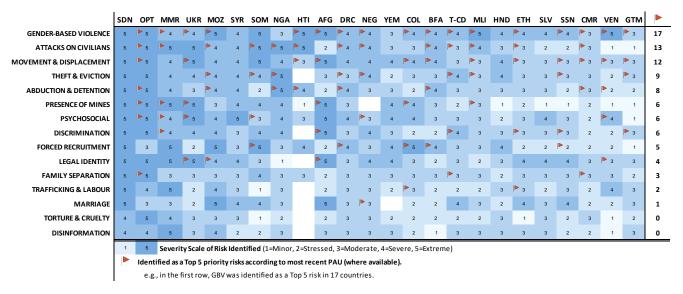


Figure 2 | Protection risk severity assessment Oct-Dec 2024 vs. PAUs defined priority protection risks.

In certain contexts such as Sudan, the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), Myanmar, Mozambique, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burkina Faso, Syria and Nigeria, the population is facing multiple overlapping protection risks at severe to extreme levels. The scale and scope is overwhelming in the majority of humanitarian crises, requiring a prioritization of protection risks which Protection Clusters coordinated with AoRs, partners and affected communities and present regularly through Protection Analysis Updates – PAUs.

According to the 30 PAUs published since January 2024, attacks on civilians, gender-based violence, risks related to movement & displacement or theft & evictions are considered priority risks by Protection Clusters partners across numerous countries, with presence of mines, abduction & detention, and risks related to recruitment and psychosocial distress being priority risks in specific countries such as Sudan, Mozambique, Somalia, Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, Haiti, South Sudan, Venezuela, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria.

Funding Analysis – Risk & Response

Protection Risks and Funding Gaps

In 2024, the Protection Cluster received \$1.7 billion and reached 25 million people, falling short of the \$3.5 billion funding requirement – resulting in a 51% funding gap. The projected funding gap analysis for 2025 has considered the funding gaps per country registered in 2024 and the impact of the US ratio of funding for those countries, as proxy for what at this stage could be the funding expectations across crises.

The projections for 2025 signal a severe decline in protection funding, with shortfalls averaging **67%** across major humanitarian crises, as shown below. These drastic cuts are expected to severely impact the ability of protection actors to respond to urgent and life-threatening needs, putting millions at greater risk.

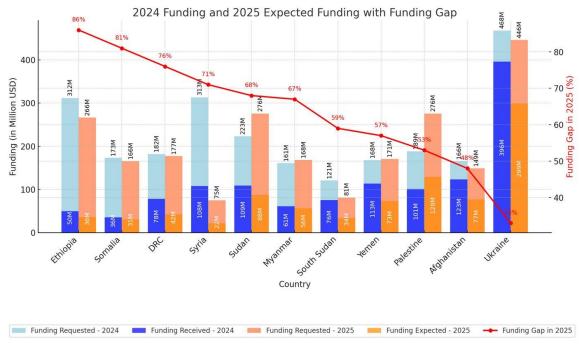


Figure 3 | 2025 Funding Shortfall Projections

The severity and scope of protection risks is critical to assess the impact of funding shortfall on people. Although the current GPC analysis focuses on a limited number of countries where data is available, its methodology can be expanded to capture broader global trends. While this analysis is considered as being conservative as it represents only a portion of all humanitarian crises, it provides a solid picture for discussions on addressing protection risks.

Humanitarian needs and harm are set to escalate, particularly when considering that several countries are already experiencing widespread conflict and violence, and are projected to see a reduction in the direct impact of protection activities. In countries such as Niger, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ethiopia, Cameroon or Ukraine, civilian populations in at least 1/4 of the country subnational areas assessed suffer extreme harms from exposure to all 15 protection risks monitored by Protection Clusters.

At the same time, these countries are likely to face an average projected reduction of 46% in protection activities⁹. While the analysis is limited, it is expected that countries like Sudan, oPt, DRC, Yemen or Somalia are facing similar

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⁹ The GPC analysis is based on the reach indicators in the HNRPs 2025, and projects their reduction according to the funding shortfall scenario as a proxy for reduction in related activities.

challenges. This analysis highlights the urgent need for collective actions, funding priorities and recalibration of strategies to ensure that life-threatening risks and harm to populations are properly identified and addressed, both within and beyond the scope of humanitarian response.

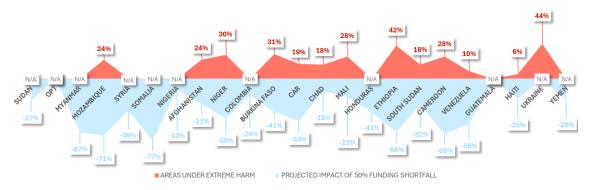


Figure 4 | Comparison of subnational risk severity assessment and projected funding shortfall

Projected Impact on Protection Interventions and Affected Populations

Prioritizing protection responses requires humanitarian decision-making to consider both life-saving interventions and addressing life-threatening protection risks, including whenever possible through integrated programming across different sectors. Driven by this dual focus, and in an effort to support country clusters and partners in preparing for anticipated funding constraints, the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) has undertaken a two-fold analysis.

- First, it conducted in-depth projections based on 30% and 50% funding reduction scenarios to assess the
 potential impact on protection operations and activities¹⁰, drawing from available data and partner
 consultations.
- Second, to better understand how protection risks are addressed by life-saving priorities in Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRPs), the GPC analyzed the 2025 HNRPs, identifying 584 protection-related activities under life-saving objectives across 20 countries and their relation with the severity of protection risks.

The consequences of the projected funding reductions are expected to be far-reaching. Between 7.5 million and 12.6 million people could be left without access to critical protection services. As resources for communities and protection partners become increasingly constrained, there is a heightened risk of shifting from proactive to reactive response modalities, which would make it significantly harder to address emerging threats to life before they escalate.

SEVERE DECLINE IN PEOPLE REACHED, WITH PEOPLE-CENTERED SERVICES, OUTREACH, AND ADVOCACY EFFORTS MOST AFFECTED. DETERIORATION OF
OUTREACH AND SUPPORT
FOR PROTECTION SYSTEMS,
INCLUDING CASE
MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL
SUPPORT NETWORKS.

SHARP DECLINE IN
COMMUNITY-BASED
PROTECTION AND IN
INSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS
- STRENGTHENING.

DECREASED CAPACITY TO IDENTIFY, ANALYZE AND PREVENT RISKS

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¹⁰ The GPC has categorized these activities into six protection programming modalities and conducted a detailed breakdown analysis of specific interventions. This classification considers whether an activity addresses threats, vulnerabilities, or capacities linked to primary protection risks. Given that protection risks are deeply interrelated, no single intervention can fully mitigate the complexity of harm, highligting the importance of using various protection modalities.

Early warning systems, community-based support structures and community-led initiatives—critical tools for safeguarding communities—are at high risk of weakening. With an estimated 68% fewer communities engaged in joint risk analysis, the ability to detect and respond to threats such as forced recruitment, arbitrary detention, and movement restrictions needs to be critically considered.

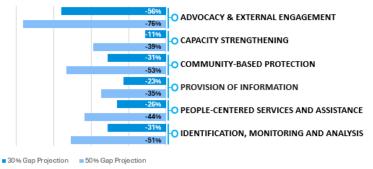


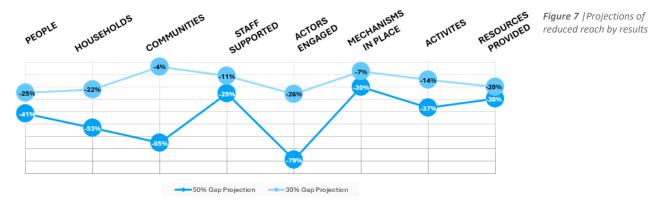
Figure 5 | Projections of reduced reach by protection modalities by scenario

At the same time, frontline humanitarian actors — key enablers of the humanitarian response — may face significant cuts preventing them from sharing their expertise on critical areas of protection, including case management, legal aid or community-based protection. It is expected that between 2,400 and 5,400 fewer frontline, local actors and institution staff will be directly supported.



Community-led protection efforts, which play a crucial role in reducing vulnerabilities, are also projected to decline, with between 4,400 and 5,000 communities at risk of losing critical support to strengthen their own protection. Beyond immediate service delivery, the ability to advocate for and engage on protection-focused policy changes is projected to be severely impacted, specifically due to a significant reduction in the capacity to engage non-protection humanitarian actors and support aimed at strengthening institutions and systems.

Furthermore, access to critical protection-related information—a vital resource for communities navigating risks—may become more increasingly limited, potentially impacting between 2.3 and 3.5 million people. This reduction in information flow could heighten risks related to misinformation, exploitation, and restricted access to legal protections. While these are just projections, the complementary analysis of the protection activities included in the life-saving objectives of HNRPs in 19 countries raises concerns over the continuation of critical actions to prevent, address and mitigate protection risks.



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In line with the Emergency Relief Coordinator's Humanitarian Reset agenda, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) have been tasked to re-prioritize their response, including through a focus on life-saving interventions. In practice, the inclusion of the different protection interventions in the life-saving Strategic Objective (SO) of HNRPs varies from one country to another. While specific activities related to people-centred services and assistance are almost systematically included in life-saving SOs of HNRPs, other critical interventions—such as advocacy, community-based protection, and identification, monitoring, and analysis—are often included in other SOs of the HNRPs, increasing their potential deprioritization during this process. For example:

- 1. People-centred services and assistance is considered in the life-saving SOs of all 19 HNRPs analysed.
- **2.** Community-based protection is only included in life-saving SOs of 8 HNRPs (42%). (DRC, El Salvador, Honduras, Mali, Mozambique Sudan, Syria and Ukraine).
- **3.** Advocacy and external engagement are only included in life-saving SOs of 3 HNRPs (16%) (Colombia, Honduras and Syria).
- **4.** Capacity strengthening is only included in life-saving SOs of 8 HNRPs (42%). (Colombia, DRC, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nigeria, Sudan, Syria).
- **5.** Identification, monitoring and analysis are included in life-saving SOs of 9 HNRPs (47%). (CAR, Colombia, DRC, Honduras, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan and Syria).
- **6.** In only 7 HNRPs (37%) are all protection programming modalities included in life-saving SOs. (Colombia, DRC, Honduras Mali, Nigeria, Sudan and Syria).

COUNTRY	MINOR to MODERATE	SEVERE	EXTREME	TOTAL SEVERE or EXTREME
AFGHANISTAN		1		8
BURKINA FASO		1		9
CAR	3	2		4
COLOMBIA	2	3	1	5
DRC	3	2		6
EL SALVADOR		2		3
GUATEMALA	4			0
HAITI		2	2	2
HONDURAS		1		4
MALI	7	1	1	2
MOZAMBIQUE		2	3	11
NIGERIA	3	2	1	7
SOMALIA	1	4	1	9
SOUTH SUDAN		1		3
SUDAN			3	15
SYRIA		4	1	9
VENEZUELA	2	1	1	3

Figure 8 \mid Number of risks by severity with corresponding activities in HNRP life-saving SOs

The above percentages do not refer to specific activities, but rather to broader core protection modalities that are essential for addressing protection risks. Within these modalities, the GPC is further analyzing specific activities in alignment with the ongoing prioritization process, while also considering the footprint and capacities of partners in each country.

The projections however show already a high and concerning probability that the current Humanitarian Reset may put a strain on certain modalities of protection work that are critical and essential to effectively reduce protection risks. As such, the current reprioritization of HNRPs, while essential and solid, must be accompanied by a collective approach to protection risks reduction. According to the GPC analysis, life-saving Strategic Objectives (SOs) related protection activities address 33% of protection risks classified as severe and 11% of those classified as extreme¹¹, including gender-based violence,

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¹¹ The analysis is based on the comparison between the list of protection activities in each life-saving SOs, and the primary protection risks they address. This initial mapping has been correlated with the protection risks severity assessed by protection clusters in country. These percentages should not be interpreted as an absolute measure of coverage, as protection risks are rarely addressed in isolation. Many activities within life-saving SOs are designed to mitigate multiple risks simultaneously, making it complex to directly attribute them to a single risk. Additionally, protection programming often extends beyond the formal classification of life-saving objectives, meaning that critical interventions addressing extreme and severe risks may be reflected under broader response efforts.

Protection Risks and Funding Analysis

the presence of explosive ordnance/mines, child recruitment, movement restrictions & displacement, psychosocial distress, and theft & forced eviction. However, many key activities to address protection risks are either in the protection-specific SOs or fall outside the scope of HNRPs. While certain protection activities in the life-saving SOs directly contribute to preventing or reducing specific protection risks, the interconnected nature of threats and the factors that make populations vulnerable or resilient, means that many activities are crucial in addressing multiple risks simultaneously (See Annex for a general overview).

The current humanitarian landscape is marked by severe and compounding protection risks across multiple crises, underscoring the critical need to keep these protection efforts central to humanitarian priorities. Protection risks cannot be sidelined in resource allocation discussions —they must be fully integrated into the global humanitarian response, ensuring that responses are aligned with the urgency and scale of the threats faced by affected populations. Investing in protection is not merely about sustaining existing efforts; it is about adapting to complex operational environments—where failure to act now will have profound long-term consequences for stability, dignity, and resilience.

Prioritizing activities within the life-saving objectives of HNRPs is an effective and principled first measure in responding to sudden funding cuts. However, the analysis underscores the urgent need to also consider context-specific interventions that address the immediate impacts of the most severe protection risks. Violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation—core threats to life, safety, and dignity—demand that prioritization and the Humanitarian Reset be guided not only by formal life-saving classifications, but also by the severity of risks identified through national and subnational protection priorities and the insights of those closest to the response.

ANNEX

Protection Activities Addressing Multiple Protection Risks in HNRP Life-Saving Strategic Objectives

The activities listed below were identified through the Global Protection Cluster's analysis of 2025 HNRPs, using a methodology that cross-referenced protection programming under life-saving objectives with the severity of the 15 globally agreed protection risks. Activities were included where they demonstrated relevance across multiple risk categories—meaning they contribute to mitigating, preventing, or responding to more than one protection risk simultaneously.

- People-Centered Services and Assistance: individual protection assistance (including cash and in-kind support), mobile protection, emergency protection assistance, case management, hotlines and referrals, child protection services, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for GBV survivors and children, and risk prevention and mitigation.
- **Community-Based Protection:** community early warning mechanisms, community-based protection initiatives, strengthening social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, and supporting community-led protection efforts.
- Communication and Provision of Information: awareness-raising on protection, child protection, and GBV, risk
 awareness, information campaigns on protection and legal issues, and dissemination of critical child protection
 information.
- Capacity Strengthening: training on human rights and protection issues, institutional capacity building, socioeconomic support, and strengthening community resilience and response mechanisms.
- Advocacy and External Engagement: negotiation and advocacy for peaceful coexistence and social cohesion, advocacy campaigns, strategic partnerships for protection, strengthening collaboration and policy influence.
- **Identification, Monitoring, and Analysis:** protection monitoring and assessments, tracking incidents and human rights violations, monitoring child protection risks, and conducting participatory assessments with communities through mobile and outreach teams.

The Global Protection Cluster has developed a more detailed breakdown of these activities by country and by risk type. While this disaggregated analysis is currently being revised in the context of the broader humanitarian prioritization exercise, it remains available to support strategic planning, coordination, and advocacy efforts.