



Protection Matters: Saving Lives and Reducing the Harms Faced by People Amidst Humanitarian Crises

GPC Statement | 2 April 2025

"As a protection sector, we are confronted with unprecedented crises driven by growing violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, escalating protection risks and severe funding cuts. The communities we serve, and our local and national partners, are most impacted by these seismic shifts. We are calling for steadfast support for the critical work protection actors are doing as part of life-saving emergency response efforts around the world." - Josep Herreros, Global Protection Cluster Coordinator

When we ask the communities we serve what protection means to them, the response is clear: protection is about people's safety, rights and dignity. This is at the core of our purpose as a humanitarian sector. And yet, despite the reality that most humanitarian crises and related needs are driven by protection risks (comprising violence, coercion, deliberate deprivation) and that protection is at the center of our shared aims, our collective ability to address these risks and provide life-saving protection for those who need it most is now under serious strain.

In 2025, 168 million people require protection due to new and escalating conflicts, protracted crises and disasters around the world. At the same time, the overall funding gap for the Protection Sector is projected to worsen from 51% in 2024 to 67% in 2025. Protection programs in major crises such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the occupied Palestinian territories, Myanmar and Sudan are experiencing major reductions in funding for protection interventions, ranging from 53% to 84%. Protection partners are having to drastically cut back their operations or even close their doors. As a result, we expect that millions of people facing severe violence and abuse will not receive life-saving protection assistance.

These funding gaps affect essential protection services such as family tracing and reunification for children separated from their parents, safety and support for survivors of gender-based violence, stopping forced evictions which leave people homeless and exposed to (further) violence and displacement and clearing explosive ordnance to prevent death and serious injury. The protection-focused negotiations and advocacy that help change the behaviours of perpetrators of harm and drive compliance with and accountability for violations of international law will also be diminished. The community-based networks and grassroots organizations—such as protection committees and women's groups— that form the backbone of monitoring and early-warning systems and emergency protection interventions, are particularly affected. Tragically, we know the decrease in such protection-focused interventions will directly compromise people's safety while also increasing their reliance on negative coping mechanisms, such as child labour, and their exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Protection is an enabler of effective humanitarian action: it enhances access to conflict zones, ensures those most in need are reached and amplifies the impact of other sectors' life-saving efforts to deliver food, healthcare and shelter. Protection is also a core driver of the transition from crisis to solutions, supporting people's access to the essential services, opportunities and rights they need to recover and rebuild.

As the Global Protection Cluster (GPC), we remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting and championing this vital work. We will continue to coordinate and enhance protection in humanitarian action, with a focus on strengthening emergency protection response efforts grounded in localized leadership and capacities. Through our convening and collective advocacy capacity, together with our Areas of Responsibility (AoRs) specialized in Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence, Housing, Land and Property and Mine Action, and expert partners, we will continue to work together to ensure the most vulnerable people can live with improved safety and rights.

To sustain this urgent protection work, we need renewed commitment and action. Humanitarian country teams and leadership at all levels must ensure that protection remains central and is operationally prioritized, based on close consultation and decision-making with affected communities and national partners. Prioritization must be accompanied by the resources and leadership needed to address protection risks. We also urge donors to continue their essential support to protection efforts, including through flexible funding and robust humanitarian diplomacy, recognizing the lifesaving, enabling and amplifying impact of protection.

In these challenging times, let us reaffirm our commitment to ensuring the people who face the greatest risks and vulnerabilities amidst humanitarian crises are supported to stay safe and rebuild their lives.

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