

# Leveraging Protection Risk Analysis for Collective Impact

Outcomes and Strategic Reflections from the HNPW 2025 Protection Risk Analysis Session

## Introduction

In the face of an increasingly constrained humanitarian environment, the imperative to place protection at the center of humanitarian action has never been more urgent. At the 2025 Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW), a critical session titled [Leverage Protection Risk Analysis to Inform Joined-Up Collective Actions](#) has been organized by the Global Protection Cluster (GPC), OCHA, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The session brought together donors, frontline practitioners, analysts, and coordination actors to reaffirm that protection cannot be siloed — protection risk analysis must inform all elements of the humanitarian response if the humanitarian sector is to deliver on the actions set forth by the Emergency Relief Coordinator’s (ERC) humanitarian reset.

The session began by underscoring the real-world consequences of protection risks and failures—violence, displacement, the denial of basic rights—and the critical role Protection Risk Analysis (PRA) can play in preventing and mitigating them. **Josep Herreros (GPC)** emphasized that PRA is not a technical exercise but a foundational mechanism that enables the system to prioritize life-saving interventions through evidence-based decision-making. By focusing on people at risk and, of those, on people in need of humanitarian assistance, PRA introduces a crucial “exposure layer” that aligns closely with the ERC’s call to target resources more strategically, based on greatest needs and where the greater risks are.

From the donor perspective, **Ambassador Dominik Stillhart (SDC)**, voiced growing concern that protection is at risk of being sidelined in humanitarian planning and financing. He emphasized that protection is not only a moral imperative, but also one of the most effective ways to reduce humanitarian needs. As such, protection must not be treated as optional in the current reprioritization. Dominik Stillhart stressed that donors have a responsibility not only to fund responses, but also to contribute with their capacities. For Switzerland, protection risk analysis plays a central role across its three functions: as a donor, it informs where resources are directed; as an advocate, it strengthens engagement in multilateral fora; and as an actor, it helps identify risks that require political or legal response beyond the humanitarian scope. He also called for greater investment in embedding protection expertise at the leadership level to reinforce the system’s ability to lead on protection. This, he concluded, is key to realizing the strategic recalibration envisioned in the ERC’s humanitarian reset.

## Field practice

On the technical front, the session showcased some of the latest advancements in Protection Risks Analysis. **Francesco Michele (GPC)** presented how, over the past four years, the GPC and its partners have developed a standardized framework that identifies [15 core protection risks](#) and [conducts subnational assessment to determine the severity of those risks](#). In its current form, PRA includes not only a granular mapping of risk exposure but also estimated [numbers of people at risk](#). The methodology has been used in various operational settings allowing actors to sharpen prioritization, improve targeting and increase accountability across sectors. In Northwest Syria, protection risk findings were used to directly inform food assistance strategies through inter-cluster coordination. In Venezuela, joint PRA workshops resulted in tangible changes to funding flows, including Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Fund (CBPF) allocations, and ensured protection objectives were integrated into the multi-sector HNRP, while informing the current re-prioritization.

This alignment between protection analysis and strategic planning was highlighted by **Natthinee Rodraksa (OCHA)**, who emphasized that PRA plays a critical role in the Joint and Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF). Protection contributes directly to intersectoral analysis; is a constitutive part of the definition of People in Need and reflected in the guidance on what constitutes a humanitarian need. Protection is also one of the outcome indicators, particularly for violations of human rights and IHL—providing a crucial reality check in intersectoral analysis. She clarified that HCs and HCTs are asked to rapidly reprioritize targets and funding within HNRPs to identify the most life-saving activities for those with the greatest needs, emphasizing this is not a revision of existing HNRPs. She explained two proposed criteria as a starting point for reprioritization: the JIAF intersectional severity levels 4 and 5 to identify priority locations and populations for humanitarian action, and activity type, focusing on life-saving activities that include protection, whether as a dedicated objective or integrated across sectors. While there were concerns that a focus on 'life-saving' might compromise quality programming, analysis of 724 activities in the HNRPs shows these reprioritized activities are comprehensive, covering all sectors, from rehabilitation of water supply systems to GBV, child protection, and education.

What emerged from these examples is that PRA enables a strategic targeting of multi-sector resources and a realignment of multi-sector objectives, rooted in a deep understanding of the specific threats faced by affected populations. Critically, it also facilitates intersectoral dialogue—another core component of the ERC's Humanitarian Reset—by ensuring that protection is seen not as a separate domain, but as a unifying lens through which other sectoral actions can be evaluated and prioritized. Francesco Michele also underlined that identifying the number of people exposed to protection risks opens new possibilities for collective action and could be further considered in the ongoing Reset discussions. From a field practice perspective, both IRC and WFP offered compelling illustrations of PRA in action. **Katie Grant (IRC)** presented how, since 2020, IRC has developed joint analysis methodologies integrating gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, safety risks, and community feedback systems. In particular, a collaborative project with Johns Hopkins University, Insecurity Insight, Physicians for Human Rights, and OCHA engaged a range of health and protection sectoral stakeholders to apply PRA to examine violence against healthcare in South Sudan, Nigeria, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The findings not only informed operational adjustments, including the deployment of psychosocial support, but also shaped violence reduction and prevention advocacy strategies and protection components in Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs). What became evident is that PRA enables organizations to uncover root causes, develop localized risk mitigation measures, and define protection outcomes that are both measurable and responsive to contextual realities.

**Andrea Breslin and Federica Mastroianni (WFP)** demonstrated how PRA supports risk-informed programming and contributes to safe, accountable, equitable access to assistance. Across its operations, WFP has adapted its targeting based on PRA findings, as seen in Lebanon, where cash delivery strategies were redesigned to reduce intercommunal tensions. In Chad, the shift from status-based to vulnerability-based assistance helped defuse tensions between displaced and host communities. And in Ukraine, PRA-informed adaptations led to home-delivery of cash for persons with disabilities who had challenges to access bank accounts. These experiences speak directly to the core commitments of the humanitarian reset: relevance, impact, and principled programming.

## Insights and potential recommendations

The session laid out a series of potential recommendations for further discussion in support of the ongoing reprioritization process underway in many humanitarian settings. Protection must be recognized as both a goal and a critical pathway to achieving life-saving outcomes. Donors and humanitarian leaders are called upon to uphold protection as a core pillar of humanitarian response. This means resisting the temptation to frame protection as a support function or technical specialty. Instead, protection outcomes must be used to guide decision-making on resource allocation, reprioritization, and programmatic design.

Furthermore, the operationalization of PRA should extend beyond the confines of the Protection Cluster. It must be embraced as a common framework that guides joint analysis and collective prioritization. This involves not only improving interoperability between analytical tools and clusters, but also investing in analytical capacity at the local level. Frontline actors and affected communities must be seen not only as data providers but as analysts and strategists in their own right.

Within the humanitarian sector transformation, the ability to track protection outcomes—rather than simply counting outputs—is essential. This shift requires dedicated investments in analytical systems, monitoring frameworks, and joint coordination platforms that allow for continuous, adaptive analysis in real time.

In her closing reflections, **Sara Brodd (Sida)** stressed that if protection is to live up to its ambitions, it must define and act on a limited set of protection priorities in each context. This means choosing the risks that can be meaningfully addressed, funding pooled services and functions rather than fragmented projects, and measuring success by the extent to which populations are less exposed to harm, rather than by how much assistance is delivered. As we confront rising needs alongside shrinking resources, she reminded participants that addressing protection risks is not only life-saving, but also essential to preventing the very conditions that drive humanitarian needs. Without sustained respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, the sector will remain trapped in an ever-expanding cycle of crisis response.

She also stressed that reducing protection risks must become a central consideration across all sectors—from food and health to shelter and education—not as an add-on, but as a strategic lens that shapes advocacy, programming, and diplomacy alike. The capacity to conduct protection risk analysis must therefore be maintained and reinforced, regardless of how the humanitarian system is reconfigured in the coming years. It is not just a tool but a strategic capability that aligns the humanitarian system with its protection obligations. In her final remarks, she called on all actors—donors, agencies, field partners, and coordinators—to take shared responsibility not just for generating protection data, but for using it meaningfully to guide collective prioritization and response.

The session closed with a strong sense of shared commitment. Across all contributions—from donors, cluster leads, and country-based actors—there was consensus that protection risk analysis must not only be maintained but firmly integrated into the core of the humanitarian system. Participants emphasized that reducing protection risks is not a peripheral aim—it is central to both saving lives and reducing humanitarian needs. These insights reflect a shared understanding emerging from the discussion regarding important aspects to consider for prioritizing, funding, and operationalizing protection in the months ahead. Protection risk reduction must be recognized as both life-saving and needs-reducing. Protection must be treated as a strategic priority, not an optional service.

- Protection Risk Analysis should inform humanitarian diplomacy, funding decisions, and strategic engagement, and support humanitarian partners' efforts to identify and reduce protection risks at country level.
- Flexible and core funding is essential to enable protection actors to maintain analysis functions and uphold the Centrality of Protection.
- Support to locally led action must be accelerated by funding local actors directly, meaningfully and including them in decision-making processes. Local organizations provide context-specific risk analysis and are key to early, preventive action.
- The data on who is exposed to protection risks must be better used. Risk exposure could further guide response planning, reprioritization and Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) development across all sectors.
- Finally, human and financial resources should be pooled to sustain core analysis functions that underpin severity-based planning and ensure protection risks drive collective prioritization.