



Global Protection Forum

What's Next? Advancing Protection in Prioritized Humanitarian Action

10 – 14 November 2025

Concept Note

I. Introduction

Each year, the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) organizes a virtual Global Protection Forum with partners and field coordinators to review emerging challenges, lessons, and opportunities in relation to the protection of communities affected by conflict and disaster. The public Forum is open to the broader protection and community and serves as a platform for dialogue on current protection priorities. In 2024, the Forum convened more than 2,000 online participants. The 2025 Global Protection Forum will take place from 10-14 November 2025, through an online platform with simultaneous interpretation in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

II. Objectives

In 2025, funding cuts, the Humanitarian Reset and “hyper-prioritized” humanitarian responses have come at a time when humanitarian crises are marked by rising levels of violence against civilian populations, including women and children, and disregard for international law and humanitarian principles. Most humanitarian crises and needs continue to be driven by protection risks, while life-saving, specialized protection responses and collective action to achieve protection outcomes are put under serious stress.

The Global Protection Forum aims to reflect on how we position protection in such a challenging context and how protection is prioritized – in 2025 and beyond – in humanitarian action. It will build on the priority themes and lessons that have shaped protection dialogue and engagement over the past year.

In particular, the Forum in 2025 will:

- Strengthen shared understanding of current trends, challenges and opportunities in the protection sector in light of humanitarian prioritization, and aggravated funding situation.
- Identify opportunities and actions to support a stronger, system wide approach to priority protection issues.

III. Programme

This year's Forum will focus on the protection space within the current context of humanitarian prioritization and funding restrictions. The different sessions aim to foster reflection within the protection community on two central dimensions: first, how to ensure that protection remains at the centre of humanitarian responses and beyond; and second, how to build an integrated protection approach that is inclusive. To this end, the Forum will analyse current trends in protection risks and examine the main threats faced by communities, with particular attention to some of the most challenging crises. It will further consider how protection and the voices of affected populations and local actors is included and prioritized in these responses, and what is required to strengthen this.

Session 1: Threats, risks and needs: a global overview of protection in 2025

Monday 10 November, 14.00-15.30 CET

Objective: The opening session will set the tone for collective reflection and action. The session will include an overview of the main outcomes of the Global Protection Update (GPU), highlighting global protection trends and the persistence and evolution of protection risks and threats across crises. It will look into challenges in upholding

international law and protecting civilians and opportunities for collective responsibility and action towards addressing protection risks and threats.

Session 2: Advancing protection in prioritized humanitarian action

Tuesday 11 November, 14.00-15.30 CET

Objective: This session will explore the impact of funding cuts and reforms on the ability of protection and humanitarian actors to effectively address protection risks. The session will reflect on the practical challenges and opportunities that hyper-prioritized responses pose for collective efforts to advance the centrality of protection. Frontline perspectives from different operational contexts will be presented to foster discussion on current and anticipated operational realities, including by reflecting on finding the balance between severity of needs and effectiveness of integrated and specialized responses, and by highlighting issues for local actors who find themselves prioritised in name but not always in practice.

Session 3: Protection and technology: For better and worse. How advancements in technology are changing the protection space

Wednesday 12 November, 14.00-15.30 CET

Objective: Digital technologies and artificial intelligence are drastically changing the global landscape including humanitarian action and modern conflicts. This session will reflect on both the positive and negative uses of technology in humanitarian settings, and how this impacts the protection of civilian populations. The session will look into concrete examples of how technology can exacerbate harm to people including but not limited to drone warfare, misinformation and disinformation or online recruitment, as well as how technologies can support humanitarian organizations, local actors and affected populations in enhancing access to critical and specialized support services.

Session 4: Food and protection crises

Thursday 13 November, 13.00-14.30 CET

Objective: Recognising the links between food insecurity and protection risks, this session will focus on how food security and protection actors can work together to mitigate the protection risks that are driving food insecurity and starvation. The discussion will illustrate how the centrality of protection can work in practice, what results can be achieved, and what more needs to be done to step up collaboration across different sectors of work to reduce the protection risks that drive humanitarian needs.

Session 5: Voices in action: Affected populations at the forefront of decision-making

Thursday 13 November, 14.30-16.00 CET

Objective: The humanitarian reset has placed strong emphasis on the participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs), affected communities and local actors in the planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance. This session will reflect on the meaning and spirit of affected populations / IDP participation in decision-making – what does this mean and how can this be done well? This session will provide comparative perspectives on IDP (including women, youth and minorities) engagement in decision-making within humanitarian responses, nexus and durable solutions frameworks.

Session 6: Justice as protection: Reaffirming rights-based commitments to humanitarian action and beyond

Friday 14 November, 14.00-15.30 CET

Session objective: While the humanitarian reset has pushed towards the hyper-prioritization of life-saving assistance, questions arise of where this leaves us on our long-term responsibilities. With justice and accountability being two foundational pillars of rights-based humanitarian action, are we in danger of losing sight of advancing human rights, legal protection and justice for people who have experienced violence and displacement? Anchored in the roots of protection action, this session will reflect on how legal protection directly relates to rights to food, shelter, health and education in humanitarian settings and how we balance long-term protection accountability and justice in humanitarian action, including at a time of accelerated humanitarian exits and transitions. It will draw upon experiences from various actors and contexts.

IV. Parameters for Sessions

- Kindly note that exact title for each session may be adjusted by the sessions' lead(s) and that the list of contributors / speakers is to be confirmed later.
- Leads for each session have been identified. Additional co-leads can be identified to support the lead in organizing the session.
- Each session has 1 or more lead organisation (members of the GPC Strategic Advisory Group or partners), which have been identified. Each session lead(s) is/are responsible for shaping the session's content and ensuring a diverse representation of speakers and partners.
- Each session must include contributions from local actors (co-organisation, moderation or panellist), and examples and contributions from country operations (including by protection clusters and partners)
- Session will consider, where appropriate:
 - Co-hosting and/or opening, closing remarks by a donor or Member State.
 - Interactivity (Mentimeter, etc.).
- Speakers can present in any of the four languages (EN, ES, FR, AR) as interpretation will be simultaneous and two-way.
- Moderators should be strong presenters with experience of managing large audiences and presentations in multiple languages, supported by interpretation. Previous Forum sessions have attracted between 250-500 participants from around the world.
- Sessions should prioritize panel discussions and/or conversation-style formats (rather than presentations) to enhance engagement between panellists and with the audience.
- All sessions are public, recorded and will be posted on the GPC website.

V. Call for Expression of Interest

The concept note is shared with the wider protection community and other relevant actors.

Interested organisations can propose specific, concrete contributions to any of the sessions (i.e. possible co-leading role, proposing speakers, other forms of contributions to the preparations of the sessions) by reaching out to Marie-Emilie Dozin (dozin@unhcr.org) and Johan Vigne (vigne@unhcr.org) **by Sunday 12 October 2025**, who will ensure coordination with the different sessions' lead organizers