



Global Protection Forum 2025

Concept Note

Session 2: Advancing Protection in Prioritized Humanitarian Action

Tuesday 11 November, 14.00-15.30 CET

Lead/Co-Lead: GPC, UNFPA, GPC Community-Led Protection Task Team

Background

In March 2025, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) announced the launch of the Humanitarian Reset – a system-wide process aimed at increasing the efficiency, agility, and impact of humanitarian action. The initiative addresses a range of reform priorities, including localisation, Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) prioritisation, and enhanced focus on life-saving actions.

The Humanitarian Reset is unfolding against the backdrop of severe funding constraints for the entire humanitarian assistance globally. Due to the magnitude, gravity and suddenness of funding cuts in the first quarter of 2025, OCHA launched an hyper-prioritized humanitarian response plan in June 2025 to address the most urgent life-saving needs in acute crises.

The Protection Cluster identified 24.7 million people to be most urgently targeted with assistance and protection. This represents just 14.7% of the 168 million people in need of protection globally – leaving 143.3 million people behind. To reach these people, US \$ 1.2 billion need to be urgently mobilized for the protection response. As of 31 August 2025, the Protection Cluster is only funded at 23% out of the initial US \$3.2 billion requested. In this context, protection actors – especially local actors, women-led organisations and community-based organisations and individuals at the forefront of the protection response – have been put under extreme pressure to deliver essential, life-saving interventions while sustaining quality, safe and specialized services for those most at risk.

It should also be reminded that in 2025, most humanitarian crises are fundamentally protection crises, driven by violations of international law and patterns of abuse, violence, coercion, deliberate deprivation, exploitation, and exclusion. These factors not only generate immediate protection needs but also exacerbate other humanitarian challenges, making protection considerations indispensable for any effective humanitarian response.

In such context, it has become more essential than ever to ensure that protection is prioritized – as a specialized response and as a central piece of the entire humanitarian response, recognizing that mitigating protection risks reduces humanitarian needs.

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, and what it means for people at risk. The session will reflect on the practical challenges and opportunities that hyper-prioritized responses

pose for collective efforts to advance the centrality of protection and for specialized protection responses. 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 prioritized in name but not always in practice.

Guiding questions

- What impact have foreign aid cuts had on the protection response, including for local actors, and how has the Humanitarian Reset shaped how we think of response prioritisation in 2025?
- How have Protection Clusters and protection partners reacted to hyper-prioritisation efforts, what are their observations and what are the reflections on meeting acute needs while ensuring quality protection responses?
- Are there any risks in hyper-prioritisation for how we view protection, and how does it impact our collective responsibility to prevent and address protection risks?
- Reflecting internally, protection actors understand the need to consolidate resources and capitalise on presence. For some partners this has moved them towards integrated protection. For others, they are concerned about the potential loss of specialised interventions. How can protection maximise our joint capacity, while safeguarding specialised services?
- A positive outcome of the reset discussions is the collective acknowledgement of the importance of local actors and communities. How have local response actors experienced the Humanitarian Reset, and are we living up to the localised principles that have been championed over the last period? To what extent local actors and affected populations influence decisions?
- What has the protection community learnt from the 2025 prioritization process? How do we address these issues in 2026 and beyond?

Agenda

The session will include some introductory remarks and observations from key partners. The discussion will stock take the experiences of the Humanitarian Reset for protection actors and look forward to areas that require collective action and collective advocacy in 2026.

Time	Component and Guiding Questions
14.00 – 14.06	Introductory remarks
14.06 – 14.15	Moderator remarks
14.15 – 14.30	Navigating the Reset
14.30– 14.50	How partners are adapting
14.50 – 15.15	Looking ahead
15.15 – 15.25	Remarks from the floor
15.25 – 15.30	Closing Remarks