PHOTO: UNHCR - Protection Information Management allows cluster partners to effectively communicate with those impacted and to interpret individual requirements for reducing protection risks or alleviating the effects of violations through tools that aid in analysis, advocacy, and support programming. The image above illustrates an individual-level vulnerability assessment of people displaced by the conflict in Upper Nile State in 2025, which was followed by evidence-based advocacy, donor-supported programming, and the provision of protection services, including C4P.

BACKGROUND

The Protection Cluster in South Sudan (PC SSD) is notable for having a high number of participating organizations globally, with over 380 listed as partners. Among these, more than 110 organizations actively engage in daily coordination and the provision of protection services to individuals in need.

This cluster encounters numerous challenges, necessitating diverse approaches to service delivery, advocacy, and collaboration with government entities, as well as alignment with durable solutions, development, and peace initiatives. The complex backdrop of ongoing conflict, natural disaster-related displacement, the return of refugees and returnees from Sudan and other areas,

health crises like disease outbreaks, and an acute food crisis, all exacerbated by a significant economic and political turmoil, creates an extremely challenging environment for protection actors.

Given the intricate nature of the crisis in South Sudan, the nation's humanitarian and development framework is frequently presented as a piloting ground for global coordination and assessment methodologies. From the viewpoint of the Protection Cluster, a significant impact and a primary workstream is the global piloting of the area-based coordination model (ABC), which unifies humanitarian, refugee response, and developmental streams into a cohesive, localized coordination model.

Notably, the piloting of the revised and hyper-prioritized Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) methodology is also being tested in the country under the leadership of OCHA, with substantial involvement from various clusters. Lastly, the Global Protection Cluster's flagship Protection Analytical Framework (PAF) and the first globally operational Protection Risk Monitoring System (PRMS) have been developed, piloted, and are continuously being enhanced in South Sudan.

The ongoing reform of the United Nations, piloting(s) in South Sudan along with challenges posed by funding reductions and the complete integration of the cluster's areas of responsibility into a single entity, has led to the emergence of new working methods at all levels.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT CONSOLIDATION

The current situation presents a significant challenge to the Information Management (IM) capabilities of the Protection Cluster (PC), which is tasked with managing IM systems and analyses that exceed typical clustered operations. Traditionally, protection clusters rely on multiple IM resources allocated by lead agencies. However, budget cuts and organizational restructuring in South Sudan have severely impacted the cluster's capacity to maintain regular operations and effectively support global systems and strategic enhancements.

In response to these challenges, the PC SSD has implemented various measures aimed at strengthening systems across the cluster and enhancing the cohesion and multifunctionality of data gathering, analysis, and advocacy product placement. The cluster's strategy includes reliance on limited IM support from Mine Action and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) workstreams, incorporating specific tasks from the Mine Action Information Management System (MAIMS) and the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS). Additionally, the cluster coordination will benefit from IM expertise provided by UNHCR, although this will not reach full operational capacity.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Maintenance of a functional Protection Risk Monitoring System and systematic upgrades in collaboration with the Global Protection Cluster for deployment in other operations as well.

2. Localization of PAF and PRMS to effectively serve as a primary knowledge base for ABC coordination, durable solution strategic planning (addressing the root causes of protection risks), and the Centrality of Protection strategic direction by all humanitarian and development actors in the country.

3. Development of a functional data and analysis system at the analytical indicator level (aligned with the revised global methodology embedded in JIAF 2.0), aimed not only at a single annual Humanitarian Needs Overview (part of HNRP) but also to provide regular updates on needs throughout the year to support local crisis mitigations, including at the ABC level.

4. Maintenance and enhancement of protection coordination tools (5W, Service Mapping, etc.) at both national and sub-national (ABC) levels.

5. Development of overall and workstream-specific advocacy and strategic planning tools and templates (GBV, child protection, mine action, disability inclusion, etc.) to ensure visibility and strategic emphasis on specific protection topics within the common protection system.

6. Explore and capitalize on IM linkages with development, peace and durable solutions actors, mainly with the ABC agenda, primarily to mainstream protection and strengthen PRMS as source, and to ensure clear controls to ensure the safe and centralized management of protection data by the Protection Cluster

ACTIVITIES

As part of the PROMO Working Group, **improve the PRMS system**, particularly by expanding the data landscape to include qualitative data and enhancing the application of PRMS analysis across a broader range of advocacy initiatives.

- Facilitate the publication of at least 26 bi-weekly protection updates, 12 versions of the PRMS dashboard, 3 trimesterly thematic Spotlight documents, 2 Protection Analytical Updates, and deliver at least quarterly internal briefings on protection for HCT, RCO, Donors, and UNMISS.

- Organize 12 online training sessions focused on PRMS data gathering tools and 6 sessions dedicated to the analysis dashboard.

- In 2026, the PC SSD plans to establish a strategic partnership with REACH to a) guarantee KII and FDG coverage in deprioritized counties, b) integrate pertinent REACH data to enhance the PRMS data spectrum, c) perform in-depth analyses on topics identified by PROMO, and d) improve the usability of PRMS within NAWG analysis and IRNA.

- Create and provide training on a PRMS-relevant household-level assessment, either as a standalone tool or integrated within IRNA or ISNA.

- Evaluate the current PRMS Expert Tool (GP, CP, and GBV), engage stakeholders, build a network of field-level experts, and ensure the data collection system operates effectively to enrich the PRMS data landscape.

- Assist the GPCs in their efforts to enhance AI-supported qualitative analysis.

Establish **PROMO working groups at the ABC level** in up to four locations, which are responsible for offering strategic support and coordination based on localized risk assessments, needs evaluations, and reach data analysis along with recommendations.

- Utilizing the mapping of existing protection actors, ensure their capacity to advise ABC leadership on localized protection risks and issues needing address.
- Conduct comprehensive training sessions on PRMS and PAF tools, focusing particularly on enhancing area capabilities through detailed drilldowns.

A functional data and analysis system that will support annual **Humanitarian Needs Overviews** and provide continuous updates to aid local crisis mitigation.

- Create a functional data and analysis system at the analytical indicator level, aligned with the updated global methodology in JIAF 2.0. This system aims to support not only a single annual Humanitarian Needs Overview (part of HNRP) but also to provide ongoing updates on needs throughout the year to assist in local crisis mitigation, including at the ABC level.

- The system envisages the revival of the PRMS Expert tool gathered data, data from HH-level assessments and AI enhanced analysis of qualitative reports as data baselines.

Improvements to protection coordination tools at both national and sub-national levels are being planned, along with the creation of advocacy and strategic planning templates tailored for specific protection areas.

- Develop the 2026 5W KOBO data collection tool and update the related Power BI Dashboard to incorporate a restructured cluster framework and a matrix of common and specific indicators.

- Establish a template for advocacy and reporting notes specific to workstreams that consolidate achievements, risk evaluations, and qualitative data. This will be in line with global cluster AI initiatives and can function as independent documents or as parts of the cluster's regular advocacy publications (PAU, Spotlight, ad-hoc).

- Create the 2026 iteration of the Protection Cluster Strategy measuring matrix.

- Collaborate with OCHA to formulate an HC Protection Strategy measuring matrix.

Strengthening **IM linkages with developmental and peace actors** to reinforce protection integration into the ABC agenda.

- Actively support data collation of ABC Roadmaps, particularly in Upper Nile, to ultimately ensure positioning of protection risks (root causes) mitigation based on PRMS assessments and advocacy to foster linkages to the humanitarian response.