



Terms of Reference
GPC Anti-Trafficking Task Team
July 2026 – August 2027

Background

Trafficking in persons is increasingly documented across humanitarian crises as a systemic and predictable protection risk, rather than an isolated byproduct. Conflict, disasters and displacement consistently erode community safeguards, disrupt livelihoods and increase unsafe mobility, creating conditions in which trafficking risks emerge and intensify. Trafficking in persons is one of the 15 core protection risks monitored and tracked by the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) and country level Protection Clusters. Latest available data shows varying levels of risk severity across operations, including one operation identifying trafficking as an extreme risk, three as severe and eleven as moderate¹; these trends confirm that trafficking is not context-specific, but a recurring feature of crisis environments requiring a more systematic response.

Protection analyses across contexts consistently identify forms of exploitation, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced and child marriage, and child recruitment, as major risks affecting displaced and conflict-affected populations. These risks are often closely interlinked with broader protection concerns, including gender-based violence (GBV), forced recruitment and other forms of exploitation.

Yet despite growing recognition, a persistent response gap remains. A stock-taking review conducted by the former GPC anti-trafficking task team in 2023² confirmed that while trafficking is increasingly reflected in Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRP), it is not systematically addressed in practice. Protection Clusters report limited technical guidance, absence of common standards, inconsistent screening and referral pathways, unclear roles and coordination mechanisms, and continued reliance on individual initiatives. Resource constraints, high staff turnover and limited specialized capacity further constrain the ability of operations to move from analysis to action. As a result, victims and populations at risk continue to be overlooked, and progress made to date risks being fragmented or lost.

This response gap is particularly critical in the context of ongoing humanitarian coordination reforms under the IASC Humanitarian Reset. While these reforms aim to streamline coordination and improve efficiency, they also risk diluting attention to cross-cutting but specialized protection risks such as trafficking, unless supported by clear standards and technical expertise.

To address this gap, the Global Protection Cluster will re-establish the Anti-Trafficking Task Team (ATTT) for a period of one year (July 2026 – August 2027) under tripartite co-leadership between the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for

¹ GPC Global Protection Update, October 2025: <https://globalprotectioncluster.org/publications/2347/reports/global-protection-update/global-protection-update-protection-prioritised>

Refugees (UNHCR) and Plan International. In line with the GPC mandate, the ATTT will only focus on contexts of internal displacement, aligned with the scope of work of Protection Clusters.

Specific Aims of the Anti-Trafficking Task Team

Building on the achievements of the former GPC Anti-Trafficking Task Team³ and the needs for support and guidance raised by several country Protection Clusters, the ATTT will focus on the development and field-testing of a concise set of **Minimum Anti-Trafficking Operational Actions** for Protection Clusters and partners, to be implemented in **2–3 high-risk pilot operations**, alongside the provision of **targeted technical support to country operations / protection clusters** to strengthen their response to trafficking in persons.

The Operational Actions will build on and complement existing inter-agency resources, including the [2020 GPC Introductory Guide to Anti-Trafficking Action in Internal Displacement Contexts](#), in response to stocktaking findings highlighting limited awareness, uneven uptake, and the need for more operational and context-adapted application of existing guidance.

This deliverable will distil the essential prevention and response measures that any Protection Cluster should adopt from the outset of a crisis, in a context-adapted manner. It will be developed in close collaboration with country teams to ensure practicality and relevance. Key components will include:

- **Identification and screening:** simple, context-adaptable screening indicators and safe-disclosure practices integrated into protection monitoring (with emphasis on do-no-harm and safe, voluntary referrals based on informed consent).
- **Referral and assistance:** model referral pathways linking suspected cases to multi-sector services (shelter, GBV, child protection, legal aid, psychosocial support, among others). Templates for SOPs and referral networks will be provided.
- **Coordination and accountability:** guidance on mapping anti-trafficking actors, forming working groups or task forces (where needed and in line with the streamlined structure of the Protection Cluster), and defining roles across humanitarian, migration and justice actors.
- **Analysis and planning:** direction on integrating trafficking risk analysis into HNRPs and Protection Analysis Updates, including harmonized definitions and indicators.

The Operational Actions will be designed as an integral component of Protection Cluster functioning, with the aim of embedding anti-trafficking considerations into coordination tools, planning processes and partner practices.

These Operational Actions will be tested in **2–3 countries** selected for high vulnerability and cluster readiness. Initial expressions of interest for support have been received from Venezuela, Myanmar and South Sudan, which provide a strong, demand-driven basis for pilot selection. The final selection of country operations will be confirmed at a later stage. In each country, ATTT experts will provide short-term technical support to adapt the Operational Actions to local law and services, train cluster and NGO partners, and refine tools based on operational feedback. This ensures the deliverable is truly country-driven. The pilot countries will serve as learning sites: lessons and practices will be documented in brief field notes for wider dissemination.

³ The GPC Anti-Trafficking Task Team was active until early 2024. As part of its core objective, the Task Team had developed [an Introductory Guide to Anti-Trafficking Action in Internal Displacement Contexts](#).

Throughout, the ATTT will work through Protection Clusters and coordinate with relevant existing mechanisms (national referral bodies, Alliance 8.7 country groups) to leverage resources and avoid duplication.

The ATTT will also serve as the go-to platform for all Protection Clusters requiring technical support and guidance on anti-trafficking actions.

Accountability, Governance & Ways of Working

The operational relationship of the ATTT is with the GPC global team.

The ATTT is formally endorsed by – and therefore accountable to – the GPC Strategic Advisory Group (SAG). It will provide updates / report on its progress to the SAG on a quarterly basis. The final draft of the Operational Actions will be presented for endorsement prior to broader dissemination and use.

The ATTT will operate as a light, demand-driven technical mechanism embedded in the Global Protection Cluster. It will not substitute field operations or create parallel systems; instead, it will provide global standards, coordination support and targeted technical assistance to Protection Clusters and partners, and ensure alignment with the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and other relevant processes and tools.

The ATTT will be co-led by IOM, UNHCR and Plan International — bringing together system-level coordination, operational expertise and field-based implementation capacity. Each co-lead contributes distinct and mutually reinforcing strengths that are essential to ensuring that anti-trafficking efforts are both technically sound and operationally grounded:

- **IOM** brings extensive operational experience in counter-trafficking across humanitarian, migration and displacement contexts, including the development and application of practical tools, case management approaches and data systems to support safe identification, referral and assistance.
- **UNHCR** provides strong operational expertise in addressing trafficking and leadership within the humanitarian coordination architecture, including through its role as Protection Cluster Lead Agency and its central function in shaping and guiding the integration of protection risks within the humanitarian response.
- **Plan International** contributes strong field presence and expertise in child protection and community-based approaches, with particular emphasis on localization and engagement with national and local actors, including women-led and community-based organizations.

This tripartite co-leadership model ensures that the ATTT is positioned to operate effectively across global, national and local levels. It combines strategic influence within coordination systems, operational and technical depth, and direct engagement with affected communities and frontline responders. Together, the co-leads enable the ATTT to translate existing guidance and commitments into practical, country-adapted approaches, ensuring that anti-trafficking measures are consistently integrated within protection coordination and response efforts across diverse humanitarian contexts.

The co-leads will jointly provide strategic direction and oversight of the pilot, ensuring that the development and validation of the Operational Actions reflect both system-level priorities and

operational realities, while maintaining strong linkages between global coordination and field-level implementation.

Localization will be a core principle of the ATTT's approach. Engagement with national and local actors — including community-based organizations, women-led groups and specialized service providers — will be prioritized throughout the pilot phase. The ATTT will support Protection Clusters in strengthening collaboration with these actors, recognizing their central role in identifying risks, facilitating referrals and delivering protection services.

Membership

The ATTT is open to interested SAG members to join, along with partners working in protection, human rights, anti-trafficking and other relevant fields at country and global levels, based on their capacities and interests. Considerations will be made to ensure a diversity of perspectives, profiles and expertise.

A list of ATTT members, and related contact information, will be maintained by the co-leads and new members can be added at any time, including based on expressed interest of new members or specific outreach by the ATTT co-leads.

Membership is conditional on members' actively engagement in and contributions to the ATTT's key deliverables. Members also commit to respecting any parameters and protocols set up for particular discussions and information sharing, such as when discussions or documents are confidential/private, or where sessions are conducted under Chatham House Rules.

Topline Workplan

Period	Key Outputs and Milestones
July-Aug. 2026	Inception phase and preparatory actions
Phase 1: Sept–Nov 2026	Develop first draft of the Minimum Anti-Trafficking Operational Actions; define and plan technical support to country operations.
Phase 2: Dec 2026–May 2027	Technical support to three selected country-level Protection Clusters (pilot countries 1, 2 and 3); consolidation of learning from pilot countries.
Phase 3 June–August 2027	Validation, finalization and broad dissemination of the Minimum Anti-Trafficking Operational Actions.

Resources

The time-bound ATTT is designed as a light and cost-efficient initiative, focused on the development of the Operational Actions and targeted support to 2–3 pilot operations. The tripartite co-leads will contribute in-kind capacity and explore complementary funding opportunities. IOM and the GPC have secured funds to support the implementation of the core deliverables, while additional fundraising efforts will be considered and leveraging existing GPC structures minimizes additional overhead costs.