Global Protection Cluster

Global Protection Forum 2026

Session 1 – Protection Under Pressure: Protection Capacities, Action and Priorities in a Time of Constraint

Monday 02 November, 14.00–15.30 CET

Objective: The Global Protection Forum will open with an overview of the current global protection landscape, drawing on the (forthcoming) 2026 Global Protection Update and the GPC's Protection Capacities Under Pressure report (and its complementary thematic notes on Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence, Mine Action and Inclusion). The session will examine how shifts in protection capacity (particularly impacting local and national actors), closure of protection service points and spaces, and the erosion of essential norms and principles are affecting the protection of people in crisis. The discussion will explore how protection actors are adapting to these pressures and identify the actions and approaches needed to sustain critical protection outcomes for affected people. It will consider what is required to ensure that the protection needs and risks faced by diverse groups – including women, children, LGBTQI+, older persons, and persons with disabilities, remain visible, understood and prioritized – and to strengthen protection interventions, programming and accountability that uphold the rights of all crisis-affected populations.

Moderator: Megain Daigle, Senior Research Fellow, ODI.

14:00 – 14:10 (10 mins) – Opening reflection by the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection. Frame the global protection landscape and the implications of declining capacities and weakening respect for protection norms.

- What is at stake for people in crisis when protection risks increase while the capacity to prevent and respond to them declines?
- What must remain central to protection action and humanitarian prioritisation in a time of constraint?
- What is at stake when global political pushback undermines gender equality and the rights of all people to live free from discrimination and violence, and why does this matter for the humanitarian imperative and protection?

14:10 – 14:20 (10 mins) – Evidence overview by the GPC Coordinator. Bring together selected findings from the 2026 Global Protection Update and Protection Capacities Under Pressure report, drawing on the complementary thematic notes.

- Where severe protection risks coincide with declining capacity, and what the available evidence tells us about the consequences for affected people.
- How capacity losses affect local and national actors and specialised services, including whose risks may become less visible as monitoring and outreach diminish.
- Why in this global context we need to reassert the critical role of all areas of protection response?

14:20 – 14:30 (10 mins) – Presentation by Corita Tassi, Protection and Gender Thematic Expert, ECHO. Frame the role of donors and members states in this critical conjecture, reflecting upon the current humanitarian landscape and why protection is critical both as enabler for effective humanitarian action and to ensure the dignity and safety of people.

- How can donors and Member States ensure that protection remains central to humanitarian funding and prioritisation, recognising its role in enabling effective assistance and safeguarding people's dignity and safety?
- What funding and policy choices can sustain critical protection capacities, including specialised services and local and national actors, as resources decline and risks intensify?
- How can donors and Member States counter the global political pushback on gender and uphold support for gender equality and GBV prevention and response as essential to principled humanitarian action?

14:30 – 15:20 (50 mins) – Panel discussion including 4 local or national actors.

Guiding questions for the panel:

- What concrete changes are people experiencing as protection capacity declines, and whose risks or access to support are most likely to be overlooked?
- Which adaptations have sustained protection outcomes, and where can adaptation no longer compensate for lost capacity or the erosion of protection norms?
- How can prioritisation draw on protection risks and community feedback while preserving specialised expertise and inclusive access to services?
- What should protection actors, humanitarian leadership and donors do differently now to sustain critical capacities and remain accountable to affected people?

Panellists will provide context specific evidence to the guiding questions on the impacts of the current protection and funding environment on people, adaptations to ensure quality delivery and support, and challenges. The panel will follow with 20 minutes for audience questions and reactions.

- **Nina Zolotykh, Inhulets District Veterans Organization of Kryvyi Rih (Dnipro region), Ukraine** – Build on the Inclusion explanatory note of the GPC Protection Capacities Under Pressure report, to provide a direct account of challenges of the pushback on inclusion, including impact on people, challenges and adaptation to reduced capacities.
- **Fatima Saeed Abdo Al-Muraisi - Head of the Aden Branch of the Yemen Women Union, Yemen** – Frame the findings of the Protection Capacities Under Pressure report, and the specific GBV analytical note, into operational realities, and how is affecting the provision of response, specialized GBV services and the impact of GBV to people in crises.
- **Stephen Oladepo - Rise to Inspire Africa Initiative, Nigeria** – Examples of how they have adapted their child protection work in response to reduced capacity and funding cuts, while maintaining quality standards.
- **Joyseph Sseruwagi, EEA-H, Kenya** Present the challenges of IDPs and local actors supporting IDP, highlighting major impact of the current landscape and reduction in capacities in IDPs vulnerabilities, capacities and access to rights.

15:20 – 15:30 (10 mins) – Closing reflections by Jennifer Chase, GBV global lead GPC. Draw together the main consequences for affected people, the capacities that need to be sustained, and priority actions emerging from the discussion. Identify who should take these actions forward and connect the findings to the Forum's subsequent discussions on collective protection action, technology, access constraints and essential services.