



GLOBAL PROTECTION FORUM 2023

In the Hour of Need: Advancing Prevention and Proactive Protection

23rd October – 2nd November

Concept Note for Virtual Session

Session Title: Civilians pay the highest price: protection centered health interventions to reduce the risk and the impact on civilians affected by attacks against health care.

Main Organisers: IRC, Global Health Cluster, WHO, ICRC

Short Abstract: International humanitarian law is crystal clear: civilian and civilian infrastructure should be protected during armed conflict. In situations of conflict, humanitarian law grants a special status and specific protection to medical services and health staff. However, in 2022, almost 2,000 attacks against the health system were documented in more than 30 countries facing conflict. This type of violence has profound consequences for civilians, by undermining the capacity of health care systems and facilities to provide services. Hospital closures after attacks often force patients to travel great distances to access care, at unaffordable costs for many. Communities in Sudan, South Sudan and Nigeria report that after an attack, they struggle to find information on where else they could go to seek services. The longer-term impact of this violence on affected communities is evident when talking to them. A recent study in Syria shows many pregnant women chose a planned cesarean section over a natural birth, to manage risks and reduce the time spent in an often-targeted health facility.

This session, led by IRC in coordination with the Global Health Cluster, ICRC, WHO and other operational health and protection actors demonstrates how protection-centered health interventions are a key mechanism to prevent harm to populations, or address barriers they face when health care is under attack. The promising practices from contexts such as Yemen, Colombia and South Sudan are useful beyond the topic of attacks against health care, providing broader lessons for collective action to immediately respond to the impact of risks and needs experienced by populations exposed to the horrors of conflict.

Speakers / Moderator:

- Moderator: Jane Mogeni, IRC Protection and Rule of Law Senior Technical Advisor,
- Samira Tika, IRC Whole of Syria Protection Cluster Co-Lead
- Dr. Jose Antonio Bastos Amigo, ICRC Health Coordinator, Colombia
- Dr. Ben Bouquet, Public Health Officer WHO
- Dr. Osan Ghazi Ismail, Public Health Officer WHO Yemen
- Dr. Mukeshkumar Prajapati, Health Cluster Coordinator South Sudan
- Shehu Nanfwang Dasigit, IRC South Sudan
- James Keah UNICOR, South Sudan

Relevant Background Documents:

Health and Protection Joint Operational Framework,

<https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/publications/1270/policy-and-guidance/guidelines/health-and-protection-joint-operational-framework>