Integration of Protection, Gender, and Inclusion and Safeguarding

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE UKRAINE AND IMPACTED COUNTRIES OPERATION

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

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AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
CBF	Capacity Building Fund
CCD	Country Cluster Delegation
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability
CFS	Child Friendly Space
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
DM	Disaster Management
EA	Emergency Appeal
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FP	Focal Point
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HEAT	Hostile Environment Awareness Training
HeOps	Head of Emergency Operations
HNS	Host National Society
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
HSP	Humanitarian Service Point
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMPACT	International Mobilisation and Preparation for ACTion
JD	Job Description
KII	Key Informant Interview
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LL	Lessons Learned
MHPSS	Mental Health & Psycho-Social Support
MOT	Managing Operations Training
NS	National Society
OIAI	Office of Internal Audit and Investigations
PGI	Protection, Gender and Inclusion
PGIiE	Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Emergencies
PMER	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
PNS	Partner National Society
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RACI method	Project Management Tool that helps define roles & responsibilities (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed)

RC	Red Cross
RCRC	Red Cross Red Crescent Movement
RCS	Red Cross Society
RFL	Restoring Family Links
ROE	Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
SADDD	Sex, Age and Disability Disaggregated Data
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SG	Secretary General
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
ToT	Training of Trainers
UIC	Ukraine and Impacted Countries
URCS	Ukrainian Red Cross Society

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Lessons Learned report evaluates the integration of Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) and Safeguarding within the RCRC Movement response to the Ukraine and impacted countries crisis, primarily from the perspective of PGI and Safeguarding experts and focal points from across the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. The IFRC, along with Host National Societies (HNS) and Partner National Societies (PNS), faced immense challenges in scaling up PGI and Safeguarding efforts amid one of Europe's most complex humanitarian crises. Key findings highlight both the significant progress made and the critical gaps that remain in effectively mainstreaming PGI and Safeguarding into emergency operations.

The report identifies initial barriers, including limited awareness and lack of formal systems, tools, and institutional policies across National Societies, which impeded early PGI and Safeguarding implementation. The establishment of PGI focal points, targeted trainings, and dedicated PGI funding were instrumental in overcoming these challenges. Additionally, collaborative efforts through the Ukraine and Impacted Countries PGI and Safeguarding Advisory Group helped foster technical support and coordination across Movement partners, which further strengthened the response.

However, substantial gaps remain in Safeguarding and PGI institutionalisation, particularly in National Society capacity building, policy development, and long-term funding strategies. Challenges such as high staff turnover, limited dedicated PGI resources, and socio-cultural barriers also constrained consistent PGI integration. These issues underscore the need for IFRC and Movement partners to invest in sustainable, well-resourced frameworks that prioritise PGI and Safeguarding from the outset of operations.

Recommendations in this report include ensuring that PGI and Safeguarding are embedded in emergency response planning, establishing clearer accountability structures, and creating dedicated funding mechanisms to support long-term PGI roles. By addressing these needs, IFRC and its partners can build a more inclusive, accountable, and effective humanitarian response network that better safeguards vulnerable populations and meets evolving operational demands.

Recommendations in this report include ensuring that PGI and Safeguarding are embedded in emergency response planning, establishing clearer accountability structures, and creating dedicated funding mechanisms to support long-term PGI roles. A summary of recommendations by theme is provided in the table below, with actionable steps highlighted where possible. For recommendations requiring further work, the use of frameworks like the RACI method can help the leadership of IFRC and Movement partners clarify roles and responsibilities.

Call to Action

It is critical that the strong recommendations in this report lead to immediate and transparent action. The RCRC Movement must commit to implementing these recommendations, ensuring accountability by making progress visible and public. By doing so, stakeholders will not only demonstrate a principled approach to humanitarian action but will also strengthen trust and ensure the safety and inclusion of vulnerable populations in current and future operations. Evaluation is only as impactful as the actions it inspires—let this report be the foundation for meaningful, measurable change.

Summary of Key Insights & Recommendations

Category	Recommendations
Top Recommendations Validated During Lessons Learned Workshop	Recruit the Right People with Strong Soft Skills for PGI Roles
	Advocate and Mobilise Resources for the Creation and Sustainability of NS PGI and Safeguarding Focal Point Roles
	Strengthen Managerial Knowledge and Accountability for PGI and Safeguarding
	Make PGI and Safeguarding Knowledge Mandatory for Deployments
	Mandatory Inclusion and Early Integration of PGI and Safeguarding in Emergency Operations
Human Resources and Staffing	Strengthen Human Resources and Capacity Building
Commitment, Accountability, Institutionalisation	Strengthen Leadership Commitment and Advocacy for PGI and Safeguarding
	Clarify the Role of Safeguarding and Accountability in Organisational Structures
Communication, Language, and Culture	Refine Messaging and Remove Barriers to Understanding PGI and Safeguarding
	Foster Collaborative and Solution-Oriented Communication Among Movement Actors
Knowledge and Understanding	Develop a stronger common understanding of PGI and Safeguarding, starting with the basics
	Explore learning opportunities through developing and implementing pilot PGI programs, based on existing capacities
	Conduct more frequent PGI & Safeguarding trainings in multiple languages & develop more translations of IFRC Learning Platform modules
	Increase attention, support for, and understanding of specialised protection
	Create more, and earlier, opportunities to learn, reflect, and share knowledge
Resources and Funding	Enhance long-term sustainable funding for PGI and Safeguarding
	Develop more quality and evidence-based funding requests

Coordination	Increase coordination and collaboration with external actors and authorities
	Improve Movement coordination
Mainstreaming	Create a Unified Approach and Practical Steps for Sectoral Integration of PGI and Safeguarding
	Mainstream through Youth Engagement: Youth as Change Agents
	Use Child Safeguarding as Entry Point
Tools, Systems, and Procedures	Systematise the practise of conducting PGI and Safeguarding self-assessment exercises
	Support National Societies to develop centralised systems for identification and investigations of Safeguarding and integrity issues
	Develop practical tools for enhancing PGI capacities
	Leverage data and evidence for advocacy and decision making on PGI and Safeguarding
	Improve Communication and Advocacy

INTRODUCTION

Background

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has led to one of the most severe humanitarian crises in Europe, resulting in large-scale displacement and exposing millions of vulnerable individuals—especially women, children, older persons, and people with disabilities—to heightened risks of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Amid these challenges, a lack of shared understanding and prioritisation of Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) was identified across the RCRC Movement, and significant institutional gaps, particularly in establishing systematic Safeguarding measures within the IFRC's operational strategy, and in raising National Society awareness and establishing effective mechanisms for Safeguarding posed additional barriers to effectively addressing the increased risks faced by affected populations. National Societies required formal institutional and thematic strengthening in PGI and Safeguarding including training staff and volunteers, implementing appropriate policies, and building an organisational history of PGI practices essential for ensuring a safe environment for all.

The IFRC Ukraine and Impacted Countries PGI and Safeguarding Advisory Group, established in December 2022, has been central to coordinating a holistic approach to PGI and Safeguarding through the provision of technical guidance and capacity-building support. Thanks to the support of PNSs, for the first time in the past 10 years, IFRC could depend on long term PGI delegate positions to enable notable progress to be made toward institutionalisation, capacity building, developing the regional PGI network, supporting PGI specific programs, and other initiatives.

Additionally, the IFRC PGI Team has worked intensively with National Societies to close gaps and establish foundational structures to ensure that PGI considerations are embedded across all aspects of the response. The team remains in close contact with Focal Points to support with Safeguarding and protection concerns, mainstreaming, and requests for training, strategy and program support. There is also continued and close collaboration with protection working groups and Movement partners (ICRC and PNSs) to ensure a holistic and informed response.

This "Lessons Learned" report consolidates the primary successes, challenges, and gaps in PGI and Safeguarding mainstreaming within the UIC response. It serves as a critical reflection on practices, aiming to provide actionable recommendations to enhance the current, as well as future emergency operations and to ensure more effective and inclusive humanitarian responses across the IFRC network and the wider RCRC movement.

Methodology

The methodology for this Lessons Learned report on the integration of PGI and Safeguarding within the Ukraine and Impacted Countries response involved several key components to ensure a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis primarily from the perspective of PGI and Safeguarding champions. A literature review and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted to gather initial findings, which were later validated in a two-day workshop with key stakeholders, including representatives from Host National Societies. This approach allowed for triangulation of data from various sources, ensuring that the findings were both evidence-based and reflective of on-the-ground experiences.

The literature review focused on analysing existing documentation related to PGI and Safeguarding efforts within the IFRC and National Societies involved in the UIC response (see Annex 1). These documents included internal End of Mission and handover reports (surge staff) as well as field trip reports mostly from PGI and Safeguarding delegates from the early months of the response, and public and more recently published documents such as UIC Operations Updates and the IFRC 'Over Two Years of Response' UIC report. Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were conducted with key actors in the field from IFRC, ICRC, PNSs, HNSs (see Annex 2) to gain insights into challenges, successes, and areas needing

improvement. A two-day Lessons Learned workshop then served to refine and validate these initial findings, with stakeholders offering practical feedback based on their experiences (see Annex 3). The culmination of these methods provided a robust foundation for the report's recommendations aimed at strengthening PGI and Safeguarding practices in future humanitarian responses.

Limitations

A perceived power imbalance between the IFRC, the ICRC, Partner National Societies, and Host National Societies may have led some respondents to self-censor, likely out of concern that critical remarks could impact future collaboration, support, or funding from these Movement partners. Additionally, at the time of research, most PGI focal points within HNSs had been in their roles for less than a year, potentially limiting their perspective on the more challenging early phases of the operation. Those stakeholders who experienced the initial surge phase—reported as the most difficult period—tended to offer more critical feedback, while those who continued into the second phase noted improvements over time.

Furthermore, while many NS representatives participated in lessons-learned activities (KII and/or LL workshop), direct feedback from some NSs in the operation was limited. This suggests that while there was broad participation, the depth and scope of feedback were inconsistent across different National Societies, which may affect the comprehensiveness of the insights gathered.

FINDINGS

The "Findings" section of the report is structured around **eight key themes** identified through a comprehensive review of data gathered during the research process, including the literature review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and insights from the Lessons Learned Workshop held in the IFRC Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia on 21 & 22 October 2024.

These key themes include:

1. Human Resources and Staffing
2. Commitment, Accountability, and Institutionalisation
3. Communication, Language, and Culture
4. Knowledge and Understanding
5. Resources and Funding
6. Coordination
7. Mainstreaming
8. Tools, Systems, Procedures, and Policies

Under each identified theme, both successes and enablers, as well as challenges and blockers, are presented. This approach highlights the factors contributing to progress alongside those posing obstacles. Recommendations derived from these findings are presented separately in a dedicated section, ensuring a focused and actionable summary of ways forward.

Human Resources and Staffing

Successes and Enablers

Support from the IFRC PGI Team and PNSs

With the support of Delegates from the IFRC and PNSs, National Societies were able to progress PGI initiatives. As an example, the Hungarian RC moved from limited PGI investment to having a dedicated PGI staff member, and even incorporated PGI into their constitution. The close proximity to the IFRC Regional Office in Budapest facilitated frequent visits and guidance from the PGI team, and with support from the IFRC Operations Manager, the Hungarian RC further developed a funding concept note and ran PGI trainings across its entire organisation, including branches.

Similarly, in Romania, the initial phase of the operation saw a strong focus on PGI, with support from IFRC delegates. In Poland, IFRC's dedicated PGI staff facilitated staff and volunteer familiarity with PGI concepts.

At the IFRC level, **regional PGI staff** played a successful role in strengthening NS capacities, deploying early surge PGI delegates and establishing a PGI team in the regional office, which

influenced Europe and Central Asia even beyond the UIC. The creation of the first-ever **Safeguarding Delegate** position based in Budapest marked a milestone for the IFRC.

Investments in human resources related to PGI and Safeguarding, from the PNSs like Canadian RC, British RC, Swedish RC, Australian RC, Irish RC, Spanish RC, and IFRC significantly strengthened PGI and Safeguarding capacity strengthening efforts across the operation.

Development of PGI Focal Points in NSs

Creating and funding PGI focal points was crucial in ensuring PGI integration across operations, as highlighted by multiple interviewees across the Movement. For example, the Lithuanian RC used these focal points to advance Child Safeguarding initiatives, while the Croatian RC relied on them to standardise Safeguarding efforts across operations. PNSs further stated that **embedded delegates** allowed for more informal conversations to take place and removed some of the barriers between PNS and HNS.

Assessing and Improving HR Practices

In the Ukrainian and Lithuanian RC, PGI mainstreaming helped the National Societies cultivate an **improved corporate culture**, including developing codes of conduct and principles for recruitment and compliance.

Outreach to Affected Populations Led to New Volunteers and Staff Members

The Polish and the Romanian RC saw Ukrainian participants becoming volunteers and even staff members. Volunteers from affected communities brought **cultural sensitivity** and a deeper understanding of needs, thereby strengthening PGI integration into National Society activities, even if these weren't explicitly labelled as PGI. Community members' involvement supported various interventions, including cash assistance and accessible service points.

Enablers included PGI-designated funding from the UIC Emergency Appeal and advocacy from IFRC and PNSs, which secured PGI roles within HNSs. Additional support came from the IFRC PGI team

and the PGI & Safeguarding Advisory Group. In Montenegro RC, low staff turnover contributed to continuity and enhanced staff expertise, even as volunteer turnover remained high.

Challenges and Blockers

Limited Number of Staff

PGI focal points often had **multiple roles**, which hindered their ability to fully focus on PGI and Safeguarding. While this 'overlap' allowed for integration across sectors in some cases, the lack of dedicated resources affected the quality, progress and sustainability of PGI and Safeguarding priorities, with staff frequently **feeling overburdened**. Many NS focal points managed PGI in addition to other duties, with PGI rarely treated as a full-time role (and thus not a priority) outside Ukrainian and Hungarian RC. The lack of PGI staff resulted in all PGI activities coming to a complete standstill for several months in one NS, while reports of PGI and Safeguarding issues couldn't be followed up in another NS, despite the existence of safe reporting mechanisms.

Finding and Retaining Skilled Staff

It proved challenging to recruit qualified individuals for PGI and Safeguarding roles, and many **staff were new to these areas**, requiring extensive on-the-job training.

At the IFRC and PNS level, it was difficult to nationalise PGI positions and retain younger focal points, who after extensive training, were often recruited by higher-paying organisations. The IFRC also faced issues with scaling up PGI capacity, as the **limited pool of PGI/Safeguarding-trained staff** meant fewer quality assessments and delayed implementation in the early days of the response.

In addition, PGI and Safeguarding efforts were sometimes influenced by the **personalities of focal points** rather than a systematic approach, leading to inconsistent outcomes across NS and operations.

Concerns were raised about poor workplace culture and sexist behaviours by leadership at the country level, which impacted staff morale and safety.

Additional blockers included **lower wages offered** by the RCRC network compared to other

humanitarian organisations, as well as limited HR capacity within NS and IFRC.

Long-Term Funding for PGI Staff

Concerns about the sustainability of PGI funding persist, as most positions are supported by the Ukraine and Impacted Countries Appeal and **lack long-term funding**. There is serious concern that, as soon as funding decreases or stops, dedicated staff for PGI – and thus PGI initiatives- are unlikely to be continued within NSs. Some interviewees stated that leadership occasionally viewed PGI roles as low priority, further complicating funding allocation.

High Staff Turnover and Lack of Guidance and Clarity for Key Roles

The constant rotation of staff changed operational dynamics and disrupted continuity, with progress often stalling once experienced PGI personnel -or Operations Managers that had been 'convinced' to integrate PGI- left. The **IFRC's reliance on surge staff** at the beginning of the operation exacerbated this issue, as new staff required time to adapt to PGI priorities, resulting in inconsistent implementation. Many delegates lacked context-specific information before deployment, relying on limited briefing materials. As the PGI and Safeguarding roles (as well as some delegates) were relatively new, IFRC lacked clear guidelines for these positions, leaving some **delegates feeling unsupported and underprepared**.

Furthermore, having PGI delegates in a very limited number of countries involved in the response hindered consistent progress across NS.

While IFRC's creation of a Safeguarding delegate/coordinator position was a positive step, confusion over **organisational structure and role overlap** hindered effectiveness. The Safeguarding role often veered towards training and awareness-raising, which was outside its intended scope.

It was also noted that IFRC has one of the smallest PGI teams of any international humanitarian organisation, with PGI staff expected to be experts in both, PGI and Safeguarding, while most other organisations have separate specialists for each of the thematic areas.

Furthermore, having PGI Delegates in a limited number of countries had three root causes: 1) the lack of rapid response alerts for PGI delegates due to the resistance and lack of prioritisation by IFRC Operations Managers 2) limited understanding of the need for PGI delegates from HNS, and 3) a lack of trained PGI surge delegates globally. The last issue is being addressed by PNSs developing PGI surge rosters and more regional PGI delegates being trained, but the other elements remain challenges.

Lack of Soft Skills and Understanding of PGI/Safeguarding amongst Operations Managers

At the beginning of the response, some IFRC and PNS Operations Managers lacked interest in and familiarity with PGI principles, and **solely focused on scaling up and distribution** rather than quality and long-term integration, which risked turning the deployment and work of PGI staff into a box-ticking exercise. It was also noted that some Operations Managers lacked the understanding of differing needs and risks in conflict situations, as their experience was often based on working in contexts of natural disasters.

Commitment, Accountability, and Institutionalisation

Successes and Enablers

Integration of PGI into Planning Processes

Interviewees from the IFRC, Slovak RC, and RC of Montenegro mentioned that integrating PGI into the overall operational and unified planning processes was a key enabler of success. By **embedding PGI considerations from the start** of the planning process, teams were able to ensure that people in vulnerable situations were accounted for in key interventions such as Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA). In several NSs, PGI focal points had a direct role in influencing the development of PGI-related CVA programs such as cash for

protection and cash for older people, based on PGI-informed needs assessments.

Interviewees from the IFRC highlighted as a success that they had developed and implemented a Capacity Strengthening Building Plan, along with a **PGI Action Plan and Strategy** during the operation. The need for PGI to be integrated into sectoral strategies being identified and acted upon by regional Operations Managers was also seen as a success.

Interviewees from PNSs noted that a PGI Sectoral Plan had also been completed in the Ukrainian RCS, providing a clear roadmap driven and owned by the Ukrainian RCS PGI Unit. This plan was based on a comprehensive understanding of the context through the PGI assessment carried out by Canadian and Swedish RC together with the Ukrainian RCS, even though their PGI Unit was not in place then. It provided an action plan for the new PGI Unit as it was established. The PGI assessment is considered to be a best practice.

Development of PGI and Safeguarding Advisory Group

While there have been some challenges in communication and alignment of approaches and priorities, the development of a **coordinated body of PGI advisors** from the IFRC and PNSs was seen as a success.

The PGI and Safeguarding Advisory Group for Ukraine and Impacted Countries was established in December 2022 to enhance coordination and effectiveness in these areas within the emergency appeal. Its objectives include guiding a coordinated approach to PGI and Safeguarding among the IFRC and PNSs providing technical and financial support, supporting monitoring, evaluation, and learning for the current and future emergency appeals, and offering a pool of technical advisors to assist the IFRC PGI team and National Societies as needed.

Led by the IFRC PGI Coordinator and co-chaired by the British RC and Swedish RC, the group also undertakes tasks such as **providing evidence-based learning** on the effectiveness of PGI mainstreaming in the UIC operation. The learnings, including the Lessons Learned Report at hand, aim to demonstrate how PGI can be systematically integrated into large-scale responses across the wider Red Cross Red Crescent movement.

Institutionalisation of PGI & Safeguarding

One positive development toward strengthening the institutionalisation of PGI and Safeguarding identified during this study was the practice of conducting Safeguarding and PGI self-assessments. During the operation, Ukrainian RCS, Moldovan RC, and Romanian RC were involved in Safeguarding and PGI self/system-assessments, supported by British RC and Swedish RC, which, among other aspects, looked at HR systems, recruitment procedures, staff wellbeing, and other HR aspects. All of these NSs, and the involved PNSs, indicated that these **assessment workshops were highly beneficial**.

In 2024, the Romanian RC conducted a joint PGI and Safeguarding self-assessment with partners and branches, developed a workplan for the future to ensure that PGI and Safeguarding are mainstreamed into the organisation. The assessment led to honest conversations about organisational change, and following the workshop, the Romanian RC agreed internally that both PGI and Safeguarding are important topics and that a development plan is needed. The participants developed their own nuanced Safeguarding plan during the workshop.

As a concrete success, the Romanian RC said that the workshop convinced leadership of the need for both a PGI Coordinator and a Safeguarding Coordinator role to be created in the NS to advance priorities and make improvements, who has now been recruited and participated in the Lessons Learned Workshop.

Additionally, in the Slovak RC, efforts to establish a code of conduct have begun, with a draft document prepared and awaiting legal review. The introduction of an updated code that includes Child Safeguarding, GBV, and other key elements is seen as a significant achievement.

At the Ukrainian RCS, a **PGI Unit was established** in 2023—the first of its kind in the organisation—with a Head of PGI in place since October 2023,

followed by a PGI Officer in November, and plans to add a Safeguarding officer, marking a significant step forward in advancing the PGI agenda (unfortunately, both staff members had left the organisation by the time this study was conducted).

Meanwhile, in the Lithuanian RC, a positive cultural shift within top management has led to an understanding of the importance of PGI, facilitating decision-making and the promotion of PGI-related initiatives.

In the Russian RC, leadership has established an ethics committee focused on PGI and Safeguarding, with a primary emphasis on upholding Fundamental Principles and values.

Additionally, small actions by National Societies have now become standard practice, even in countries where discussing these topics is challenging. For instance, volunteers in the Georgian RC have rolled out PGI trainings after initial IFRC support, with youth in the organisation actively integrating PGI into their programming.

Increasing Leadership Buy-In

In the Ukrainian RCS, leadership alignment with Safeguarding has progressed significantly, particularly regarding **integrating Safeguarding into risk assessments**. The Risk Department intends to evaluate the organisation's risk appetite for Safeguarding, highlighting a strengthened commitment to this area. As a result of recommendations developed during recent risk assessments, a **new Code of Conduct** was also developed, prioritising behaviour issues. The British RC is also supporting the institutionalisation of Safeguarding in Ukrainian RCS, with a draft Safeguarding Policy to be shared in December 2024.

In the Slovak RC, two annual meetings with branch directors, including a PGI training during the summer 2024 meeting, have been instrumental in gaining **buy-in from branch leadership**. This approach helped branch directors understand PGI not as an extra burden but as a relevant part of their work, moving away from the perception of it being solely HQ-driven. PGI trainings specifically targeted

at leadership have also been effective in fostering support.

Additionally, during the PGI/Safeguarding assessment workshops held in Romania and Moldova strong support and buy-in was observed from leadership.

Enablers

A variety of enablers have helped increase leadership buy-in for PGI initiatives. Having IFRC staff with experience working in Host National Societies bring valuable expertise, reinforcing trust in their role. From the beginning, having **dedicated PGI and Safeguarding delegates**, as well as specific funding, has been critical. Collaboration with thematic colleagues and strong advocacy have also strengthened support from National Societies. IFRC management has played a key role, with two supportive HeOps approving the first Safeguarding delegate in IFRC, while regional Operations Managers supported earmarked PGI funding and encouraged sectoral strategies from country delegations.

Sectoral colleagues within IFRC have been supportive, and **consistent advocacy** has ensured PGI's inclusion in the emergency appeal. On the ground, Operations Managers and key staff with PGI knowledge have helped foster buy-in, and strong relationships across the network—connecting focal points, headquarters, branches, and thematic colleagues—have aligned efforts. Funding availability has allowed IFRC to set conditions and drive initiatives, though challenges arise when resources are limited.

In addition, **significant support from PNS**, sharing international practice, policies, and SOPs has been very helpful, as there were few systems before escalation of the conflict.

In the Red Cross of Montenegro, PGI is part of the DM team, who they say have been very supportive. The DM team was very open to PGI, due to the fact that the PGI focal points talked about it in a way that their colleagues understood, about SAD disaggregated data and providing examples of things that were already being done which were actually PGI.

Several factors have been instrumental in achieving buy-in for Safeguarding initiatives. In the Romanian RC, a team of women advocating for Safeguarding was key in driving progress. "We are a team of women, and we gained the courage to speak up. This was an enabler to make progress."

A **risk management approach** has helped to systematically integrate Safeguarding, as has identifying the appropriate entry point within each National Society—whether at the institutional level with established systems or in areas with implementation gaps needing support.

Trainings and simulations have proven effective in engaging leadership, providing a practical entry point to emphasise Safeguarding's importance.

Donor requirements have also played a role, often leading to formal documentation, although not always translating to immediate action.

Templates, toolkits, checklists, and guidance notes have helped HNSs to better understand processes and create structure.

Starting with Child Safeguarding has served as a useful gateway. Child protection frequently appears in needs assessments and secondary data, and a child protection policy as an entry point helps to build trust with parents and caregivers. Messaging around Safeguarding children resonates broadly, making it an effective starting point for gaining support.

Challenges and Blockers

Lack of Accountability Framework

Interviewees pointed out confusion during risk assessments, where there was lack of clarity on responsibility between local and international teams, which made it harder to define who was ultimately accountable for Safeguarding risks. While they may have been operational and able to scale up, many NSs faced high Safeguarding risks without adequate mechanisms in place to address them. This was highlighted as a significant issue amongst IFRC, PNS, and ICRC interviewees, especially those working with NSs that have limited experience in PGI and Safeguarding.

The IFRC faces significant challenges to properly identify, mitigate, and reduce Safeguarding risks due to an apparent **lack of clear lines of accountability and processes.**

It was further stated that some Operations Managers lacked a solid understanding of their responsibilities related to Safeguarding, and resources like the Integrity Line are perceived as ineffective. Although Safeguarding was incorporated into operations, PGI, and risk management, it was done in a way that created overlap and confusion. Risk management responsibilities are distributed across countries and regional registers, with OIAI involved; however, country-level risk is often assigned to Operations Managers or Heads of Office, and the ROE only promotes risk register updates without enforcing them.

Leadership holds ultimate responsibility for Safeguarding, yet often **shifts accountability down the hierarchy.** Implementing Safeguarding controls in risk registers without consulting Safeguarding focal points has highlighted a disconnect between risk management and Safeguarding leads.

Lack of Leadership Buy-in and Institutional Support at the beginning of the response

A lack of prioritisation and buy-in from leadership at various levels has significantly hindered the progress of PGI and Safeguarding initiatives in the Ukraine and Impacted Countries response. Interviewees consistently noted that leadership within HNSs, PNSs, and the IFRC often viewed PGI and Safeguarding as lower-priority concerns, overshadowed by other operational demands. This **lack of prioritisation** was attributed to limited knowledge and awareness, insufficient accountability mechanisms for Operations Managers, and the overarching pressure to scale up quickly. As a result, PGI and Safeguarding efforts were often reactive and incoherent in the early phases of the response, despite the clear identification of significant risks.

Progress was further impeded by **blockages at regional and Geneva leadership levels**. Despite

eagerness from the IFRC Regional Office PGI team to collaborate with Movement partners on joint trainings and curricula, these initiatives were obstructed by regional and Geneva leadership. Attempts to establish unified PGI curricula were blocked and visiting Geneva staff at times strained relationships between the IFRC and its National Society partners, undermining trust and long-term collaboration.

Lack of initial support from Operations Managers

Respondents from across the Movement frequently cited Operations Managers as acting as blockers rather than facilitators of PGI and Safeguarding integration at the beginning of the response. Prior to the arrival of a PGI Coordinator, Operations Managers resisted PGI and even avoided meetings on the topic, creating significant barriers that took over a year and a half to address. Feedback from Operations Managers suggested that they found the initial PGI approach impractical and too high-level rather than action oriented.

Personal resistance to PGI was also observed by someat leadership level, with some staff unsupportive of PGI, which resulted in PGI or Safeguarding rarely being prioritised. In some instances, there was a lack of understanding on how to incorporate PGI into operations, with Operations Managers **struggling to balance support for National Societies while implementing PGI**.

In cases where PGI was identified as an IFRC policy requirement or risk, some managers were more receptive. Requests for PGI support often came only after risks had already turned into reality, reflecting a systematic issue. Prioritisation of PGI and Safeguarding by operations management depended heavily on individual managers' backgrounds; those without relevant experience or interest typically did not view it as a priority.

Balancing Speed, Scale, and Quality

The emphasis on rapid scale-up and high expenditure rates in the Ukraine and Impacted Countries response often overshadowed the need for quality programming and principled approaches.

Pressure to implement quickly, driven by large funding volumes and operational demands, further exacerbated these challenges. The sheer complexity of the multi-country operation added layers of difficulty to embedding quality practices, highlighting the need for a balanced strategy that equally values speed, scale, and the quality of humanitarian responses.

Fatigue and Lack of Reflection

Consecutive crises over the past 3–4 years, including COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have resulted in fatigue and limited opportunities for reflection, planning, and development. These rapid, large-scale operations expanded from relatively small capacities to complex responses involving evacuation centres, CVA, and more, within a short timeframe, leading to quality issues.

There is a pressing need to pause, reflect, review, and improve as certain aspects were overlooked. **PGI and CEA play a crucial role** in this process by raising uncomfortable questions, assessing current practices, and identifying areas for improvement. However, the continuous strain of recent crises has also shifted leadership and staff focus on resource building rather than establishing high standards, with quality often taking a backseat.

Disconnect between HQ and Branch capacities and priorities

There is an ongoing disconnect between HQ and branch capacities and priorities, and branches differ in their levels of capability—some are well-developed, while others have more room for growth, presenting a challenge in bringing all branches to a similar standard. At the branch and volunteer levels, there are **varying understandings of "needs-based" support** and how it aligns with the Fundamental Principles, which can affect consistency in serving different target groups. This is exacerbated by the fact that international delegates mostly work on capacity building at HQ level -and rarely at branch level-, leaving it up to the NS how/if they disseminate new skills and knowledge. Additionally, in National

Societies with independent branches, the challenge of institutionalising consistent practices across all branches becomes even more difficult.

Personality-based Priorities

Progress related to PGI and Safeguarding often depended more on the individuals promoting these areas than on a systematic, coordinated approach. Strong personalities who prioritise PGI tend to drive its visibility, but in the absence of such advocates, PGI can be overlooked. Many successes in this area have **relied on personal relationships rather than institutionalised processes**, with PGI and Safeguarding teams often needing to reach out individually to drive progress. This reliance on individual priorities and personalities impacts sustainability, as continued progress can be uncertain if key advocates are no longer involved.

Lack of Data and Reporting on PGI Needs and Successes

A lack of data and reporting on PGI needs and successes has acted as a barrier as PGI needs are often identified through secondary data, due to some National Societies showing reluctance to conducting their own needs assessments. There is also an **absence of clear indicators** and requirements for data collection and reporting specifically on PGI and Safeguarding. While there are various projects supported by other donors focusing on PGI and Safeguarding, the reporting frequently lacks evidence of what has been accomplished in these areas, limiting understanding, accountability and visibility of progress.

Communication, Language, and Culture

Successes and Enablers

Affected Community Members as Volunteers and Staff

Successes in communication, language, and culture were highlighted by the inclusion of affected community members as volunteers and staff. For example, employing individuals with language skills such as Ukrainian or Russian proved essential.

Latvian RC demonstrated this by having a former Ukrainian RC volunteer as the PGI focal point, while their Secretary General emphasised the importance of providing information to Ukrainians in their own language. Hiring interpreters and ensuring **language accessibility** were key practices in fostering inclusivity.

Tailoring Key Messages to Local Context

Understanding the local context and using culturally sensitive language played a critical role as enablers, avoiding topics or words that could cause discomfort and promoting empathy. Effective communication required tailoring key messages to the target audience, selecting appropriate words (including gender-sensitive language), and carefully **considering the medium and messenger** to build trust.

As an example, in the Bulgarian RC, communication and language plays an important role to 'sell PGI' when inducting new staff and volunteers. PGI principles are introduced together with the Fundamental Principles and the responsibility we all have when wearing the red vest: Protecting the people we help, as well as protecting ourselves (do no harm) and ensuring everyone is included, heard and acknowledged.

PGI Language as a Driver for Change

Several NSs mentioned that while they had already been 'doing PGI' prior to being officially introduced to PGI by international partners, they didn't have the language or a structured approach to it. Through capacity building -including PGI trainings offered by the IFRC- National Societies are now able to **review and improve existing programs** and services and have difficult conversations about e.g. unfair distribution between refugees from different countries, or lack of support for vulnerable members of the host community.

Challenges and Blockers

Sociocultural and Linguistic Challenges

Sociocultural challenges were highlighted as an obstacle in integrating PGI, with difficulties in adapting PGI concepts to local contexts due to differences in cultural norms and a lack of

vocabulary for certain ideas in many languages, such as gender identity. Some interviewees emphasised that PGI concepts, largely developed from Western feminist perspectives, often **clashed with traditional cultural environments**, where topics like gender identity or sexual orientation are highly politicised, taboo, or even criminalised.

Additionally, there was a prevalent mentality in some contexts that social assistance recipients should feel grateful for any support, regardless of the quality or inclusiveness of the services. This created significant resistance, both within affected communities and among staff and volunteers, and slowed progress toward PGI goals. Furthermore, due to **IFRC's Western perspective and expectations** regarding PGI, delegates didn't always see that a lot of progress was already being made in some NSs, but that this progress (e.g. regarding gender equality) was based on 'where they were at'.

Linguistic challenges added another layer of complexity, as language barriers between ethnic groups required tailored approaches, and PGI trainings conducted in local languages excluded non-native speakers, such as Ukrainian staff and volunteers. These barriers limited effective participation and integration of diverse perspectives.

Definition of PGI & Communication between Actors

Inconsistencies in the definition of PGI created confusion and coordination challenges. Divergent interpretations and terminology between IFRC and ICRC, and even within National Societies, hindered collaboration. These differences underscored a **systemic lack of agreement across the Movement**, particularly around protection-related concepts. While some confusion was addressed through trainings, some discrepancies in understanding persist, necessitating greater coordination and alignment.

Communication between actors was also problematic as **PGI was often framed negatively**, focusing on risks and shortcomings rather than practical, solutions-oriented approaches to improve

quality of programs and support. The perception of PGI as a Western feminist construct further alienated stakeholders in certain regions. Delegates frequently took a policy-driven, long-term approach that did not align well with the immediate needs of the emergency response. Successful mitigation strategies included emphasising operational aspects and demonstrating practical applications.

Top-down Approach and 'Standardised Packages'

The response to the Ukraine crisis highlighted a recurring issue with the top-down approach taken by international staff and management, which often lacked sufficient tailoring to the national contexts of Host National Societies. IFRC surge teams and technical advisors frequently brought pre-packaged frameworks and **"cookie-cutter" models** to the operation, attempting to fit HNSs into these structures rather than adapting to the unique needs and capacities of each context. For example, rather than providing tailored support to women and children at borders, a blanket approach of distributing in-kind goods was implemented, which failed to address specific protection and inclusion needs effectively.

This standardised approach also impacted buy-in from HNSs. Protection programs were notably more successful when implemented through familiar and trusted channels, such as Restoring Family Links (RFL), which facilitated greater alignment with local capacities. However, both IFRC and ICRC were reported to have approached HNSs with **predefined agendas**, expecting them to conform to international frameworks rather than adjusting these frameworks to local realities. Stakeholders noted that this method often led to friction and limited the effectiveness of PGI and Safeguarding efforts in the early stages of the response.

Knowledge and Understanding

Successes and Enablers

Training and Capacity Building

Interviewees emphasised the success of the IFRC's PGI trainings and capacity building initiatives, stating that the PGI trainings in particular were crucial enablers of success. Following the introductory training in December 2022, National Societies began identifying their own PGI needs and reached out to the IFRC ROE PGI team, with these **trainings offering a platform for self-assessment**. In Moldova, Hungary, and Slovakia, a delegate conducted weekly PGI sessions with the RC teams, covering practical areas such as Child Safeguarding and PSEA, using concrete examples from other sectors to clarify PGI's relevance.

The high turnout at both PGI ToTs underscored a strong interest in PGI, with both sessions reaching full capacity and requiring waitlists. A significant success was having two National Society PGI focal points co-facilitate the ToT, with focal points leading regional trainings.

HNSs all stated that staff, volunteer, branch, and leadership trainings were effective in helping to **raise awareness, increase skills, start conversations about change**, and thinking about needs in each country. They reported that the trainings significantly raised awareness of PGI principles, helping both staff and volunteers to better identify and address the needs of vulnerable populations in their operations. The Hungarian and Croatian RC mentioned that training sessions helped frontline staff understand PGI principles more deeply and noted how training reinforced the importance of PGI in the field. Bulgarian RC highlighted that PGI training improved the team's ability to integrate Safeguarding into their operations.

Finally, the creation of the PGI Network for Europe and Central Asia was also seen by many as a significant success, enabling the exchange of knowledge and serving as a platform for peer-to-peer support and learning.

Advocacy and Awareness Raising

Some respondents mentioned strong advocacy efforts, both **internally and by the IFRC and PNSs**, to raise awareness of PGI issues as enablers of their success. This included advocating for the inclusion of PGI in policy discussions and operations, securing leadership buy-in, and ensuring that PGI became a strategic priority for the organisation.

In the Bulgarian RC, PGI has helped start a conversation about unfair distribution between different groups of refugees as well as host community members who are vulnerable.

In Lithuania, the Red Cross began undertaking PGI-related actions, such as an Action Plan together with Canadian RC and various protection and inclusion activities, following the second regional PGI training was held in April 2023. This includes deeper Safeguarding training and a broader understanding of vulnerability, which has contributed to shifts in staff perspectives.

Support from and Collaboration with the IFRC PGI Team

Across all HNS interviewees, each one highlighted the support they received from the IFRC PGI colleagues in Budapest and Warsaw as significant enablers to their ability to successfully integrate PGI and Safeguarding into their organisations and operations. They particularly noted the **high level of attentiveness, receiving both in-person and remote support**, being provided with advice, guidance, and tools, as well as PGI-earmarked funding as being particularly appreciated. There was some apprehension, however, about how this level of support would be sustained after the current EA expires.

For many National Societies, their first exposure to PGI came through the IFRC PGI training at the Regional Office in 2023. Since then, PGI has started to become part of e.g. the Hungarian RC' daily work, supported by the establishment of a PGI focal point. Most Hungarian RC staff now recognise and use PGI terminology, thanks in part to further awareness raised by the IFRC Operations Manager in-country.

The Russian RC has integrated PGI and Safeguarding principles into its work, aiming to standardise approaches using common definitions and concepts. "Protection" and "Safeguarding" are now commonly used terms in the NS, with PGI trainings for regional branches underway and there are plans to create a glossary of PGI concepts in Russian.

In the Bulgarian RC, mechanisms for feedback and complaints are developing as part of the organisational culture, facilitating the identification of issues and recommendations for improvement.

In Romania, RC staff are now trained in PGI, including one member who completed the PGI in Emergencies surge training.

In the Polish RC, PGI has been introduced at the branch level with support from IFRC PGI colleagues in Warsaw, management backing, and dedicated funding. Ongoing support from the IFRC PGI team through phone calls, visits, and meetings has helped to establish PGI as a consideration at the branch level, though there is still room for further development.

Changing Mindset

As stated above, IFRC's PGI trainings have helped introduce National Societies to PGI and Safeguarding concepts, supporting a shift in mindset. In addition, **advocacy campaigns were a clear success and entry point** for changing mindsets and developing gateways to talk about PGI and Safeguarding as an important subject in NSs. Polish RC highlighted that their 16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence, International Women's Day, and World Refugee Day campaigns were highly successful and that prevention of GBV is now on the agenda of the Polish RC regional branch in Lublin for the first time.

Within IFRC, more exposure to PGI and Safeguarding resulted in briefings for delegates, and OIAI organising PSEA and Safeguarding trainings for IFRC operations staff.

These efforts have strengthened programming quality in National Societies, helping them recognise that PGI and Safeguarding issues are essential considerations. National Societies are increasingly consulting PGI teams to ensure they are following best practices, although ongoing support is needed to maintain progress. In Ukrainian RCS, training workshops held in eight oblasts engaged volunteers and staff, connecting PGI with the "do no harm" approach and encouraging practical actions based on this principle.

Additionally, PGI efforts have introduced staff and volunteers to **new perspectives**. Through gradual exposure, individuals have been able to explore and adapt to different approaches, fostering a shift in mindset that supports sustainable change over time.

One national society provided a convincing perspective of the need for a change in mindset that has driven progress: *"Society is changing, people change, beneficiaries are changing and asking for changes. We can only move forward and can't go back to how we were doing things before. The law has also changed and all humanitarian organisations providing social assistance now need to follow standards, otherwise you can lose your license and face fines. Now was the moment for change. In order to provide social services, you need a license, one branch wanted to get a license to provide services but were rejected. One of the reasons for rejection was that the NS doesn't have a Safeguarding policy. If we want to license services, we need to put these things in place. Not only drafted but also approved."*

Ukrainian RCS stated that Leadership understands the need for PGI and Safeguarding for sustainable development of the NS and has helped transform the culture and build PGI and Safeguarding team.

Enablers

The **IFRC learning platform** was seen as a useful tool to get more detailed information about PGI and Safeguarding out to a larger audience, although it was noted that more translations into different languages would be helpful.

Participation in ROE-hosted meetings and learning sessions have also allowed National Societies to learn from each other's experiences, sharing insights and best practices.

Additionally, ongoing, daily cooperation and coordination with the IFRC have facilitated progress, allowing for consistent guidance and support in implementing PGI and Safeguarding initiatives.

Finally, **programs focused on children** were seen as effective entry points for introducing and integrating PGI principles, making it easier to gain traction and support.

Challenges and Blockers

Definition of PGI across the Movement

When asked to explain what PGI and Safeguarding meant to them, interviewees' definitions and explanations were quite different from one another, particularly among NS respondents.

Many people mentioned that **IFRC concepts on PGI are too complex** and need to be simplified or packaged in a way that is more understandable to wider audiences.

There was also a lack of consensus among PGI focal points in IFRC, PNSs, HNSs, and ICRC on whether or not PGI and Safeguarding should be combined as concepts and approaches. Moreover, regarding Safeguarding, some argued that it should be under the umbrella of HR, whereas others promoted keeping it under the umbrella of PGI.

"There is a fundamental lack of agreement or common understanding about PGI (protection in particular) between Movement actors. This is not isolated to this region but more systemic across the Movement. There was some confusion about concepts with NSs but this was overcome during trainings. During the initial response, PGI as such was not yet a policy until June 2022. The term and idea had been floating around, but the process of getting the message out had not been coordinated so much (across the Movement), even though at the Geneva level there was coordination going on."

This topic **requires additional exploration** and discussion within the Movement to better understand where the lack of clarity stems from and come to a consensus. It may be the case that the new 2024 Council of Delegates Resolution on

Protection in the Movement will help to resolve some of the existing differences of opinion.

Limited Awareness and Prioritisation of PGI Across Sectors

A recurring challenge was that PGI and Safeguarding needs were not always prioritised across different sectors within operations (e.g., health, shelter, logistics). Participants indicated that these sectors often did not view PGI as an essential component of their work, which made it difficult to communicate the importance of addressing these needs comprehensively. This lack of cross-sectoral integration meant that Safeguarding issues did not get the attention they deserved.

Participants noted that this lack of prioritisation may be due to a **general lack of understanding of the concept**. PGI, being a combination of concepts (Protection, Gender, and Inclusion), has taken time to understand and is not always fully understood by even leadership who are promoting it.

Most National Societies have engaged in PGI-type work for years without labelling it as such, using codes of conduct including PSEA and gender considerations without specifically calling them PGI or Safeguarding. Safeguarding, in particular, is newer than PGI and less familiar to many National Societies.

Underdevelopment of PGI and Safeguarding in the Region

Prior to recent conflicts, Europe did not have the same level of PGI and Safeguarding awareness as regions like the Americas or Africa, as there was less exposure to international actors driving these agendas, meaning that foundational work on PGI concepts, including gender, had to start from scratch.

In the beginning of the operation, there was **minimal understanding or mapping** of PGI and Safeguarding policies, practices, and capacities in the region, and basic systems were missing.

Interviewees further noted that National Societies often lacked the systems, resources, and experience necessary for properly addressing Safeguarding issues, although this was also noted

as a limitation within the IFRC. Additionally, within this response, National Societies have had **more exposure to and training on PGI than Safeguarding**. The operation revealed that, over multiple decades, much more investment had been directed toward other regions, meaning that European NS were starting from the very basics.

Resources and Funding

Successes and Enablers

Availability of PGI Funding

A major success in the UIC response was securing earmarked funding for PGI, amounting to CHF 3 million, which **enabled productive negotiations** with Operations Managers. This funding provided more freedom and flexibility, allowing significant progress to be made in advancing PGI and Safeguarding initiatives. The allocation of PGI funding served as a strong incentive for National Society leadership to increase buy-in.

Development of PGI/Safeguarding Positions

Investments in human resources related to PGI, particularly from PNSs like Canadian RC, British RC, Swedish RC, Australian RC, Irish RC, Spanish RC, ensured **strong technical capacities** in Budapest and several country cluster offices and country offices.

In addition to providing technical advice, the Canadian RC has been the longest supporter of regional PGI and Safeguarding positions in Budapest, while the Swedish RC is supporting a PGI delegate position in Ukraine, as well as a PGI implementation plan in coordination with the Canadian RC and Ukrainian RCS. A Safeguarding-integrated staff position in the Ukrainian RCS was established and funded by the British RC.

Irish RC funded the PGI coordinator roles and the 16 Days of Activism coordinator role with IFRC, supporting the Polish Country Plan, which included enhancing the Polish RC Livelihood & Social Integration Program and PGI sensitisation and training.

Additionally, leftover PGI funding was allocated to address the funding gap for the Lessons Learned Workshop.

PGI-related Funding Applications

Hungarian RC applied for and successfully received AMIF funding for a migration project that focused on protection, accommodation support, and promoting inclusion and social cohesion. Additionally, Hungarian RC is running educational projects with Swiss funding, which focus on inclusion through language classes that bring together Hungarian and Ukrainian students.

The Romanian RC applied for EU funding with support from Swedish RC. The application required attaching a Safeguarding policy, but as Romanian RC didn't have a specific Safeguarding policy, they could only attach a Child Safeguarding policy. This prompted a new discussion about the need for a Safeguarding policy, highlighting how **funding opportunities can serve as a positive motivation to develop capacities and policies**.

IFRC provided assistance to Latvian RC in applying for the Capacity Building Fund, as they were not part of any existing PGI pledge.

Polish RC, which had seldom engaged in community-based advocacy campaigns like the 16 Days of Activism and International Women's Day campaigns, participated in these campaigns during the UIC operation. This experience opened their eyes to new ways of introducing and accessing funding for PGI, particularly at the branch level, with 16 branches participating in these campaigns.

Enablers

Several key enablers have facilitated access to more funding and resources for PGI and Safeguarding. Data-driven, evidence-based requests for funding and the **ability to clearly demonstrate successes and impact** have been instrumental in securing support. The willingness of National Societies to deliver PGI activities has also played a crucial role, supported by an external push from the IFRC and other National Societies to prioritise PGI. Additionally, PNSs have made commitments to provide technical support, further strengthening the capacity for PGI. Advocacy with donors has

helped to raise awareness and gain additional funding, while specific **PGI funding from PNSs** has enabled the hiring of dedicated PGI officers and coordinators. Furthermore, the sharing of success stories and earmarked PGI funding for programming have reinforced the case for ongoing investment in these areas.

Challenges and Blockers

Sustainability of Funding

While many interviewees noted that they had been appreciative and satisfied with the level of funding allocated to PGI and Safeguarding in the operation, most then questioned or were uncertain about how the current focal points in HNSs would be funded after the Emergency Appeal funding runs out.

Many National Societies reported that they are running out of funding for PGI as the operation winds down, and they need more support to access new funding, develop proposals, and create case studies to demonstrate the impact of PGI activities. While the Capacity Building Fund accepts PGI proposals, few NSs are applying, and those who have previously applied cannot access new funding until their current project is completed.

A further challenge has been the difficulty in **communicating the added value of PGI to donors**, as the concept is cross-cutting and difficult to define. This has created a need to develop clearer messaging around PGI's operational benefits, beyond capacity building. The sentiment "we have dignity kits, so what?" highlights the struggle to convey the tangible impact of PGI.

From the perspective of HNSs, PGI focal points often had to independently seek funding and negotiate PGI budgets with donors, sometimes without adequate training or understanding of PGI principles. Furthermore, there is **uncertainty around the continuity of funding for PGI focal point positions** in many NSs, as these roles are currently funded almost exclusively through the Emergency Appeal, raising concerns about sustainability of PGI after the appeal concludes.

Another challenge was that on some occasions, funding for training was withdrawn by PNSs at the last minute, causing trust issues and necessitating difficult discussions to repair relationships.

Time-restricted Funds

Participants highlighted that there was significant pressure to implement and spend funds within tight timeframes. Due to funding deadlines, PNS stated that they couldn't wait for a year for HNSs to be ready to begin implementation, which added additional strain. Furthermore, it was stated that the assessment and planning processes of the operation didn't go as expected. PNSs noted that funding had been secured based on IFRC's proposed needs, but there was a lack of evidence to support these needs or the capacity at the HNS level to effectively absorb the allocated funds. As a result, funding was redirected to avoid a perceived potential for misallocation of resources or inability to spend funds. Pulling this funding then created additional challenges within the IFRC to quickly fill funding gaps and strained relations between Movement actors.

Pressure to implement quickly and spend funds more rapidly and at higher volumes, along with the **time-restricted nature of many pledges**, may have also negatively impacted the sustainability of the progress NSs were able to make toward integrating PGI and Safeguarding into their organisation. Many prioritised quick, high-cost interventions like distributions of CVA and in-kind assistance rather than investing in lower cost, longer term, human resource-heavy interventions like developing community support groups, accompaniment or "buddy system" programs, or other integration and inclusion related activities.

There was an opinion highlighted by interviewees that **NSs didn't have time to stop, reflect, and plan** how to better integrate PGI and Safeguarding into their programming due to the considerable pressure being placed on them to implement quickly, reach more people, and spend more funds. Without this pressure, several interviewees felt that they would have been able to make more progress toward integrating PGI and Safeguarding into their operations since they would have had time to plan their programming more holistically.

Lack of Flexible Long-Term Funding

While increasing flexible long-term funding is a commitment of the IFRC under the Grand Bargain, the volumes of **earmarked and/or time-restricted pledges** received through the UIC emergency appeal seemed to override this commitment. This put considerable pressure on NSs that had been largely neglected by the broader Movement network for decades and were therefore underdeveloped in many crucial areas which would have enabled them to adequately scale up operations and absorb so many earmarked or time-restricted pledges.

Lack of Safeguarding Resources

The resources committed to Safeguarding were very limited, with participants emphasising that if the IFRC and HNSs are unable to secure long-term funding for dedicated Safeguarding positions, continued progress would not be feasible. Without sustained financial support, Safeguarding initiatives may struggle to maintain momentum and effectively address gaps in capacities.

PGI and Safeguarding initiatives were viewed by some interviewees as being **project-driven with limited timeframes**, preventing a more sustainable approach and long-term capacity strengthening. Additionally, participants noted that it sometimes appeared that leadership's perception of PGI and Safeguarding staff was that there was not much work to be done, which led to these resources not being prioritised.

Coordination
Successes and Enablers

Regional Movement Coordination

Regional coordination between the IFRC, ICRC, and PNSs after the first phase of the operation was viewed as a success. In addition, IFRC's initiative to ask HNSs to help facilitate trainings and share expertise with other NSs in the region was highly appreciated. Additionally, the IFRC organised 'brown bag discussions' with HNSs to discuss ongoing efforts and future needs, further promoting collaboration.

The overall **coordination by IFRC was seen as highly beneficial by HNS**, especially for PGI focal points, who appreciated the ability to reach out to regional or cluster PGI colleagues for support and guidance. Coordination between IFRC and HNSs was largely viewed as horizontal, fostering a sense of empowerment among HNSs. In some cases, the IFRC was also able to advocate for the integration of PGI and Safeguarding by meeting with the governing boards of HNSs.

Establishment of the PGI Advisory Group

Earl in the operation, there were notable gaps in coordination and communication between Movement actors, and the PGI Advisory Group Advisory Group was established to mitigate these gaps.

Setting up the Advisory Group at the beginning of the operation was seen by group members as a **key instrument to align the various priorities**, share expertise and knowledge, and coordinate the efforts of Movement actors to integrate PGI and Safeguarding.

Country-level Coordination

At the country level, in the Baltic countries, there was an Operations Manager with a PGI background who ensured that PGI was invited to bi-weekly CVA meetings with Lithuanian and Estonian RC and PGI considerations could be mainstreamed into different programs, such as cash. Based on the Seville 2.0 coordination framework, the Romanian RC divided tasks with Movement partners and established a **PGI technical working group** that included the IFRC and PNSs. The Slovak RC also held weekly meetings with the IFRC to provide sectoral updates on PGI, fostering ongoing communication and collaboration.

Coordination between the IFRC Secretariat and ICRC

Coordination between IFRC and ICRC was also seen as very positive. IFRC was able to coordinate with ICRC rapid response staff and had regular communication and collaboration. **Joint trainings** between the two Movement actors were a success, even if in the end there were different priorities regarding protection. A joint workshop was held

with the ICRC & IFRC in Budapest where the two actors went through IFRC's PGI training curricula and ICRC's minimum protection approach to see which areas were overlapping between the two and which were unique.

Joint monitoring visits to border points and accommodation centres between the IFRC and ICRC were positive and facilitated better collaboration. Participation in Protection Cluster working groups was seen as beneficial for both IFRC and HNSs, strengthening their engagement in the overall operation.

ICRC stated that the ongoing cooperation and dialogue with IFRC has been unprecedentedly positive, stating that the **ROE PGI team made exceptional efforts**; each organisation having its own priorities but coordinating what each is doing for the benefit of the NSs.

While it was noted that Geneva-based Movement counterparts had different approaches, ICRC said it had appreciated the openness of IFRC delegates, despite these differences, as it forced them to rethink and focus on overcoming coordination internally, as well as staffing/HR challenges. Through trying to **focus on increasing synergies** between ICRC and IFRC, it was decided early in the operation that IFRC would lead on capacity strengthening, policies, and practices, while ICRC focused on RFL scale up.

The Polish RC adopted a positive approach to clarifying coordination between IFRC and ICRC in country by designating two distinct focal points: a Protection Focal Point working with the ICRC on specialised protection and a PGI Focal Point focused on mainstreaming, staff planning, and other areas. This dual focus allowed for complementary efforts, with IFRC and other partners supporting broader needs that were not fully covered by ICRC's more specific protection activities.

Challenges and Blockers

Coordination on Capacity Strengthening Initiatives

Several challenges were encountered in the coordination of integrating PGI and Safeguarding

into the UIC operation. One key issue was the **decline in information sharing and communication between PNSs** and other stakeholders as the operation progressed. While there had been frequent sharing of information in the initial stages, this decreased later in the operation. Shared leadership between the IFRC and PNSs in managing PGI and Safeguarding also presented challenges, as it required ongoing collaboration and transparency, which needed to be assessed regularly. In addition, PGI needs were not always effectively communicated from the country level to other technical focal points, which led to gaps in the flow of important information.

The **overall structure of the operation** also posed challenges, with multiple technical advisors in Budapest trying to influence different delegations and HNSs. Some questioned the effectiveness of this approach, not only in Safeguarding but across the operation. HNSs also faced difficulty managing the attention of multiple Movement partners, including the IFRC, which sometimes made it challenging for them to absorb the various inputs they received.

There were also differences in approaches among PNSs and between the IFRC and ICRC regarding operational methods. This resulted in some confusion, as **different organisations pursued different priorities**. From the HNS perspective, having multiple organisations with differing priorities created some confusion. Focal points were often tasked with managing the input from numerous advisors, which occasionally created a lack of clarity.

Mainstreaming

Successes and Enablers

Enhanced Integration in Programs

Safeguarding efforts were effectively integrated into various programs, and training and awareness-raising were crucial for both staff and volunteers, for example in Ukraine where helpline staff were trained to handle sensitive issues and respond to Safeguarding concerns.

In addition, **attention to the specific needs and cultural nuances** of different communities improved the relevance and impact of assistance programs. For example, the Romanian RC made adjustments to cater to local food preferences and ensure safe access to services by changing the location of an HSP and providing elevators (and not only stairs) in their health centres.

The integration of PGI seemed particularly **successful in certain sectors**. In the Moldova RC, PGI was mainstreamed into CVA and WASH programs, enabling complementary protection activities and ensuring that affected populations received the right information and had their voices heard through surveys and assessments. In Slovakia, PGI was incorporated into RC rental assistance programs, ensuring sustainability after three months and long-term support by linking beneficiaries to necessary services.

In the Latvian RC, CVA programs tailored assistance to specific needs, such as cash for education for families with children, and ensuring access for people less familiar with technology such as older persons. It can be assumed that the experience gained from improved programs and the inclusion of different beneficiary groups will have a positive impact on other programs implemented by National Societies involved in the UIC response.

Cross-Sector Collaboration & Long-Term Planning

Programs and services were designed not only for immediate impact but also for longer-term sustainability and capacity-building. Mainstreaming PGI and Safeguarding has led to strengthened capacities within National Societies, equipping them to improve future programs. For example, the Polish RC started mapping all of their traditional activities and is looking at how PGI and MHPSS can collaborate with and improve existing services and programs, now that they have the skills and knowledge. In addition, Polish RC is aspiring to **integrate PGI considerations into each program** they are implementing in the future.

In 2024 the Georgian RC developed a PGI funding proposal to PNSs and external stakeholders, aimed at integrating PGI into broader areas such as climate response and disaster management, moving beyond standalone PGI training to more comprehensive strategies.

In several countries, leadership decided that both CEA and PGI needed to be **included in sectoral strategies and/ or unified planning**. For example, in the Ukrainian RCS this led to the development of a PGI sectoral plan that became an integral part of Ukrainian RCS' One Plan and a guiding document for all other sectoral plans.

In addition to CVA and MHPSS, it was also noted by multiple stakeholders that the collaboration between PGI and CEA was particularly useful in progressing PGI awareness and initiatives, e.g. through the provision of joint trainings.

Enablers

The success of these mainstreaming efforts was facilitated by supportive funding and clear directives from the IFRC and PNSs. Funding enabled the practical implementation of Safeguarding activities, while messaging emphasised that training alone was insufficient—Safeguarding needed to be actively embedded within every stage of the project cycle, from planning to delivery.

In addition, **clear guidance and support for Safeguarding in programs** allowed for more confident and consistent implementation. Safeguarding staff provided clarity on Safeguarding roles and responsibilities, making these efforts more supported and understood than in previous operations.

Furthermore, working with children, and more specifically **Child Friendly Spaces** (CFS), were seen as 'a way into' a lot of NS. Developing guidelines for CFS helped operationalise Safeguarding and improve programs, especially in sectors involving vulnerable groups, such as children.

Challenges and Blockers

Lack of Unified Mainstreaming Approach

The challenges in mainstreaming PGI and Safeguarding include the absence of a unified approach to incorporating these principles across all operations, limiting their perceived importance. Often, PGI and Safeguarding are **considered an**

afterthought rather than an integral part of program planning.

PGI efforts are frequently siloed, lacking integration within organisational management, which hinders their effectiveness. Staff in National Societies reported that PGI is rarely discussed when developing new projects, as it is not seen as a priority and is **mostly excluded from early planning stages**. This lack of prioritisation is compounded by time pressures and the urgent nature of many operations, making it challenging to incorporate quality considerations like PGI and CEA. While the IFRC regional PGI team developed a PGI and Safeguarding strategy for the UIC operation, due to the lack of prioritisation of these areas, time pressure to implement interventions quickly, and other challenges, PGI and Safeguarding staff struggled to implement key priorities of the strategy.

Tools, Systems, Procedures, and Policies

Successes and Enablers

Feedback Mechanisms and Safe Referral Systems

National Societies have made significant progress in developing feedback mechanisms and safe referral systems that empower vulnerable groups to report concerns and access services safely. These initiatives, supported by IFRC and other partners, have increased awareness of Safeguarding risks and needs, and enhanced the quality of programming. For example, the Polish RC established referral pathways including the adoption of **Integrity Line** and strengthened PGI and Safeguarding capacities have contributed to a safer environment for both beneficiaries and staff. The Slovak RC formalised its safe referral networks, providing branches with a structured, survivor-centred approach. Ukrainian RCS launched an anonymous Integrity Line for reporting in February 2024, allowing the organisation to collect statistics, conduct investigations, and analyse and address risks. Currently, 21 National Societies within the Europe and Central Asia Region have mechanisms

for reporting complaints, facilitated by IFRC support.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies

The development of child protection and Safeguarding policies has been another notable success. Several National Societies have introduced comprehensive **codes of conduct, Safeguarding policies, and PGI guidance**, with valuable support from IFRC. The Lithuanian RC' new Child Safeguarding policy highlighted the need for practical guidance, while Slovakia conducted a risk analysis to strengthen child protection measures. The Latvian, Estonian and Russian RC developed child protection policies during the UIC operation, with Latvian RC formalising its policy and Russian RC receiving support from IFRC to build capacity and raise awareness. The Bulgarian RC was able to review and revive its original child protection policy through a consultative process involving all levels of the organisation. The Hungarian RC introduced a PSEA policy within their Code of Ethics and is in the process of developing a child protection policy.

Self-Assessment Workshops

Self-assessment workshops held in the Ukrainian, Moldovan, and Romanian RC, led by British RC and Swedish RC, have encouraged transparency and helped **identify many good practices**. Despite some gaps at the institutional level, these workshops helped lay the foundation for a better understanding of PGI and Safeguarding. Another feature of the workshops was that each of the NS developed their own Safeguarding organisational action plan as an output of the assessment process.

Program Planning and Quality Assurance

The integration of PGI considerations into program planning and quality assurance processes -led by PGI focal points- has also been a key success. Some National Societies incorporated PGI questions into needs assessments, monitoring, and field visits, **improving program quality** and ensuring a stronger focus on inclusion. The RC in Hungary and Montenegro included PGI in needs assessments for the UIC operation, while the RC in Slovakia improved data collection by ensuring age, sex, and disability disaggregation. The Romanian RC focused

on accessibility, ensuring that people have equitable access to services.

Tools and Guidelines

Efforts to develop practical tools have further strengthened PGI and Safeguarding work. The RC in Latvia created a pre-registration form for cash and voucher assistance and conducted service mapping in multiple languages throughout the country, while IFRC worked with both Lithuania and Latvia RC leadership to **develop roadmaps** and additional tools that align closely with beneficiary needs.

Challenges and Blockers

Time Constraints & Adapting to Country Contexts

Many National Societies face challenges due to limited time and conflicting schedules, which impede their ability to create new tools, systems, and procedures. Adapting tools and policies to specific country contexts has also proven difficult. Policies implemented by IFRC sometimes felt like box-ticking exercises, as they were simply 'copied' and **lacking the contextualisation** necessary for meaningful impact. Although knowledge and experience have accumulated over the years, this information has not been systematically organised for replication across countries, leaving gaps in standard procedures.

Reporting Mechanisms, Policies, and Needs Assessments

Reporting mechanisms, policy implementation, and needs assessments remain areas of concern. Unclear definitions of needs and the **absence of straightforward implementation roadmaps** have hindered the practical application of policy into daily operations.

Red Flags Raised During the Study

During the course of this study, there were a number of broader-reaching, systemic challenges that were identified and go beyond the scope of the research team to address. These issues were found to be significantly impacting the integration of PGI and Safeguarding, the quality of programming more generally, as well as the overall accountability, functionality, and effectiveness of various Movement actors.

Firstly, it was repeatedly stated by interviewees that **accountability for Leadership** to fulfil their obligations for ensuring proper Safeguarding was seen as lacking. At the beginning of the operation, for those managers who did try to address Safeguarding risks, some expressed that they felt that they had few tools or support from the IFRC to properly fulfil their duties to mitigate these risks.

Hostile or unprofessional working environments were also a common issue raised by participants, who said that there were issues of misogyny, bullying, and unprofessional conduct by managers (from IFRC and HNSs alike) at country level.

Finally, it was raised on several occasions that **no Safeguarding policies or practices are in place** in some NS, despite them implementing IFRC and PNS-funded programs involving children, such as overnight camps, field trips without parents, PSS sessions, educational activities, and others, raising child protection concerns. Many NSs in the response are working on the development of these key policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Top Recommendations Validated During Lessons Learned Workshop

Recruit the Right People with Strong Soft Skills for PGI Roles

The network's success in PGI integration often depends on interpersonal relationships and the personality of PGI focal points. The Movement should focus on recruiting proactive, engaging individuals with the right skill sets, supported by clear job descriptions and HR oversight. Recommendations include establishing **guidelines for both hard and soft skills**, enhancing retention

through motivation strategies, and providing development pathways and ongoing training (LL Workshop participants suggested it would be beneficial to have a separate workshop to discuss and share retention strategies across the Movement). To increase influence within NSs, it was recommended by several stakeholders that PGI staff/focal points should be **integrated at management level**.

To avoid increasing the number of 'problems' that already exist in any emergency operation, international Movement actors should focus on recruiting PGI Delegates who "don't just point out the challenges, but who offer practical solutions that can be integrated into operations". It was recommended to **deploy more PGI personnel** in emergency operations to increase the number of people the IFRC can draw on, as there is generally little PGIiE field experience to date.

Advocate and Mobilise Resources for the Creation and Sustainability of NS PGI and Safeguarding Focal Point Roles

It has been recognised that, ideally, each National Society should have PGI and Safeguarding focal points, with defined job descriptions and shared best practices for PGI and Safeguarding integration. However, this has proven to be a challenge due to a lack of sustainable human and financial resources, lack of prioritisation by leadership, and lack of awareness, among other challenges. Movement partners should continually work to support HNSs to address these blockages and establish these focal point roles.

Advocating for PGI and Safeguarding to be included in strategic plans and ensuring **long-term funding for focal point** positions will also help to improve sustained progress on key priority areas.

It was suggested by multiple stakeholders that each NS should have **multiple dedicated PGI and Safeguarding focal points** at HQ, management, and branch level to reduce the impact of frequent staff turnover. While this may be implausible in many NSs, ensuring that multiple core staff at HQ and branch level are trained in PGI and Safeguarding would be ideal.

Strengthen Managerial Knowledge and Accountability for PGI and Safeguarding

Improving the integration of PGI and Safeguarding requires a concerted focus on equipping managers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and accountability mechanisms. Operations Managers from IFRC and PNSs must receive enhanced training to fully understand and embrace their Safeguarding obligations, enabling them to act as facilitators of PGI integration. Leadership at regional and cluster levels, alongside HR, must adopt a more hands-on approach to holding managers (and themselves) accountable for meeting PGI standards, including integrating these expectations into **performance evaluations with tangible consequences for non-compliance**. This includes ensuring that candidates for management roles possess relevant qualifications and experience in PGI and Safeguarding. Job descriptions and performance reviews for management and staff working with vulnerable populations should include clear Safeguarding performance indicators. Building this culture of accountability requires starting from the top, ensuring that senior leadership values PGI and Safeguarding and conveys its importance throughout the organisation.

Further, establishing clear links between regional and country-level risk registers is crucial to ensure specific Safeguarding risks are identified and managed at all levels, with clear accountability assigned to individuals for addressing these risks. This systematic and accountable approach will strengthen PGI and Safeguarding capacity across the organisation.

Make PGI and Safeguarding Knowledge Mandatory for Deployments

A lack of awareness and knowledge about PGI and Safeguarding—particularly among Operations Managers and other key roles—poses operational, reputational, and financial risks and acts as a barrier to the effective integration of PGI and Safeguarding into the UIC response and future operations. Addressing this challenge requires a systematic approach to embedding PGI and Safeguarding responsibilities across all levels of staff involved in deployments.

Similar to Security, Safeguarding and PGI responsibilities should be **included in the job descriptions of all delegates**, with particular emphasis on Operations Managers, field coordinators, and decision-makers. To operationalise this, SOPs and checklists tailored to specific roles should be developed. Trainings on PGI and Safeguarding must be strengthened and integrated into existing programs, such as IMPACT, HEAT, MOT, and **sector-specific trainings**, ensuring sectoral and technical leads receive specialised training aligned with their areas of expertise. Regular briefings, peer exchanges, and tailored sessions for staff and volunteers can further reinforce these principles.

HR oversight must ensure candidates for deployment have the appropriate skills and qualifications in PGI and Safeguarding. Current onboarding processes, which rely on minimal training or signing documents, are insufficient and unsustainable. A comprehensive and continuous training strategy is necessary to build lasting awareness and accountability across all levels of emergency response.

Mandatory Inclusion and Early Integration of PGI and Safeguarding in Emergency Operations

To ensure humanitarian interventions are needs-based and do no harm, PGI and Safeguarding must be treated as essential components of all emergency operations. They should be **integrated into operational strategies and preparedness plans** from the outset, avoiding reactive approaches that are less effective. Institutionalising PGI and Safeguarding during peacetime is critical, as it is significantly harder to introduce these principles during an active emergency.

Emergency preparedness and operational plans should include PGI-sensitive risk assessments that identify protection risks, gender-specific vulnerabilities, and marginalised groups. National Society preparedness plans must integrate PGI principles to anticipate, respond to, and recover from crises, Safeguarding vulnerable populations and promoting inclusion. **Response scenarios** should address the needs of women, children, and marginalised groups across all phases of the response, with concrete measures like child-friendly spaces, gender-segregated shelters, safe zones, and accessible early warning systems.

A systematic approach is essential, incorporating PGI and Safeguarding standards into **sectoral SOPs and operational strategies**. KPIs and monitoring systems should track adherence to these standards, while Emergency Appeals must include dedicated budgets with earmarked funding for PGI and Safeguarding activities. Regular staff and volunteer briefings, as well as scenario-based PGI training drills, should simulate real-world challenges and enhance preparedness.

Collaboration with PGI focal points during program and project planning is essential to meet and exceed minimum standards. **Regional Protection Mapping** exercises should also be conducted regularly to improve understanding of PGI risks, systems, and practices within the region. These proactive measures will build the capacity of NSs, ensuring they are equipped to integrate PGI and Safeguarding effectively before, during, and after crises.

Human Resources and Staffing

Strengthen Human Resources and Capacity Building

The Movement should incorporate PGI and Safeguarding objectives into all job descriptions and performance reviews, along with creating **checklists and SOPs for different profiles**. Expanding HR accountability, training sectoral leads, and integrating PGI and Safeguarding into planning processes will foster a more robust approach to PGI and Safeguarding.

Further research and awareness-raising sessions should focus on volunteer engagement and community integration. **Training should extend beyond headquarters to branch levels**, addressing the disconnect between central and local operations, and ensuring all volunteers and staff interacting with affected populations receive comprehensive PGI and Safeguarding training.

Apart from including PGI and Safeguarding into the competencies and job descriptions of IFRC and PNS

delegates (and particularly Operations Managers), the focus should be on **recruiting more staff (technical advisors) with sector-specific skills** in protection, gender, inclusion, and Safeguarding, and that these should come with experience from different organisations - including outside of the RCRC Movement.

Similar to the role of security and independent from funding, it should be a **non-negotiable to deploy PGI staff** from the beginning of an operation (surge phase) and have them stay throughout the whole operation. In addition, in large operations, specialised delegates should be deployed for PGI and Safeguarding independently to ensure clearer roles and greater accountability. Exit interviews, core PGI positions, and structured handovers should be implemented to improve information-sharing and support continuity within National Societies.

Commitment, Accountability, and Institutionalisation

Strengthen Leadership Commitment and Advocacy for PGI and Safeguarding

To enhance the integration of Safeguarding and PGI across the Movement, increasing leadership buy-in and commitment is essential. A **Safeguarding leadership conference**, organised with the participation of IFRC, ICRC, PNSs, and willing HNSs, can serve as a platform for leaders to demonstrate their commitment and engage in dialogue on overcoming challenges in adopting these principles. Leaders should actively attest to their dedication to Safeguarding and PGI, fostering a unified approach to these critical areas, particularly in contexts where buy-in has been more difficult to achieve.

An "army of advocates" should be created, comprising PGI focal points, sectoral leads, and managers from IFRC, PNSs, and HNSs, to advance a shared agenda for PGI and Safeguarding integration. This network would amplify the message through a "one message, many messengers" strategy, ensuring that Safeguarding principles are embedded in policies, practices, trainings, and operations.

Safeguarding can be effectively advanced by leveraging a risk-management perspective, which positions it as a vital organisational responsibility tied to mitigating operational, reputational, and financial risks. Presenting Safeguarding in this context often resonates with leadership and creates opportunities for broader organisational development. To further demystify PGI and Safeguarding, leadership should be provided with **practical examples and evidence** of its successful implementation, illustrating its tangible benefits and demonstrating how it can be applied in day-to-day operations.

Clarify the Role of Safeguarding and Accountability in Organisational Structures

To enhance the effectiveness of Safeguarding within the IFRC and National Societies, its placement in the organisational structure must be carefully considered, with clear lines of accountability and responsibility. According to some stakeholders involved in this study, Safeguarding should not be subsumed under PGI but instead positioned at the leadership level to emphasise its critical importance and ensure it receives adequate attention and resources. While PGI and Safeguarding share overlapping goals, they are distinct components that require **separate strategies and responsibilities**. Misconceptions that strong PGI implementation automatically addresses Safeguarding must be addressed through greater clarity and education.

The HR department should play a pivotal role in disseminating Safeguarding considerations across the organisation, embedding these principles into recruitment, training, and organisational policies. Leadership must also provide clear guidance on the division of responsibilities between PGI and Safeguarding, ensuring both areas are effectively managed and integrated into broader organisational strategies.

Communication, Language, and Culture

Refine Messaging and Remove Barriers to Understanding PGI and Safeguarding

To foster greater understanding and acceptance of PGI and Safeguarding principles, international Movement actors together with HNSs must develop clear, **audience-specific messaging** that resonates both internally and externally. Communication strategies should focus on contextualising these concepts, tailoring them to cultural and linguistic sensitivities, and presenting them in relatable terms rather than abstract or overly technical frameworks.

Efforts should prioritise explaining the "why" behind PGI and Safeguarding, emphasising their practical relevance and meaningful impact on individuals and communities. **Drawing on existing good practices** and using them as entry points for discussions can make these principles more relatable and accessible. By grounding communications in familiar examples, PGI and Safeguarding can be introduced as essential, actionable concepts rather than imposing them as complex, unfamiliar frameworks.

Addressing language and cultural barriers is key to this effort. Concepts must be **effectively translated**—not just linguistically but also in terms of cultural and political contexts—to ensure clarity and relevance. Recruiting staff and volunteers from affected communities can serve as a critical bridge, enhancing communication and trust. Volunteers and staff with language skills, such as Ukrainian or Russian in the current response, or the use of interpreters, should be supported to ensure inclusivity and accessibility in all communications and programming. These measures will help create a deeper understanding of PGI and Safeguarding while fostering stronger connections with affected populations.

Foster Collaborative and Solution-Oriented Communication Among Movement Actors

To improve the integration of PGI and Safeguarding, Movement actors must adopt a more collaborative and solutions-oriented approach when engaging with HNSs. International actors should focus on **solving problems alongside HNSs**, seeking input on how best to provide support, and avoiding a top-down or overly critical "colonial" attitude. Partnerships should be built on mutual respect, treating all actors as equals and fostering an environment of trust and shared accountability.

Transparent and clear communication, particularly with PNS PGI and Safeguarding advisors, is essential to align efforts and ensure effective collaboration. Deployments of PGI personnel should prioritise presenting actionable solutions rather than focusing solely on challenges, which can overwhelm operational teams and hinder buy-in. Addressing issues constructively and offering meaningful, context-sensitive strategies—rather than quick fixes—will strengthen the perception and value of PGI in operations.

Finally, **simplifying language** and avoiding excessive use of acronyms is critical for accessibility and clarity. Communication should be straightforward and designed to demystify concepts, ensuring all stakeholders can engage meaningfully and contribute to shared goals.

Knowledge and Understanding

Develop a Stronger Common Understanding of PGI and Safeguarding, Starting with the Basics

It was recommended that, generally, the IFRC and network members need to work more to create a common understanding of PGI and Safeguarding concepts and minimum standards.

It has been stated that this should start with the basics and not to "building rocket ships when we should be building bicycles" meaning that sometimes experts end up starting at too high of a level for NSs, creating confusion, intimidation, and unrealistic expectations.

There also appears to be a need to have further discussion within the IFRC Network on **whether PGI and Safeguarding should be connected** and addressed as similar concepts with similar approaches **or if they should be addressed separately**, with unique profiles and associated

SOPs. For example, in some NSs, Safeguarding was placed under the HR department or within the office of the Secretary General, while PGI is being addressed more at the programmatic level. Conversely, in some NSs and in the IFRC, PGI and Safeguarding are addressed within the same units of the organisation.

There was no common agreement on this debate during the Lessons Learned Workshop, and participants agreed that a follow-up discussion is needed.

Explore Learning Opportunities through Developing and Implementing Pilot PGI Programs, based on Existing Capacities

HNSs said that they gained a lot of in-depth knowledge of PGI and Safeguarding through specialised programs that built on activities they are already doing (for example, the operation of case management systems for migrants in Lithuania). Thus, developing pilot PGI programs and seed funding, **tailored to the existing activities and capacities of HNS**, would provide strong, practical, hands-on opportunities to increase knowledge and understanding of key concepts and standards.

Offer More Frequent Trainings in Multiple Languages

Repeating introductory and advanced PGI trainings regularly in multiple languages, in order to raise awareness and refresh staff and volunteers' knowledge and understanding of key PGI and Safeguarding concepts and standards was promoted as a beneficial idea.

More frequent and tailored trainings and **simulation exercises for Safeguarding** (especially Safeguarding in emergencies) should be developed and resourced.

Furthermore, IFRC learning platform modules should be translated into more languages. Participants stated that this would be very useful for increasing NSs basic understanding of PGI and Safeguarding.

Increase Attention, Support for, and Understanding of Specialised Protection

More information and focus are needed on specialised protection such as Child Protection and GBV, as it's not clear what IFRC's perspective is on these topics. In the Ukraine operation, attention on specialised services was lacking. IFRC should prioritise this more and provide technical support, ensuring that NSs have specialised protection staff and other resources.

Create More, and Earlier Opportunities to Learn, Reflect, and Share Knowledge

Efforts to capture and share learning are also vital. Lessons learned exercises should be done early on in operations and while the memories of staff are still fresh, rather than two and a half years into an operation.

Lessons learned exercises should also happen at the national level, in addition to regional exercises, in order to see what could be improved. The transfer and retention of knowledge should be considered as a top priority across the Movement.

Strengthening **communities of practice, such as the PGI Network for Europe and Central Asia,** and creating contextualised toolkits for emergencies will support National Societies in learning from each other and applying insights effectively.

Lessons Learned workshops, case studies and other resources will further help in disseminating good practices across the broader movement.

Participants also emphasised that IFRC and PNS should help to facilitate more opportunities for **peer-to-peer exchanges** and support between HNSs.

Resources and Funding

Enhance Long-Term Sustainable Funding for PGI and Safeguarding

Sustainability planning must begin early on in future operations, recognising that funding and international attention is often limited to two to three years or less.

Budgets and funding models for PGI and Safeguarding need to become more sustainable. Budgets should include **clear provisions for maintaining PGI and Safeguarding efforts** at both regional and country levels beyond the operational timeframe. While these efforts do not require large budgets, all projects should allocate small, dedicated amounts for PGI and Safeguarding activities.

If long-term processes like PGI and Safeguarding are initiated, which require buy-in and institutionalised systems, IFRC and other Movement partners must be able to continue supporting National Societies for sustained periods of time. Without this long-term support, these efforts risk being disrupted once operations conclude.

Applying **principles of localisation** is critical. IFRC, ICRC, and PNS should focus on building capacity at the local level rather than allocating substantial resources to international staff. This approach ensures that expertise and systems remain within the local context, promoting sustainability.

National Societies must be supported to develop core cost recovery policies that include PGI and Safeguarding budget lines as core costs. This would ensure that funding for these activities is seen as a fundamental requirement rather than optional expenses.

Another approach would be to advocate for budget lines for PGI and Safeguarding to be included in every project proposal and budget, similar to those for PMER or other operational costs. Ensuring a **dedicated percentage of operational budgets** is set aside for PGI and Safeguarding will help institutionalise these practices. In order to achieve this advocacy must focus on demonstrating the operational value of PGI and Safeguarding, enabling budget lines for these priorities to be consistently included.

Earmarking funding for PGI and Safeguarding in emergency appeals and National Society budgets has proven effective. To make future funding more effective, HNSs, PNSs, IFRC, and ICRC agreed that directing money to salaries for focal points, technical support, tailored trainings, assessments, and the development of PGI and Safeguarding projects, policies, and procedures was most beneficial.

It was further noted, that the IFRC should put a stronger focus on supporting NSs to **develop resource mobilisation plans** for sustaining core programs and positions. The IFRC should continuously map donors and their sectoral priorities in the region, and regularly communicate funding opportunities to NSs, particularly those related to PGI and Safeguarding.

Additionally, funds should be directed to specific PGI and Safeguarding needs and capacity gaps, such as collecting and reporting SAD-disaggregated data, which remains a critical gap in many contexts.

National Societies that have not yet applied for the **Capacity Building Fund** should be encouraged to do so. These funds provide vital resources to strengthen PGI and Safeguarding initiatives, supporting long-term development.

Develop more Quality and Evidence-Based Funding Requests

Leveraging stories of success and change related to PGI and Safeguarding is a powerful way to demonstrate impact and secure additional funding. Highlighting **real-world examples** of how PGI and Safeguarding initiatives have led to positive outcomes can resonate with donors and stakeholders, showcasing the tangible benefits of these efforts.

Adopting a **risk appetite graduation model** can also serve as a compelling tool to advocate for Safeguarding funding. By demonstrating how Safeguarding efforts can help organisations or communities move along a continuum of reduced risk, this model can illustrate the critical importance of dedicated resources to achieve safer environments.

Risk assessment findings and corresponding action points should be systematically monitored to identify gaps and resource needs. These insights can be used to craft funding requests that address specific risks, justify the allocation of resources, and ensure that PGI and Safeguarding efforts are

evidence-driven and targeted where they are needed most.

Coordination

Increase Coordination and Collaboration with External Actors and Authorities

Improving coordination with organisations outside the Movement would be beneficial for strengthening PGI and Safeguarding capacities, resources, and knowledge for NSs.

Engaging with other organisations and specialised agencies, particularly those focused on Safeguarding, gender-based violence, and child protection, would be especially useful.

Developing stronger coordination with state actors is equally important, particularly for protection-related work, as many services are government-run.

Improve Movement Coordination

Improving communication and coordination between Movement actors, including at the Geneva level, will be vital for aligning strategies and ensuring that PGI and Safeguarding efforts are consistent and effective across different contexts.

Increasing the frequency of PGI network meetings and facilitating the **sharing of lessons learned from the start of operations** would enable Movement actors to collectively reflect on challenges create more peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

Expanding opportunities for peer-to-peer support and exchange among National Societies is highly beneficial. Learning from others who have faced similar challenges—such as addressing cultural or mindset barriers—could foster practical solutions and encourage sustainability of progress.

Efforts to co-create initiatives with National Societies, rather than relying on top-down approaches, should be prioritised.

Centralised coordination mechanisms related to PGI and Safeguarding between Movement actors, National Society headquarters, and regional branches should be established.

Delegates should engage not only with headquarters staff but also with **branch-level** representatives, addressing the common disconnect between National Society headquarters and branch-level operations.

The RCRC Movement has developed a resolution on Protection in the Movement. Movement partners should build on this by engaging in clear, honest discussions about how the IFRC and ICRC can better align their approaches to PGI and protection, resolving ambiguities and enhancing collaboration.

A **joint IFRC-ICRC training curriculum** on PGI and protection, along with consistent messaging to clarify differences between specialised protection and PGI, should be developed. This would help standardise understanding and practices across the Movement.

If systemic barriers cannot be removed at the Geneva level, Movement actors should prioritise closer collaboration at the regional, cluster, and country levels. Localised coordination could help address operational challenges more effectively.

The example of the Polish RC, which has separate focal points for specialised protection (working with ICRC) and PGI mainstreaming (working with IFRC) highlights a promising practice. Adopting similar models could strengthen coordination and clarify roles within National Societies.

It was also recommended to hold a follow up workshop or discussion on connections and differences between PGI and specialised protection facilitated by ICRC and IFRC.

Mainstreaming

Create a Unified Approach and Practical Steps for Sectoral Integration

Awareness-raising and tailored training for Operations Managers and sectoral leads, learning from successful sectoral and National Society practices, and **providing clear, practical tools and templates** for PGI and Safeguarding actions in every sector are critical to overcoming siloed approaches.

Lessons learned workshop participants recommended that advocacy is needed to ensure

PGI and Safeguarding are included in 100% of emergency operations plans and donor proposals by 2026.

While ongoing debates exist within the Movement about whether Safeguarding is a subset of PGI or a separate focus that should sit with HR/ Risk/ Investigations, a unified approach to defining roles and accountability is crucial.

Workshop participants emphasised the need for **follow-up discussions** or workshops on practical ways to operationalise PGI and prepare sector leads for incorporating it into programming effectively.

Mainstream through Youth Engagement: Youth as Change Agents

The active engagement of youth (staff and volunteers) can play a key role in mainstreaming PGI, as they are often more innovative and adaptable than older colleagues. Younger people more often see the need for change and the cross-cutting nature of PGI in improving RC programs and services (rather than a 'threat' or tool for criticism). **Establishing PGI youth focal points** has proven very successful in the Bulgarian RC, where young people are actively engaged in training and new initiatives and slowly changing the organisation's culture by 'naturally' integrating cross-cutting themes like PGI and CEA into their work, because it just 'makes sense'.

Use Child Safeguarding as an Entry Point

While presenting Safeguarding in the context of risk often resonates with leadership, messaging around Safeguarding children seems to resonate more broadly, making it an effective starting point for gaining support from NSs.

Child protection frequently appears in needs assessments and secondary data, and a child protection policy as an entry point can help to build trust with parents and caregivers. Where NS directly support or work with children (e.g. have allocated spaces for children), the **provision of guidelines for Child-Friendly Spaces** can serve as a starting point for improving programs, operationalising Safeguarding, and introducing PGI principles more broadly.

Holding a follow up workshop or discussion on the development and integration of PGI indicators was also recommended in order to better define accountability in mainstreaming

Tools, Systems, and Procedures

Systematise the Practise of Conducting PGI and Safeguarding Self-Assessment Exercises

Participants stated that it was very beneficial to participate in PGI and Safeguarding self-assessment exercises before starting new programs/partnerships between PNS and HNS. The self-assessment workshops were seen as strong **opportunity to raise awareness on key issues, identify capacity gaps and needs, and gain buy-in from leadership**. Conducting these self-assessment exercises should be more widely and systematically used and could also be adopted by the IFRC when establishing a longer-term presence in countries or as a broader part of its NSD support plans.

Support National Societies to Develop Centralised Systems for Identification and Investigation of Safeguarding and Integrity Issues

Many interviewees noted that their NS lacks systems and procedures in place to adequately address Safeguarding and integrity issues. Therefore, one of the main areas of support from Movement partners should be to support NSs to establish centralised systems for the identification and mitigation of Safeguarding and integrity issues. Participants noted that these systems would be highly beneficial to helping them to **identify existing gaps and mitigate inappropriate actions**, ensuring a consistent and accountable approach to addressing Safeguarding concerns.

Providing more information and accessible support related to Safeguarding was also noted as a common need.

Develop Practical Tools for Enhancing PGI Capacities

The creation and dissemination of PGI and Safeguarding **checklists, guidance notes, case**

studies, instructional materials, communications materials, and other practical tools was highlighted as an urgent need by most participants. It was also noted that all of these tools and materials must be culturally and linguistically adapted to the context where they are being used in order to be appropriate and effective.

Leverage Data and Evidence for Advocacy and Decision Making

Leveraging technology and data to support decision-making is crucial. **Safeguarding statistics** and evaluation data should be used to inform transparent, data-driven decisions.

Improve Communication and Advocacy

Finally, participants raised that more work is needed to strengthen communication and advocacy to help raise awareness and promote PGI and Safeguarding efforts both internally and externally.

Developing clear communications materials will support advocacy on PGI and Safeguarding, ensuring that these priorities receive consistent attention from all levels of the organisation. With reinforced tools, frameworks, and clear leadership commitment (from top to bottom), PGI and Safeguarding can become a central and integrated part of the Movement's culture and operations.

The need to improve **how we communicate the impact** of PGI and Safeguarding through case studies, donor/Federation-Wide reporting, and externally was also raised. Conversely, the Movement should improve on demonstrating and communicating the impact and risks of NOT integrating PGI and Safeguarding practices and standards into the systems and operations of NSs.

CONCLUSION

The integration of PGI and Safeguarding in the Ukraine and Impacted Countries operation has revealed both substantial progress and ongoing challenges. This Lessons Learned report demonstrates the effectiveness of embedding PGI

considerations into operational planning and emphasises the critical need for continued development in Safeguarding mechanisms, capacity building, and systematic mainstreaming of PGI across sectors. Initial gaps in knowledge, tools, and institutional structures required significant efforts from IFRC and National Societies to align with PGI and Safeguarding standards, highlighting the importance of proactive strategies in emergency operations. Key successes, such as the appointment of PGI focal points, targeted training initiatives, and collaboration with Movement partners, have established a foundation for a more inclusive response. However, sustaining these gains requires further commitment, particularly in funding, accountability, and standardised policies to safeguard vulnerable populations consistently.

Addressing these areas with an emphasis on sustainable systems and dedicated resources will be essential to ensure that future humanitarian responses are safe, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all individuals. The insights and recommendations provided herein aim to support IFRC and its partners in strengthening PGI and Safeguarding efforts across the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

As a final recommendation, to ensure the operationalisation of the successes and challenges identified through this lessons learned exercise, **additional meetings or workshops should be held** to dive deeper into how to address specific topics raised in this report. Noting the limitations of this exercise, more work is needed to further develop and turn the recommendations listed into reality, with the need to determine who does what, creating a roadmap of necessary actions, plot out the sustainability of planned initiatives—noting that human and financial resources in the UIC operation are shrinking—and ensuring that HNS continue to be put in the driver's seat of their own development.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: LIST OF REVIEWED DOCUMENTS

1. PGI and Safeguarding Mission & Field trip reports covering Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, Estonia, Montenegro, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary (May 2022 – Oct 2023)

2. PGI and Safeguarding Surge staff End of Mission/ Handover Reports UIC (Feb 2022 – Sept 2022)

3. PGI Operational Strategy

4. PGI and Safeguarding Roadmap

5. PGI Infographic (draft)

6. PGI Regional Action Plan (2023)

7. PGI Action Plan PNS (2023-2025)

8. PGI Report Ukraine Response (Aug 2023)

9. PGI Safeguarding Roadmap (2022-2024)

10. PGI and Safeguarding Activities in UIC (2024)

11. URCS PGI and Safeguarding Achievements since February 2022

12. Operations Updates UIC (March 2022 – Aug 2024)

13. Weekly Highlights (2022)

14. Country Risk Registers UA Response

15. OIAI Critical Risk Review Ukraine – fraud and SEAH (Nov 2022)

16. OIAI Critical Risk Review – Transition Management (Oct 2022)

17. Risk Assessment Humanitarian Aid Centre Przemysl, Poland

18. Mid-Term Review UIC Emergency Appeal (draft report)

19. IFRC Ukraine 2 Year report

ANNEX 2: LIST OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

2.1 Key Informant Interview/ Focus Group Discussion participants

Name	Position / Relation to the Project	Organisation	Email
Agnieszka Cholewinska-Nielsen	Protection surge	ICRC	acholewinska@icrc.org
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2.2 Lessons Learned Workshop participants

Name	Position / Relation to the Project	Organisation	Email
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ANNEX 3: INTERVIEW/ FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Interview Participant(s):	Interviewer(s):	Date:

Introduction and purpose of the interview

My name is ___. I am part of the IFRC consultant team conducting a Lessons Learned exercise looking at PGI & Safeguarding mainstreaming in the UIC Operation.

We are looking at activities designed and implemented from February 2022 to now. The purpose of this interview is to gather insights and firsthand experiences from PGI/Safeguarding/Ops staff like yourself, who have been directly involved in the UIC response.

Your perspectives and feedback are crucial in assessing the successes, challenges, and recommendations for improving the mainstreaming of PGI & Safeguarding in the current operation and for future emergency responses.

Information and informed consent

With your permission, the interview will be recorded for transcription and analysis by our team. The recording and transcript will be used to inform the lessons learned report. Data from the interview will be stored both locally on the consultancy team's work computers and on OneDrive for a period of up to six months.

Your name will not be published unless specifically requested and your permission is given. You are under no obligation to discuss any topic you are uncomfortable with, and you can withdraw from the interview at any time. Finally, please feel free to raise any relevant points, even if they haven't been specifically asked.

Would you like to ask me anything about the interview? If not, do you agree to start the interview?

About you

- Can you describe your role within the UIC operation?
- [Additional question for NS PGI focal points: Is this your only/main role?]
- How long have you been/ when were you involved with the UIC response?

1. Understanding of PGI

- How would you define or explain PGI and its objectives in your own words?

2. PGI and Safeguarding Needs

- During the operation were PGI and Safeguarding needs communicated to you?
- If so, how and when?
- Do you know how those PGI and Safeguarding needs were identified?

- [Additional question for IFRC Operations staff: How was PGI/Safeguarding incorporated into operational planning throughout the operation?]

3. Key Moments

- Can you describe the key PGI moments you remember from your involvement in the UIC operation?

- What made them so memorable (good or bad)?

4. Successes and Enablers

- What are/were some of the big successes in mainstreaming PGI and Safeguarding in the UIC Operations? (e.g. funding, leadership & accountability, coordination & collaboration, communication, capacity: Human Resources, training, systems, tools, processes, etc.)

- In your opinion, what contributed to these successes?

5. Challenges and Blockers

- What are/were some of the big challenges in mainstreaming PGI and Safeguarding in the UIC operation? (e.g. funding, leadership & accountability, coordination & collaboration, communication, capacity: Human Resources, training, systems, tools, processes, etc.)

- In your opinion, what caused these challenges?

6. Impact

- Did the integration of PGI / Safeguarding make an impact (positively or negatively) on the quality of programs, operations, and the people you support through your work?

- If so, how?

- If so, do you think these changes are sustainable? Why/ why not?

7. Recommendations

- What actions would you recommend to better and more effectively scale up PGI and Safeguarding across the National Societies involved in emergency operations? (e.g. funding, leadership & accountability, coordination & collaboration, communication, capacity: Human Resources, training, systems, tools, processes, etc.)

Close

- Is there anything else you would like to share that we haven't covered in this interview?

ANNEX 4: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE PGI AND SAFEGUARDING ADVISORY GROUP

Terms of Reference

Ukraine and impacted counties Protection, Gender and Inclusion and Safeguarding Advisory Group

The Ukraine and impacted countries Protection, Gender and Inclusion and Safeguarding Advisory Group was established in December 2022.

Objectives:

1) To provide guidance for ensuring a coordinated approach to protection, gender and inclusion, and safeguarding between the IFRC and the PNSs supporting (technical and financial) PGI actions in the Ukraine and impacted countries emergency appeal.
2) To support with the monitoring and evaluation and learning for use in this and future emergency appeals.
3) To provide a pool of technical advisors to support the IFRC PGI team and the different NS in the Ukraine and impacted countries in the emergency appeal when required.

Lead/Chair: IFRC PGI Coordinator for the Ukraine and impacted countries (revisit in case of IFRC restructure)

Co-Chair: Two co-chairs from PNS
- British Red Cross
- Swedish Red Cross

Membership:
- PGI and Safeguarding technical advisers from PNS (technical and financial) supporting the response (either through IFRC or bilaterally with NS)

- Australian Red Cross

- British Red Cross

- Swedish Red Cross

- Canadian Red Cross

- Netherlands Red Cross

-IFRC Regional PGI Coordinator for Europe could be invited when necessary.

- ICRC could be invited when necessary

Roles and Responsibility:

<u>Operational coordination and shared leadership</u>

    a) Sharing information and operational plans between IFRC, HNSs and PNSs to ensure we are all strategically and operationally aligned. Combined IFRC and PNS PGI and Safeguarding Regional Action Plan for Ukraine and Impacted Countries.

    b) Participation in PGI Network for Ukraine and Impacted Countries as subject-matter experts, sharing knowledge in the learning sessions and supporting NSs as they mainstream PGI and safeguarding.

<u>Collective coordination on allocation of funds</u>

a) Collective agreement on the PGI and Safeguarding strategy for the Ukraine and impacted countries emergency appeal.

b) Collective decision making on geographical focus of different Movement Partners according to the needs.

b) Collective decision making on level of support offered for PGI and Safeguarding activities (based on assessments).

<u>Technical support</u>

    a) Provide a forum for regular coordination and collaboration between technical advisers in the supporting PNS, IFRC and ICRC

    b) Provide technical support and advice on the PGI and safeguarding Strategy and action plans, support PGI mainstreaming, offer staff on loan (where possible), and (where possible) assign delegates with specific tasks to support the regional response

    c) Provide NS with technical and accompaniment support for implementation of PGI and Safeguarding activities e.g. including coaching, mentoring and accompaniment for participation in UN coordination mechanisms,

    d) Support IFRC in mapping PGI capacity gaps and supporting NS partners with resources and training needs

    e) Support the development and adaptation of PGI and safeguarding tools for the response that can be used globally afterwards.

    f) Support strengthening of in-country Protection and PSEA clusters, networks, organizations and authorities as part of auxiliary role

<u>Advocacy and influencing</u>

a) Joint advocacy and messaging for different audiences (Operational Managers, PNS leadership, donors, governments, etc.)
b) Support on the direction for PGI in the response and focus (countries to be defined) based on the needs and changing dynamics.
c) Support evidence-based learning through the creation of: case studies and baseline and sector-wide learning reviews related to PGI and Safeguarding.
d) Support PGI related events and communications campaigns throughout the region.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

a) Support the development and implementation of a monitoring evaluation and learning strategy linked to the IFRC learning strategy and existing monitoring cycle for the IFRC PGI and Safeguarding strategy and the different bilateral programmes that include PGI in the response.

b) Work with PMER on the inclusion of PGI considerations in the Key Focus Areas within the Learning Strategy.