

AFTERSHOCK

Abuse, exploitation & human trafficking in the wake of COVID-19

This Global Protection Update covers 28 out of 35 countries where Protection Clusters are active



This week, 20 years ago, the global community adopted the world's first international law on trafficking in persons. Its adoption followed damning cases of peacekeeper and humanitarian involvement in trafficking rings during the Balkans wars of the 1990s. Today, the [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons](#) is almost universally ratified, symbolic of our collective will to eradicate the sale and exploitation of human beings. Despite 20 years of progress, the devastating social and economic shocks induced by COVID-19 mark our greatest challenge to combating trafficking. As we observe the 20th anniversary of the Protocol, the Global Protection Cluster is taking stock of the humanitarian Protection communities' anti-trafficking response and how we can improve. Trafficking in persons remains the single largest rights violation exacerbated in times of crisis in which the humanitarian community does not have a predictable, at-scale way to respond. This must change.

Context Update

Mid-year predictions that deteriorating protection conditions caused by COVID-19, conflict and climate change would lead to an unprecedented uptick in [hunger, displacement](#), and [the adoption of adverse coping strategies](#) are proving worryingly accurate as we near the end of 2020.

Between September and November 2020, multiple Protection Clusters delivered lifesaving services amidst renewals of armed violence and a fresh wave of disasters, including heavy rains, flooding and cyclones that have driven immediate protection needs in Burkina Faso, Chad, DRC, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

The escalation of tensions between federal Government troops and Tigray forces in Ethiopia has resulted in the [deaths of hundreds](#) of people since 4 November, and the [displacement of over 27,000 people](#) into Sudan since 10 November. Phonelines and internet are blocked, and banks shut, complicating coordination and delivery of humanitarian supplies. Tigray, already home to 100,000 internally displaced people and 600,000 people dependent on food aid prior to the conflict, risks descent into crisis.

The Global Protection Cluster is also alarmed by [reports](#) of massacres by non-State armed groups in several villages in northern Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, on 7-8 November, which resulted in beheadings and abductions of women and children. This follows months of escalating conflict compounded by chronic underdevelopment, consecutive climatic shocks and recurrent disease outbreak across the region in 2020, contributing to rising-by-the-day numbers of IDPs. [Over 33,000 people](#) were displaced in the last week.

The Global Protection Cluster is monitoring and responding to escalating protection needs in [Iraq](#), [Cote d'Ivoire](#) and [Nagorno-Karabakh](#). In [Iraq](#), ongoing and sudden closures of IDP camps and informal sites are displacing families and exacerbating protection risks; while almost 14,000 Ivorians have fled [Cote d'Ivoire](#) amid tensions over election results. An estimated 300,000 civilians have fled their homes in Nagorno-Karabakh, many into [Armenia](#). A Protection Working Group has been established in [Azerbaijan](#).

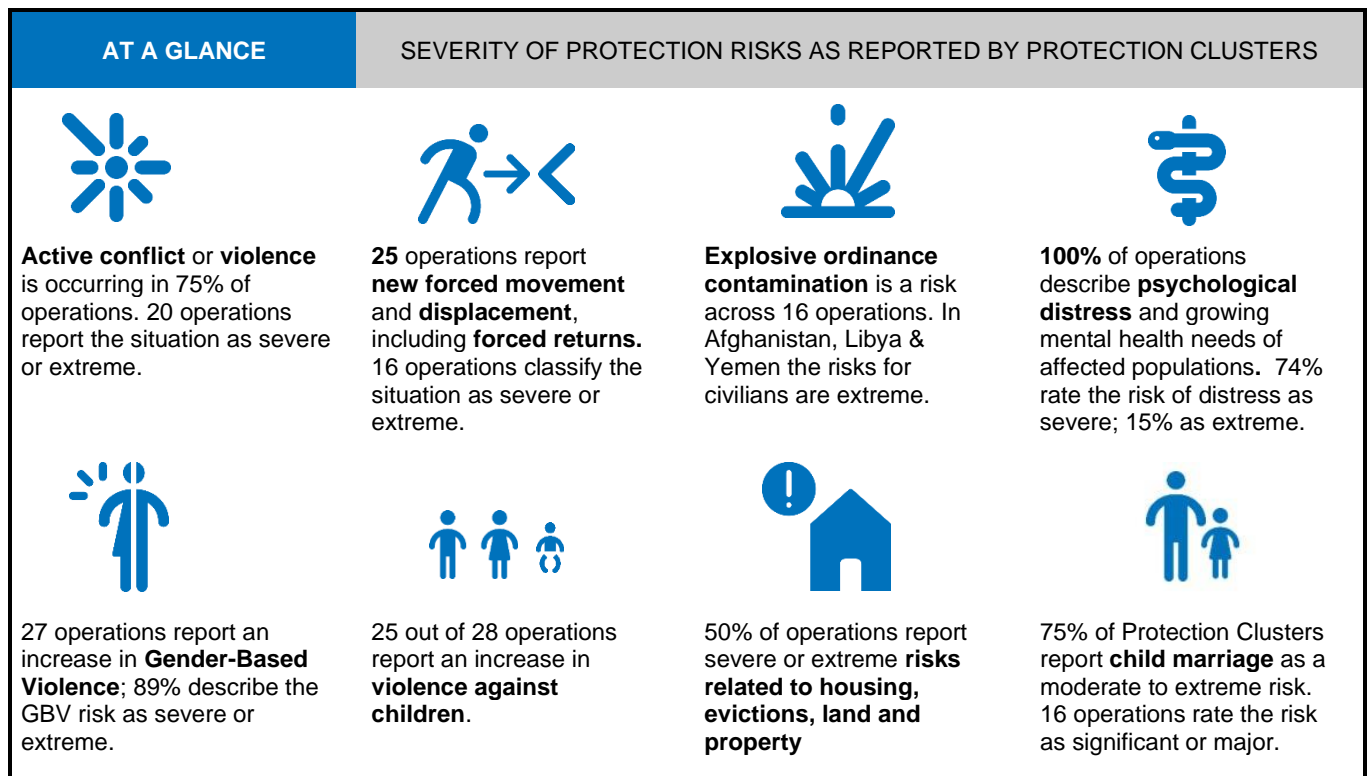
Conflict and disasters, and the protection issues they generate, create conditions for trafficking in persons to thrive. Across operations, we see that crises (1) **act as amplifiers of pre-existing trafficking practices** (e.g. forced marriages to members of armed groups usually occur in contexts where child marriage is already embedded in local culture), (2) **create new demands** (e.g. trafficking for forced recruitment), and (3) **increase supply of potential victims**. Trafficking is being used as a tactic to spread terror among local populations and to suppress ethnic minorities. It is also perpetrated opportunistically by host communities, displaced families, armed groups and authorities.

66% of Protection Clusters are reporting trafficking in persons as a current risk, and associated phenomena are also increasing – forced recruitment and forced labour (72% of operations), sale and exchange of sex as a coping mechanism (78%), and child and forced marriage (78%).

Left unaddressed, trafficking corrodes relations between host communities, the displaced, and humanitarian responders; inflates the informal economy; exacerbates, as well as fuels, corruption and organised crime; and undermines national and regional socio-political and economic stability. As global data indicates almost 60% of victims of trafficking are exploited within their own country, protection actors must be increasingly alert to trafficking risks locally, rather than assuming exploitation will occur transnationally.

As we enter the new year, the aftershocks of 2020 will begin to take effect. The dual role of protection – in responding to immediate needs while putting in place systems to counter deeply rooted, negative beliefs that allow abuse and exploitation to thrive – has never been so critical. Investing in these systems is our litmus test if we are to preserve the hard-fought for gains in combating trafficking and related abuses.

Emerging Protection Trends



Key Country News

The security situation in **Cameroon** remains volatile, with armed group attacks on civilians and schools, kidnapping of students, and mass arrests. 11 civilians were killed by state security forces; hundreds of GBV incidents were reported in North-West and South-West; 33% of victims were children. Over 130,000 people were affected or displaced by floods.

Serious human rights violations against the civilian population are reported in **Central African Republic**. A quarter of the population is displaced. One GBV incident is recorded every hour by the humanitarian alert system which covers 42% of the country.

Despite peace talks in Doha, heavy fighting continues in southern **Afghanistan** causing displacement and significant civilian casualties especially in Helmand, Uruzgan and Kandahar provinces.

Heavy floods in **Chad** have affected close to 400,000 people. Security incidents & flooding in the Lake Chad Basin required the establishment of 25 new IDP hosting sites for over 65,000 newly displaced people. Kidnappings, homicides and assaults were up by 23% between August and September.

Massacres and collective killings in **Colombia** continue unabated – OHCHR has documented 33 massacres and verified 45 killings of rights defenders and 41 ex-combatants.

Sporadic checkpoint closures along **Ukrainian** control lines are impacting freedom of movement. Hospitals in the east are not adequately equipped with personal protective equipment and basic facilities such as x-ray machines and ventilators to respond to COVID-19. In eastern Ukraine, there are over 16,000 cases, about one third of which are in areas beyond Government control.

In **South Sudan**, the withdrawal of UNMISS from the Protection of Civilian sites is perceived to leave a vacuum of accountability, raising protection fears. Intense flooding along the White Nile River has displaced approximately 800,000 individuals. Areas affected with floods have seen a high rate of violence and criminal incidents.

Tropical storm Eta is affecting thousands of people in **El Salvador**, **Guatemala** and **Honduras**. Some areas requiring urgent humanitarian protection assistance are inaccessible due to floods and landslides.

In **Iraq**, ongoing and sudden closures of IDP camps and informal sites are displacing families and exacerbating protection risks. Families unable to afford rental costs of apartments are forced to erect their tents brought from the camps, others with limited means to pay rent risk eviction. Some IDPs with perceived affiliation with armed groups are being turned away from areas of origin. Increasing reports of forced labour among out-of-camp IDPs may indicate households are being compelled to accept exploitative work as their only means of income.

In **Libya**, as of 1 October, there are an estimated 3,500 individuals held in state-run detention centres including over 1,200 of concern to cluster members. 27% are children between the ages of 12-17; 12% of detainees are female.

Flooding has affected 8 provinces in **Niger** causing loss of life, material damage, and the displacement of 400,000 people. More than 400 schools are closed, and solutions have not yet been found for access to education for these children.

In **Syria**, civilians continue to suffer death and injuries at the hands of various parties to the conflict. In Dar'a, almost daily reports are received of kidnappings and targeted killings by unidentified perpetrators against civilians and those who 'reconciled' their situation with the Government since hostilities ceased, following the re-establishment of Government control in July 2018. The Government hosted a conference on 11 November aimed at convincing the more than six million refugees who fled the country to return home.

COVID-19 and conflict are contributing to acute food insecurity which is affecting nearly 22 million people in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, and 14 million people in the **Sahel**, including 3.3 million in **Burkina Faso**.

Over a hundred civilians were killed in the six-week conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, **Azerbaijan**. The new ceasefire agreement cedes control of large areas of disputed territory back to Azerbaijan, and places 2,000 Russian soldiers in the area to act as peacekeepers. An estimated 300,000 civilians have fled their residences in NK, many into **Armenia**. A Protection Working Group has been established in Azerbaijan.

The presence of armed groups in **Burkina Faso** has triggered the cross-border displacement of about 4,000 people. Armed incursions into **Niger** from Burkina Faso's armed groups have caused internal displacement. The displaced are stuck in inaccessible zones near the border.

In northeast **Nigeria**, the Government intensified their efforts to return IDPs to their areas of origin amid deteriorating conditions in overcrowded camps. The humanitarian community is concerned that returns are premature and that areas identified for return are unsafe.

In **Somalia**, GBV is increasing as well as trafficking of children for recruitment by Al-Shabaab (AS). In South West state, about 20 attacks targeting the transport of commercial goods to towns resulted in food and vehicles burned, and owners arrested and interrogated by AS. An economic blockade has since been imposed which, coupled with the COVID-19-19 restrictions, resulted in a sharp increase of food prices.

In **Zimbabwe**, national hotlines continue to record increased rates of GBV and child protection violations (increase of 50% compared to pre-lockdown trends). Risk of intimate partner violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, and child marriage remain high. A Government ban on mobile payments to counter hyperinflation is pushing families and individuals into adverse survival strategies, including transactional sex.

Unprecedented floods in **Sudan** have impacted over 860,000 people. Widespread insecurity (intercommunal and factional fighting) continue. IOM has recorded displacement of over 75,000 persons in Darfur state alone.

Upcoming presidential elections in **Burkina Faso** (22 Nov) are feared will cause similar unrest to what was seen in neighbouring **Mali** where the disputed election sparked protests and a military coup.

Conflict in **Yemen** has intensified in Al Hudaydah, with widespread use of explosive weapons near densely populated areas. Between 25 September to 13 October, an estimated 69 civilian casualties were reported in the Governorate; more than half were women and children. A medical centre was damaged by shelling, restricting health care access to 200,000 people. More than 41,000 IDPs in Al Hudaydah are spread across 77 IDP hosting sites within 5km of active hostilities.

The largest wartime transfer of detainees since 1953 took place this month in **Yemen** and Saudi Arabia. 1,056 people were returned to their places of origin.

Almost 14,000 Ivorians have fled **Cote d'Ivoire**. The numbers continue to rise amid persistent tensions surrounding election results. Over 5,500 people are internally displaced.

Protection context

Distribution of operations according to reported severity levels of protection risks and concerns

OVERALL RISKS AND CONCERNS	MINOR %	STRESSED %	MODERATE %	SEVERE %	EXTREME %	N/A or no answer
Violence and armed conflict	7	7	14	50	21	0
Disasters and the adverse effects of climate change	4	25	32	32	7	0
Discriminatory practices by authorities and/or non-state actors	11	19	41	19	0	11
Social exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination, racism and xenophobia	7	18	32	43	0	0
Arbitrary or unlawful arrest and / or detention	11	11	50	18	7	4
Arbitrary limitation on freedom of movement	7	11	36	39	4	4
Forced movement and displacement of people including forced returns	7	4	32	43	14	0
Attacks on humanitarian, protection and health workers, facilities and services	29	18	25	21	7	0
Explosive ordnances contamination	15	7	19	30	11	19

Risks, concerns and adverse coping mechanisms

Distribution of operations according to reported severity levels of protection risks and concerns

SPECIFIC RISKS, CONCERNS AND ADVERSE COPING MECHANISMS	MINOR %	STRESSED %	MODERATE %	SEVERE %	EXTREME %	N/A or no answer
Psychological distress and mental health	0	0	11	74	15	0
Gender-based violence or abuse	0	4	7	71	18	0
Family and child separation	11	4	39	39	4	4
Violence against children	0	7	32	50	7	4
Forced recruitment of labour	0	14	36	36	7	7
Trafficking in persons	7	19	44	22	0	7
Risks related to housing, evictions, land and property	14	7	29	43	7	0
Sale or exchange of sex as a coping mechanism	4	19	44	30	4	0
Child marriage	7	15	19	48	11	0



Psychological distress and mental health concerns are the highest risk across all operations. Clusters report a critical need for greater investment in mental health services to address high levels of individual and collective fear, trauma, acute and chronic stress, bereavement and depression. School closures due to conflict, disasters and/or COVID-19 are impacting children's capacity to cope.



96% of operations report **gender-based violence** as a moderate to extreme risk; with extreme risk in [Afghanistan](#), [Guatemala](#), [Nigeria](#), [the Pacific](#), and [Yemen](#). Across operations, GBV has increased substantially in response to COVID-19 lockdowns; calls to domestic violence hotlines have increased by 120% in [Colombia](#), 60% in [Fiji](#), and 56% in [Zimbabwe](#). In [Chad](#), protection actors are facing difficulties promoting a rights-based approach for survivors of sexual violence – a preference for customary law is leading to “amicable solutions between [victim and perpetrator’s] heads of households”. Following bans on public education deemed “Western” and new compulsory tithes imposed by non-state armed groups in [Niger](#), women are being tortured for economic activity outside of the home and non-compliance with full veil coverings.



Violence against children is a moderate to extreme risk in 89% of operations; and particularly acute in [Afghanistan](#), [Cameroon](#), [CAR](#), [Colombia](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Libya](#), [Mali](#), [Niger](#), [Nigeria](#), [Sudan](#), [Ukraine](#), [Venezuela](#), and [Zimbabwe](#). October marked the deadliest month of 2020 for children killed in the crossfire in [Yemen](#); while children in [Sudan](#) have resorted to selling non-food items and shelter assistance materials to support their families. Over 21,000 children are affected by COVID-19 in [DRC](#), many others are experiencing negligence, police violence against street children and GBV. Violence against children, including sexual violence, remains

widespread throughout North West [Syria](#), including by parents, caregivers, community-members, as well as armed actors. Girls experience sexual harassment and violence in a range of situations, including when working on the land/farm, in shops, and in instances when affected by child recruitment. Some male adolescents are exposed to sexual abuse, especially in orphanages.



10 of the 15 countries with the world's highest rate of **child and forced marriage** are home to an active Protection Cluster: (% of children married before 18) [Niger](#) (76%), [CAR](#) (68%), [Chad](#) (67%), [Burkina Faso](#) (52%), [Mali](#) (52%), [South Sudan](#) (52%), [Mozambique](#) (48%), [Somalia](#) (45%), [Nigeria](#) (44%), and [Ethiopia](#) (40%). The majority of these operations report increasing risk of child marriage as an economic coping strategy during 2020. Concerningly, in North West [Syria](#), girls are reportedly being married younger, as young as 10 or 11 years old; some prepubescent girls are given hormones to accelerate puberty and marriageability.



66% of Protection Clusters are reporting **trafficking in persons** as a current risk, with associated phenomena – **forced recruitment** and **forced labour** (72% of operations) also on the rise. Trafficking is a particular concern in [Afghanistan](#), [Chad](#), [Colombia](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Libya](#), [Myanmar](#), [South Sudan](#), and [Venezuela](#). Refugees and migrants are particularly susceptible to trafficking in [Libya](#) due to the interconnectedness of existing smuggling rings and trafficking rings. Libyan law enforcement and judicial capacities are not fully functioning, so trafficking continues with impunity for perpetrators. [Afghanistan](#) has been downgraded to Tier 3, the lowest ranking possible in the [US State Department's 2020 Trafficking in Persons report](#), due to inaction on incidents of sexual slavery (*bacha bazi*) and recruitment and use of child soldiers.



Forced recruitment, particularly of children, is an ongoing issue in [Afghanistan](#), [Cameroon](#), [CAR](#), [Colombia](#), [Iraq](#), [Mali](#), [Niger](#), [Somalia](#), [Syria](#) and [Yemen](#). Children in IDP camps in Somalia are at high risk of worst form of child labour and as child soldiers – Al-Shabaab, engage in the widespread and systematic conscription and recruitment of children and has requested clan elders to send their children for recruitment leading to conflict or families sending their children to urban areas for protection. In [Niger](#), communities who refuse to give children to non-state armed groups are threatened and forcibly displaced.

Children and adults forced to work, sometimes in the worst forms of child labour, is increasing in several operations. An increase of boys working in dangerous conditions in mines is reported in [CAR](#) and [Mali](#), while asylum seekers, migrants and refugees in [Libya](#) are frequently exposed to labour exploitation while seeking livelihood opportunities.



Risks related to **housing, evictions, land and property** remain significant in [Cameroon](#), [CAR](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Honduras](#), [Libya](#), [the Pacific](#), [Sudan](#), [Somalia](#) and [Yemen](#). Attacks on land and houses in Far North Region and North West South West regions in [Cameroon](#) are the largest proportion of protection incidents reported. The threat of forced eviction in IDP sites are continuous and imminent in [Somalia](#) and [Yemen](#); in [Yemen](#), over 116,000 IDPs across 181 IDP hosting sites report fearing eviction. Disputes over ownership and access are affecting populations in [Ethiopia](#), [the Pacific](#) and [Somalia](#); with lack of laws and policies, and weak enforcement of laws if existing, exacerbating the risks. Insecurity of tenure is an issue for Libyans and non-Libyan communities alike, due to lack of housing documentation.



Understanding the specific vulnerabilities of **people living with disabilities** and **older persons** to the above protection risks is an ongoing area of work. Several operations report **people living with disability** face difficulty complying with COVID-19 physical distancing measures, as they primarily rely on their caretakers to be moved from place to place; this has severely limited their access to assistance including to protection services and other essential services (including WASH). New assessment findings in [Syria](#) indicate 25% of Syrians aged 12 and above are living with a disability, twice the global average. Of IDPs in Aleppo and Idlib governorates, female IDPs are more likely to experience disability than males. In [the Pacific](#), people living with disability are advocating for improved access to disaster evacuation centres, critical as climate change increases displacement risks.

In [Nigeria](#), beliefs (in some communities) that COVID-19 only affects **older persons** resulted in avoidance of interacting with the elderly. The higher likelihood of older COVID-patients requiring medical care has placed financial strain on individual's limited resources, particularly in [Ukraine](#). A recent survey on older people in [Venezuela](#) indicated over 50% cannot cover necessary medication costs; over 50% have reduced their food intake to two meals per day and 89% have had to reduce the portion size of these meals.

IN FOCUS – Slavery & trafficking in persons in Mali

On 1 September 2020, four men who were born into slavery were beaten to death in Mali.

One of the dead men, a 69-year-old slave, had won a court ruling over farmland. Some members of the community objected to the judge's decision, surrounded the houses of the slaves and savagely beat them. The four dead men ranged in age from 42 to 72; an elderly woman and a married couple, aged 30 and 44, were hospitalised. Eleven people have been arrested.¹

Despite the legal abolition of slavery in Mali in 1905, some Malians are born into slavery because their ancestors were captured and have “belonged” to slave-owning families for generations. People who are considered slaves work without pay, can be inherited, and are deprived of their human rights.²

This descent-based slavery exists alongside other forms of trafficking in persons, including trafficking for forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and forced begging. Victims may be Malian, migrants, or asylum-seekers.

The conflict and subsequent humanitarian crisis in Mali are also generating new forms of trafficking – namely, trafficking of children for forced recruitment by armed groups, as well as for forced labour.

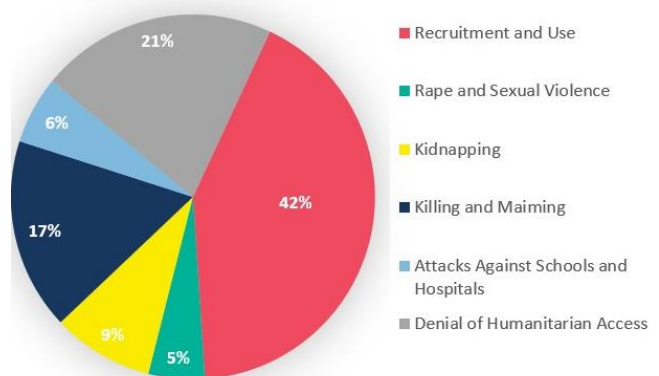
In the first 6 months of 2020 with the escalation of violence, there have been more documented cases of child recruitment and use than in the whole of 2019 (230 cases vs 215 in 2019); and double the number of cases detected in 2018.

Armed groups are also trafficking children for labour in gold mines, profits from which are used to enrich combatants, fuel the arms trade and finance the violence. Extortionate “taxes” are also imposed by the armed groups on adult gold miners.

The closure of schools – due to conflict and insecurity, COVID-19, and teachers’ strikes – is contributing to increased movements of children towards informal gold mining areas, particularly Gao and Kidal. Most of these areas are controlled by armed groups.

In June, the interception of 21 Burkinabè children and 3 Malian children bound for the gold mining sites triggered a Rapid Child Protection Assessment, the results of which are alarming.

Serious Violations of Children's Rights in Armed Conflict Situations - MALI
(January - June 2020)



An estimated 6,000 children, disproportionately boys, are working across 8 mine sites. They are exposed to the worst forms of child labour, economic exploitation, GBV, child recruitment and use, physical and verbal violence, and psychological distress.

Some children arrived on the site on credit (a third party pre-financed their transport and food) and others reported having worked days without being paid by their employer (they must work an unspecified time period until they have paid off the recruitment/travel debt).³

Girls across the country are no less vulnerable to being exploited – 66% of over 4,000 GBV cases reported between January - September 2020 involved girls.⁴ Gang rapes are rife, particularly as woman and girls search for

¹ UN human rights experts urge Mali to end slavery once and for all, Geneva, 8 September 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26219&LangID=E>

² Ibid

³ Child Protection AoR, *Rapid Evaluation Report on Child Protection on the Gold Packing Sites of N'Tillit and Tinaikarane (Gao Region) and Kidal (Igouzar, Takalot, Tassik, Tinzaoutaene, Tessalit (Kidal Region))*, July 2020.

⁴ GBVIMS

water and firewood. In the Mopti region, entire communities of women and girls have been abducted, sexually assaulted and raped; there are over a 1000 cases recorded in this area so far in 2020.

Child and forced marriage are major issues in Mali – 53% of girls are married before the age of 18,⁵ the sixth highest child marriage rate in the world.⁶ Although rarely considered trafficking, marriages that are not freely entered into, that involve abuse and exploitation, and where one party cannot freely leave, may be trafficking in persons for the purposes of forced marriage.⁷ The Protection Cluster report child marriages as increasing across the country as a result of COVID-19.

Such exploitation of children, for labour or marriage, is partially indicative of the critical lack of socioeconomic opportunities available to families in Mali. Indeed, across the globe, the COVID-19 driven economic downturn is directly impacting the vulnerability of child exploitation and trafficking.

Despite the conflict and COVID-19 movement restrictions, Mali continues to be a critical transit country for West African migrants and asylum seekers attempting to reach Northern Africa and Europe. In Mali, some people on the move are trafficked for forced labour in the agricultural sector, others, particularly women en route to promised jobs in Northern Africa, Europe and the Middle East, are diverted to Bamako or to mining or agricultural areas where they are forced to sell sex.⁸

What is striking about the trafficking situation in Mali, as in many countries where Protection Clusters are activated, is that the profile of a victim of trafficking is incredibly diverse – elderly people in descent-based slavery, national and foreign boys in high risk sectors, local girls forced to marry, and migrants forced to work or sell sex. Traffickers and their accomplices may be part of organized criminal groups or armed groups, may be tribal chiefs or state authorities, or may be opportunistic parents, relatives or community members.

The response, therefore, needs to be as multi-faceted as the crime.

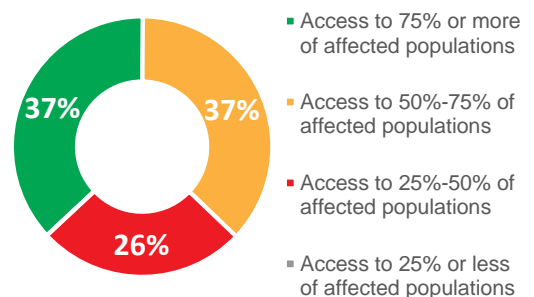
A robust and sustainable anti-trafficking response cannot lie with Protection actors alone. Anti-trafficking programming must be integrated across humanitarian sectors. Anti-trafficking efforts will not succeed without a truly multi-stakeholder approach. Strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is critical to effective anti-trafficking, as is a localized approach that promotes partnerships with government, NGOs and civil society, survivor-led organisations and faith leaders, communities and beneficiaries.

Protection Access

Protection access refers to populations who can/cannot be reached by protection actors or who can/cannot reach protection services due to access restrictions. The most common access restrictions relate to security, logistical challenges, and/or constraints from local authorities, including non-state actors. Access for provision of protection services requires sustained presence and trust in communities.

According to the survey of Protection Clusters in October 2020, 10 Clusters have access to/can be reached by 75% or more of affected populations. A further 10 have access to/can be reached by 50-75% of affected populations, while 7 have access to 50% or less of affected populations.

Estimated protection access



⁵ Demographic Health Survey in Mali, 2018

⁶ Mali, Enquête par grappes à Indicateurs Multiples (MICS) 2015, Rapport de Résultats Clés (Mars 2016), available at: https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS5/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Mali/2015/Key%20findings/Mali%202015%20MICS%20Key%20Findings%20Report_French.pdf

⁷ For more information on the interlinkages between trafficking in persons and marriage, see this new report from UNODC: Interlinkages between Trafficking in Persons and Marriage, ISSUE PAPER, 2020: https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2020/UNODC_Interlinkages_Trafficking_in_Persons_and_Marriage.pdf

⁸ UNODC, *Introduction to Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants: Training module for police officers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali* (2020), https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2020/Training_Manual_on_TIP_-_SOM_for_MINUSMA_UNPOL.pdf

Access to affected populations to deliver protection services and/or how accessible services are to populations is particularly challenged in [Cameroon](#), [Colombia](#), [Honduras](#), [Iraq](#), [Libya](#), [Mali](#) and [Ukraine](#). In all but Honduras (affected by Tropical Storm Eta) and Iraq, security challenges are cited; logistical challenges are experienced by all but Colombia, and constraints by local authorities, including non-state actors, are affecting Cameroon, Iraq, Libya and Ukraine.

In North West South West [Cameroon](#), parties to the conflict are imposing lockdowns under their areas of control, seriously challenging humanitarian access and activities but also creating a climate of fear in which the civilian population has started to show reluctance reporting protection incidents to protection monitors and partners. Armed groups in [Colombia](#) continue to take advantage of COVID-19 movement restrictions to consolidate territorial control, while movement restrictions in [Libya](#) (impacting 49% of Libyan households and 42% of non-Libyans) are impeding access to humanitarian services. In [Myanmar](#), escalating fighting in Rakhine state coupled with Government restrictions means accountable protection programming to IDP populations has been severely restricted. Repeated attacks against humanitarians have occurred in [CAR](#), while kidnappings of humanitarian workers in [Niger](#) is an ongoing risk (12 kidnapped NGO workers were released in September). The Government closure of check points in the [Ukraine](#) has restricted access for protection actors to communities living along the conflict lines.

In particularly volatile crises, humanitarian access is a challenge faced for all responders. The challenge is on the double for protection services as it requires securing safe, community based and sustained presence in communities. The Global Protection Cluster is working establish systems to better monitor access for protection in order to help improve our reach to vulnerable communities

* These access results do not include Venezuela and Yemen.

Protection Funding

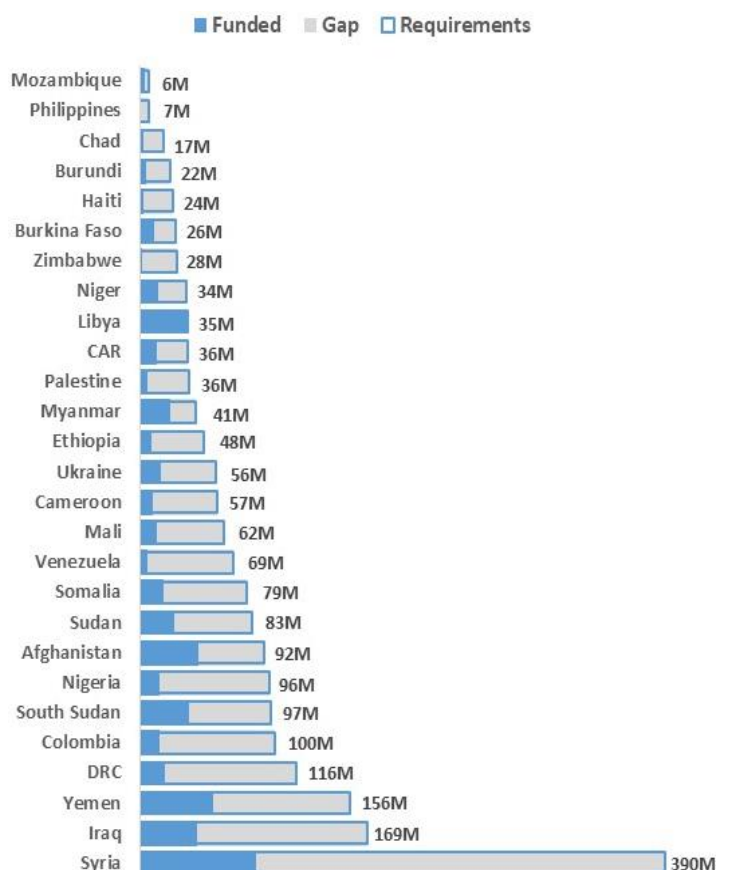


In what has been a challenging year, the international community has stepped up to ensure the delivery of a minimum package of protection assistance needed by communities in a deteriorating protection environment. However, protecting the most vulnerable requires a continuum of support, and as we approach the end of the year, funding remains at just a quarter of the appeal (25% for COVID-19 response, and 27% for overall protection needs).

When protection funding is limited, Clusters are forced to prioritise. This results in either limiting the set of protection services available, or the number of people who can be reached.

Of particular concern is protection funding for Zimbabwe and Venezuela, which remains under **10%** funded, as well as for 10 other operations (Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Nigeria and Palestine) where the response remains under **20%** funded.¹

Coordinated protection programming is lifesaving. The Global Protection Cluster and Norwegian Refugee Council will [launch a new report on 30th November](#) that examines the latest trends on financing for protection, with a set of recommendations for adopting a smarter approach in light of contemporary challenges to humanitarian funding.



Field Coordination and Operational Response

In line with its [Strategic Framework for 2020-2024](#), the GPC has developed an Operational Footprint with minimum benchmarks to enhance operational effectiveness and ensure basics of coordination and programming are in place in all field operations. In October 2020, a global survey was launched to obtain baseline information around the updated nine pillars of the Footprint. Building on GPC Forum events, the analysis of the survey data provides an overview of the current situation in GPC field operations. Together with the upcoming Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) to be launched in December 2020, this baseline will allow the GPC to identify good practices to better define GPC standards and minimal expectations for field operations, highlight critical gaps for proactive field support, and monitor progress. It is important to note that this initial baseline is based on self-assessment by field cluster coordinators based on best available information. More information about the different components and methodology used in the analysis can be found [here](#).

Pillars of the Global Operational Footprint

1. DELIVER ESSENTIAL QUALITY SERVICES TO POPULATIONS IN NEED

Overall assessment

■ Adequate ■ Partial ■ Insufficient



Protection partners continue to deliver critical life-saving protection services despite dire operational contexts. Shrinking operational space and access constraints, compounded by major operational disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and funding gaps are impacting significantly the coverage of essential protection services.

As a result, about a third of field operations report that most of their services reach less than 30% of target populations or are not implemented at all. Yet, despite those challenges, in 14% of field operations most services remain available to more than 65% of target populations.

2. COORDINATE SERVICE DELIVERY

Overall assessment

■ Adequate ■ Partial ■ Insufficient



Almost all operations have a system tracking who is doing what where when, in place use to track progress and coverage of activities, with some using online dashboards (see [Afghanistan](#), [Iraq](#), [Nigeria](#), [Syria](#), [Ukraine](#) and [Venezuela](#)). However, about half of them need to ensure all partners share data more regularly.

About 2/3 of operations have services mapping and referral pathways in place, some use online platforms (see [Burkina Faso](#), [Iraq](#), [Mali](#), [Somalia](#), [Ukraine](#), [Venezuela](#)). Nevertheless, much progress needs to be made to ensure greater coverage, harmonization and information sharing within the cluster and with other clusters.

3. INFORM HUMANITARIAN STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

Overall assessment

■ Adequate ■ Partial ■ Insufficient

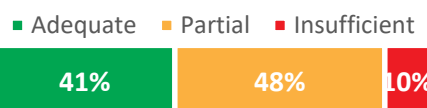


Despite challenges for data collection posed by COVID-19, most operations have some protection monitoring (66%) and protection needs assessments (77%) systems in place (see [Burkina Faso](#), [Chad](#), [DRC](#), [Iraq](#), [Mali](#), [Niger](#), [Nigeria](#), [Somalia](#), and [Ukraine](#)). However, most need better harmonization of tools, increased coverage, and more timely data sharing from partners to strengthen the quality of collective analysis and regular reporting.

Almost all clusters provide briefings to HCT at least quarterly, many even on a monthly or weekly basis. While 73% of clusters undertake joint protection analysis, most only do it during the HNO/HRP process, and about a third do it at least on a quarterly basis. There is also a need to enhance the collective analysis including cluster SAG, sub-national coordinators, etc, to expand scope of data sources, to increase the regularity of reporting ([Philippines](#), [South Sudan](#), [Ukraine](#) and [Yemen](#)).

4. PLAN AND IMPLEMENT CLUSTERS STRATEGIES

Overall assessment

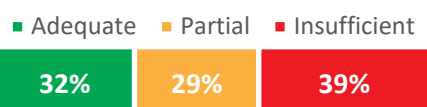


Virtually all field operations have a strategy and/or work plan in place identifying key response priorities, objectives and funding requirements. All clusters promoted the Centrality of Protection in inter-sectoral needs analysis and response planning, with half of field operations rather successful in their endeavours, and the other half still facing challenges.

Positively, essentially all operations contributed to interagency funding processes such as Pooled Funds and CERF, and engagement in durable solutions processes has become standard practice across field operations. Although limited, few field operations show good practices in engaging and participating in development and peace.

5. MONITOR AND EVALUATE RESPONSE

Overall assessment

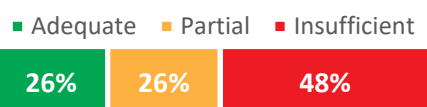


Almost 80% of operations conduct reviews of progress against objectives, targets and requirements, two third of those do it at least quarterly.

However, there are important gaps in relation to mechanisms to monitor the quality of protection services, and cluster coordination performance monitoring – with the latter to be address in the coming weeks through the revamped CCPM process for the review of 2020.

6. BUILD NATIONAL CAPACITIES IN PREPAREDNESS AND CONTIGENCY PLANNING

Overall assessment

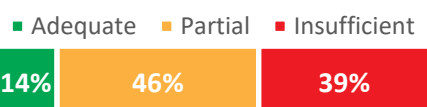


More attention needs to be given at ensuring preparedness and contingency plans, with a strong component of localisation through capacity building of local authorities, civil society, local partners and communities for different type of recurrent hazards (i.e. conflict/violence, natural hazards, diseases outbreaks). About a quarter of field operations have plans for all type of risks, yet half appear to have no contingency planning in place.

Similarly, a small number of operations have developed transition strategies. Although this may well reflect operational environments not ripe for transition, it is nevertheless a point of improvement.

7. SUPPORT ROBUST ADVOCACY

Overall assessment

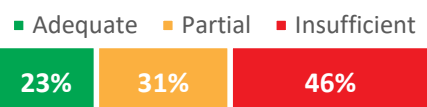


Although less than half of operations have an advocacy strategy in place, many operations produce regular advocacy briefing notes (e.g. [Afghanistan](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Chad](#) and [South Sudan](#)), and almost all operations contribute to HCT advocacy messaging (albeit, with differing regularity).

About half of field operations conduct multilateral meetings with donors, most of them of a wide range of topics such as protection risks, needs, response, advocacy and/or funding, and half of them at least quarterly.

8. ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS AND STRONG ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITIES

Overall assessment



While 70% of operations report facilitating trainings for partners on Code of Conduct, PSEA, or Child Safeguarding, only a third required adherence to those policies as a condition for cluster membership. Less than half field cluster report facilitating trainings for partners on AAP and feedback mechanisms highlighting lingering lack of clarity on the role of the cluster (as opposed to agencies themselves) in fostering AAP.

Finally, rights awareness-raising, RCCE, and community-based protection programming constitute some of the strongest protection programming in field operations. Nevertheless, only a quarter of field operations have developed harmonized approaches for community engagement and RCCE highlighting the need for improvement.

9. CLUSTER RESOURCES AND LEADERSHIP

Overall assessment

■ Adequate ■ Partial ■ Insufficient



Effective protection coordination requires dedicated resources, appropriate structures and collective ways of working. While 71% of clusters report having a dedicated national coordinator position showing great progress over the past few years, only 37% have co-coordination in place, and 38% count on a dedicated IMO. In addition, while Child Protection and GBV AoR are active in almost all operations, gaps in HLP coordination remain in many field operations despite major progress over the last couple of years.

Last but not least, half of field clusters do not have Strategic Advisory Groups in place, and only a quarter of those include representation of local NNGOs and meet at least quarterly showing progress to be made to ensure inclusive, participatory and collective approaches to coordination.

Global Protection Forum



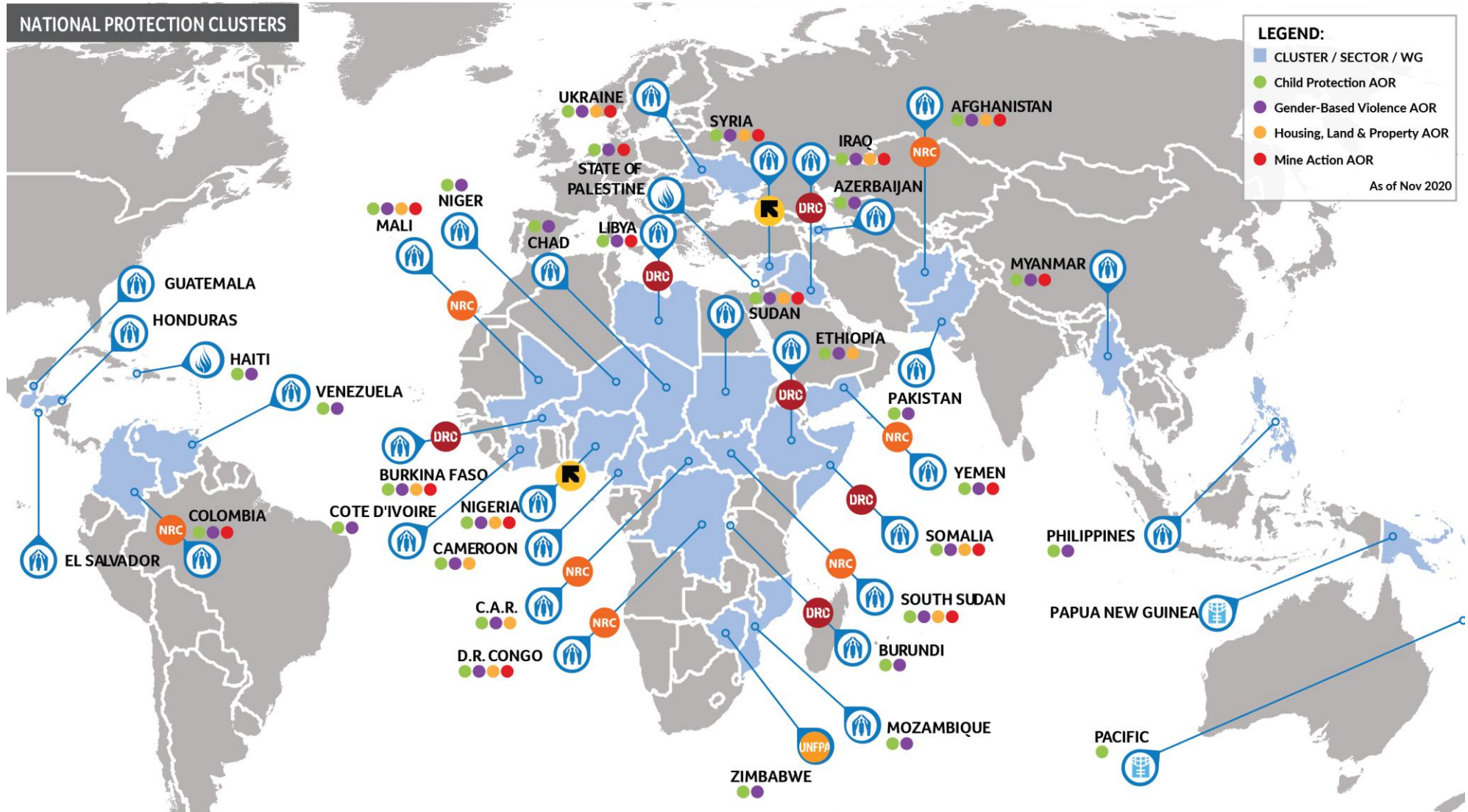
The Global Protection Cluster’s [annual forum](#) held during September-October, allowed over 2,800 partners and field coordinators across the globe to convene together in 8 technical events and 17 thematic events.

The Forum culminates in a high-level event: The State of Protection in the COVID-19 Era, on 30 November. Please join us by registering at: phap.org/30nov2020



The Global Protection Cluster is a network of NGOs, international organizations and UN agencies, engaged in protection work in humanitarian crises including armed conflict, climate change related and natural disaster. The GPC ensures well-coordinated, effective and principled protection preparedness and responses, and that protection is at the core of all humanitarian action and recognized as essential in any nexus with development and peace. The GPC unites members, partners and communities working on the full gamut of protection activities, including in four specialized Areas of Responsibility: Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Housing, Land and Property and Mine Action. The GPC contributes to and benefits from the broader IASC system.





This map highlights all GPC field operations whether formally activated protection clusters and sectors, or protection working groups. It shows the cluster lead agency (CLA), and where applicable the co-coordinating NGO, as well as active areas of responsibility (AoR) - Child Protection, Gender-based Violence (GBV), Mine Action, or Housing, Land and Property (HLP).

LEAD & CO-COORDINATING AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

