Global Protection Cluster

RENEWING THE BOND
A call to action to put rights at the centre of the response
This Global Protection Update covers 26 countries where Protection Clusters are active

Photo by: UNHCR media

Human rights are universal, inalienable, and indivisible. At anytime and anywhere.

Mid-way through 2021, all our operations relay one clear, consistent, and loud message - - the capacity of people on the frontlines of conflicts and disasters is crushed under the weight of crisis upon crisis.

People are triple impacted. Firstly, many are the victims of violence and abuse. Secondly, many survivors are left on their own with heavy physical, mental, and societal burdens, and little road to justice. Thirdly, people are forced to resort to harmful practices to cope, to survive, and to eat.

We see the rule of law eroded in many contexts. Basic infrastructure is systematically targeted and destroyed, leaving societies without shelter, markets, schools, and hospitals. Girls, boys, women, livelihoods, and hopes are starved, bombarded, and trapped by medieval sieges and explosives. We see traffickers target young women, young men and children feeding on uncertainty, despair, and vulnerability. Women and girls are enslaved, exploited, and abused, denying them the ability to fulfil their potential. The elderly and persons with disability are left behind. We see the all too vilifying label of 'other' stamped on displaced, minorities, indigenous people, migrants, refugees, and the LGBTI community. Children are abused, pushed out of school, and forced to work. We also observe global hunger on the rise, education under attack and youth unemployment and lack of hope rising to alarming levels. National and local responders and human rights defenders arbitrarily disappear and are detained. Humanitarians, health workers and journalists are killed.

The challenge for protection actors today is double faceted: Firstly, how do we keep the hard-fought gains made over the last decade in terms of respect for human rights and humanitarian principles? Secondly, how do we keep ensuring that today, in the multi-layered crises, that rights of people and the obligations of duty bearers under international law are understood, respected, protected, and fulfilled without discrimination?

The UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights calls for individual and collective responsibility to consider human rights in all decision-making, operations, and institutional commitments. This Call to Action recognizes that respect for human rights is an essential crisis prevention mechanism. But when prevention falls short and violence is rampant, people need protection. The Call to Action identifies diverse courses that can be taken:

 1- We can work hand-in-hand with Governments and other stakeholders, providing technical support to build national human rights institutions and guide the national application of international norms and standards. 2- We can speak out, identifying both violations and violators. 3- We can work behind the scenes. 4- We can engage with the Security Council and human rights mechanisms to raise awareness, prevent crises, protect people, and ensure accountability, including through international criminal courts and other mechanisms for global justice. There is a place for each of these approaches, and often several at once. The ultimate test is meaningful change in people's lives.

Human rights aspirations define a hope and road map and a bond for all human beings to live to their fullest potential. Today, on the frontlines of conflicts and disasters, it is high time to renew that bond.

CONTEXT UPDATE

During this reporting period, March 2021 – May 2021, we have seen an intensification of conflict across multiple contexts, resulting in situations of displacement, often forcing people who have been displaced on several previous occasions to once again leave their homes or shelters: In Sudan, hundreds of thousands of people were displaced in parts of the Darfur region due to a spike in intercommunal violence; in Mozambique increased attacks by non-state armed groups, deliberately targeting the civilian population, also triggered displacement; in Myanmar, the military coup in February led to violent suppression of civilian protestors and there are warnings that the country is on the brink of a return to civil war; in Afghanistan, ten members of the HALO Trust were killed, and 16 others injured, when gunmen burst into a demining camp in Baghlan-e-Markazi district in June; in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, the government declared a ceasefire after Tigrayan troops retook the regional capital Mekelle in June and in the same region three staff members of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) were killed in an attack. Alongside a rise in violence or armed conflict, the operating environment becomes increasingly difficult for humanitarian actors, meanwhile the frequency of human rights violations increases, as does the imperative to provide lifesaving support.

Psychological distress is continuously highlighted as being amongst the most severe protection concerns across all operations, and this is often linked to having been subject to human rights violations or the fear of violence and abuse. The psychological impact of violence on children is of ever-growing concern. In the wake of another escalation of conflict between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups, the levels of psychological distress amongst children are of paramount concern. As people in Gaza begin to rebuild their homes, they are forced to live with the constant fear of the next spike of violence and the ever-compounding impact that this has on every aspect of their lives.

Situations of armed conflict exacerbate pre-existing dynamics that discriminate against women and girls and expose them to a higher risk of human rights violations. This includes early marriage, trafficking or exploitation, and gender-based violence, all of which further exacerbate levels of psychological distress. Although outside of situations of armed conflict, the levels of gender-based violence reported in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador remains of severe concern and must not be overlooked. Across all operations, Protection Clusters continue to help to support people affected by these issues, but there is a necessity for increased resources to meet the acute levels of need.

Natural disaster and climate change continue to exacerbate or drive humanitarian need across operations. Protection colleagues continue to respond to the needs of people affected by Hurricanes Eta and Iota in Honduras and Cyclone Eloise in Mozambique, to displaced populations in South Sudan who once again are affected by seasonal flooding, and in DRC, where the eruption of the Nyiragongo Volcano in May led to the displacement of thousands, compounding an already desperate living situation for many.

As conflict shows no signs of abating, the operating environment becomes increasingly challenging, and several clusters have reported increased mobility restrictions during the reporting period, including Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Colombia. Although restrictions on movement previously in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic have been lifted, in some operations they remain, and continue to present obstacles to the delivery of aid.

Emerging Protection Trends

Active conflict or **violence** is occurring in all field operations. 72% operations report the situation as severe or extreme.

Almost all operations report **new forced movement** and **displacement**, including **forced returns**. 50% of operations classify the situation as severe or extreme

Explosive ordinance contamination is a risk across all operations. In 45% of operations the risks for civilians are severe or extreme.

Every field operation **describes psychological** distress and growing mental health needs amongst the affected populations. 41% rate the risk of distress as severe; 17% as extreme.

Every field operation reports **Gender-Based Violence** as being amongst top concerns; 79% describe the GBV risk as severe or extreme.

Violence against children is highlighted by all field operations as a major concern, with 61% describing the risk as severe or extreme.

36% of operations report severe or extreme risks related to **housing, evictions, land and property**

46% of Protection Clusters report **child marriage** as a moderate risk. 35% operations rate the risk as severe or extreme.

KEY COUNTRY NEWS

The US has officially pushed the date of withdrawing troops in **Afghanistan** from May 1 to September 11. Meanwhile, the operating environment continues to deteriorate, and the security situation remains volatile and unpredictable. On May 8, a terrorist attack took place outside a school in Dasht-e-Barchi, Kabul specifically targeting girls and their families. Scores of civilians, including students, between ages of 11 and 15 were killed and hundreds of others injured. On June 8, ten members of the HALO Trust were killed, with 16 others injured, when gunmen entered their demining camp in Baghlan-e-Markazi district and opened fire.

In **Burkina Faso**, since early May, a series of armed attacks on villages in the commune of Tin-Akoff, in the northern Sahel region and close to the borders with Mali and Niger, has displaced 4,755 people, forcing them to seek refuge in the town of Tin-Akoff and the nearby town of Markoye. Local authorities are reporting urgent multi-sectoral needs among the newly displaced, but access to Tin-Akoff remains very difficult due to frequent security incidents, limiting humanitarian operations in the area.

The security situation in the North-West and South-West (NWSW) regions of **Cameroon** remain volatile with frequent use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and clashes between State and non-State armed group (NSAG), triggering the displacement of civilian population and affecting humanitarian access. Violence across NWSW regions has resulted in over 1,427 people

forced to flee their homes seeking shelter and safety in nearby bushes, villages, and towns in March alone.

On 28 April, peaceful demonstrations against a tax reform bill across **Colombia** mainly in Cali, Popayán, Pasto, Neiva, Medellín and Bogotá was seriously affected by the disproportionate use of force and repression by security forces. Reports of at least 26 killings, 1,876 cases of police violence, 216 injuries, approximately 168 disappearances, 963 alleged arbitrary detentions, at least 12 sexual violence cases, including allegations of torture. Massive, forced displacement is among the recurring emergencies and as of April 30, at least 18,957 people have been affected.

With the rainy season in **CAR** barely beginning, on 23 April torrential rains in Kodozilo and Danzi villages, affected more than 150 families, collapsed 50 houses, damaged 80 houses and plunged the entire capital of Bangui into darkness for weeks. On 18 April, an accidental fire broke out at the PK3 site for IDPs in Bria destroying 364 shelters and leaving at least 2,000 people homeless. A decline in security incidents affecting humanitarian organizations was recorded in April (34 incidents against 53 recorded in March). However, the civilian population remains the first victim of the renewed tensions in prefectures of Nana-Gribizi, Ouham and Bamingui-Bamoran.

On 20 April, **Chad**'s President Idris Deby died amidst fighting with rebel group 'Front for Change and Concord Chad (FACT)' in the Kanem region, and plunging the country into uncertainty. Following this, allegations of dispropor-

tionate use of force including the use of live ammunition by security and defense forces in the context of protests have been reported. A Transitionary Military Council (TMC) headed by the late President's son Mahamat Idris Itno Deby will be leading the country for the next 18 months until elections.

DRC saw the official end of the 12th Ebola outbreak on 3 May, just 3 months after the first case in North Kivu. On 22 May, following the eruption of Nyiragongo volcano, over 5000 people fled the city of Goma and crossed the border into Rwanda, resulting in more than 150 children separated from their families and more than 170 children feared to be missing. Some 3,629 houses, 3 health structures and 12 schools have been destroyed. The volcanic eruption compounds the acute humanitarian needs in North-Kivu, where in 3.2 million people face food emergency and 44% of the country's 5 million displaced people are in the province.
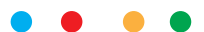
On 1 May, **El Salvador**´s Legislative Assembly removed 5 magistrates of the Supreme Court's Constitutional Chamber, including Attorney General Raúl Melara, for issuing "arbitrary" decisions. The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS), Salvadoran civil societies and NGOs, the U.S. Vice President, UN Secretary-General, all expressed their rejection to the dismissals and urged El Salvador to respect the separation of powers.

The armed conflict between the Federal Government of **Ethiopia** and the ruling party in the Tigray Region, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), entered its 6th month in May. The federal government imposed a six-month state

of emergency, undertaking what it called a "law-enforcement operation". The conflict has resulted in about 2 million internally displaced people, widespread disruption of access to health facilities and basic services, and 5.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. On 28 June 2021, the Ethiopian government declared an immediate and unilateral ceasefire after Tigrayan troops retook the regional capital Mekelle. Government soldiers retreated in the region, in which hundreds of thousands are suffering in a famine crisis. On Friday 25 June, three staff members of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) were killed in an attack in the Tigray region, which has been widely condemned by the international community.

At the beginning of March, **Guatemala** started its national vaccination plan. However, due to national documentation requirements, foreign citizens, including asylum seekers and refugees, face challenges in registering for the vaccine. The end of the eruptive phase for the Guatemalan volcano of Pacaya was announced on 23 April, however a new fissure on 3 May once again put residents of nearby communities and authorities of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction on alert.

In **Honduras**, a total of 417,000 persons were severely affected by hurricanes Eta and Iota in November 2020. Up to April 2021, 2,000 still remain in shelters in Cortés and Santa Bárbara, although most of the shelters were suspended in March once the electoral process began. Women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities are especially affected by this protracted state of emergency. Moreover, April became the second deadliest month in Hon-

duras due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with 678 deaths. Here the challenges of hospital capacity have not been overcome.

On 1 March, a new law was adopted in **Iraq** that provides reparation, compensation, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society for women and girls who have survived atrocities of ISIL terrorist fighters. Risks of eviction are ongoing from informal settlements in Mosul district that hosts IDPs who were forced to leave the formal camps and ended up in secondary displacement settlements. The Ameriyat al Fallujah (AAF) camp closure is postponed till further notice after some violent protest against the Al-Jazera and Al-Badiyah Operations Command during the relocation process.

The transitional institutions in **Mali** that resulted from the August 18, 2020 coup d'état continue to operate amidst unions' socio-professional protests. The security situation is marked by the presence of non-state armed groups along the three borders of the Liptako Gourma (Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger), recurring inter-community conflicts, the presence of improvised explosive devices, and attacks against national and international armed forces and humanitarian organizations. As of 31st March, the country accounted for 346,8641 IDPs, of which 61% are children.

On 24 March, in **Mozambique**, an attack by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) on Palma, severely affected the local population, with reports of grave human rights violations causing forced displacement. Road access to Tanzania (north) or Nangade District (west) are not deemed safe, and moreover IDPs reported

that the NSAG specifically target civilians on-the-run. This results in long journeys through alternative routes to reach Afungi peninsula, which is still considered safe. Once there, IDPs wait to be let onto evacuation boats to reach safety in the south of Cabo Delgado.

Since the 1 February military takeover in **Myanmar**, the military presence has significantly increased, and additional checkpoints have been established in different locations. Furthermore, an increase in movement restrictions has been observed through formal and informal impositions by de-facto authorities, particularly in Kachin and the northern Shan State. Between April and May, around 46,000 people were displaced in the south-eastern region due to the conflict and insecurity, about 37,000 of them displaced in late May following the clashes in Kayah State.

The political level is calmer in **Niger**, with the investiture of the new president of the Republic of Niger on April 2, and the formation of the new government. On May 21, the national authorities in collaboration with those of the Tillabéri region and the facilitation of the National Mediator, initiated the planned return of all 12,112 IDPs (1,643 households) from the four villages of the commune of Anzourou to their localities of origin. These displacements were caused by attacks and other abuses perpetrated by non-state armed groups.

In **Nigeria**, ahead of the upcoming rainy season, there is anticipation that the food supplies in Rann town, northeastern Borno state, hosting over 25,000 civilians and IDPs will be cut-off by flooding. Rann is one of the most challeng-

ing operating contexts in north-east Nigeria due to repeated non-state armed groups attacks that have claimed hundreds of civilian lives, including aid workers, and flooding that cuts off the entire town for several months every year.

Somalia declared a drought on 25 April. The combined effects of drought and flood are worsening the dire circumstances of 2.7 million food insecure people in the country. In addition, armed conflict in Somalia continues to impact heavily on civilians. According to OCHA, the armed conflict escalated on the 25 April resulting in the displacement of an estimated 250,000 people. Access to justice remains one of the most prevalent protection concerns across Somalia.

South Sudan saw the first killing of an aid worker this year during an ambush in Budi, East Equatoria on 12 May. The security situation remains worrisome for the lives of civilians and has led to several sizeable new displacements in the past months, aggravating the protection situation of IDPs and host communities. The recent announcement of WFP Food ration cuts for targeted populations coming into play this May due to funding constraints, including a reduction of food rations for IDPs refugees in South Sudan from 70% to 50%, will further exacerbate protection risks.

In **Palestine**, an outbreak of violence in the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict commenced on 10 May and continued until a ceasefire came into effect on 21 May. It was marked by protests and rioting, police riot control, rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Israeli airstrikes target-

ing the Gaza Strip. Hamas and other militants fired more than 4,000 rockets from Gaza, while Israel carried out over 1,500 strikes. It is estimated that more than 250 Palestinians were killed, including whole families, with 66 children among the victims.

During the first quarter and April 2021 in some parts of **Sudan**, mainly West, South and Central Darfur, intercommunal violence was reported. As a result, particularly in El Geneina and Greida, many IDPs and conflict affected populations were killed, injured, and around 200,000 displaced. Such violence was also reported in the eastern corridor of South Kordofan. UN agencies and UNITAMS are in the process of development and submission of a comprehensive Protection of Civilians project proposal for funding to the US government.

Despite a time of relative calm in **Syria**, compared with earlier years of the conflict, it is also a period of growing humanitarian suffering of Syrians, with no improvement in the economic situation, water shortages in the northeast and millions of children having to endure shock level of violence. With no progress towards advancing Security Council Resolution 2254 and an unwillingness to take the first step toward conflict resolution, it is feared that Syria will become another protracted conflict, lasting generations.

During April, the security situation in the Donetska and Luhanska oblasts in Eastern **Ukraine** remained volatile. The number of civilian casualties increased from 5 cases recorded by OHCHR in March to 17 cases in April. On 28 April, the government adopted a procedure to allow IDPs to apply to preferential long-term mortgage loans. It is expected that in 2021 to 2022, 680 households or 1,768 IDPs will benefit from this programme. COVID-19 vulnerability remains high in Donetska and Luhanska oblasts due to the high transmission rates and limited hospital capacity.

Since April, **Venezuela** saw thousands of its civilians fleeing the country away from intense armed clashes which involve the Venezuelan army and Colombian rebel groups. Families were reportedly displacing to the neighboring city of Arauquita, in Colombia, including both refugees and people with international protection needs. On 22 April, a boat capsized off the coast of Venezuela killing two people. According to IOM, the capsizing incident en route to the Caribbean islands underscores the need for safe pathways to prevent use of irregular routes, smuggling and trafficking.

In **Yemen**, the offensive in Ma'rib resumed, with frontlines shifting eastbound progressing towards Ma'rib city, with an increasingly significant impact on the civilian population. Since the start of 2021, 74 civilian casualties, including 18 fatalities have been recorded and it is estimated that the first quarter of 2021 has seen over half the civilian casualty count recorded throughout 2020. Moreover, April saw the highest child casualty count so far this year (20), and overall, the proportion of children among civilian casualties this year has been increasing.

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	10	14	3	55	17	0
Social exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination, racism and xenophobia	7	21	41	28	3	1
Forced movement and displacement of people including forced returns	3	14	31	38	14	0
Explosive ordnances contamination	25	14	14	43	4	1
Arbitrary or unlawful arrest and / or detention	21	21	18	32	7	1
Arbitrary limitation on freedom of movement	14	14	29	36	7	1
Discriminatory practices by authorities and/ or non-state actors	7	28	24	35	7	0
Disasters and the adverse effects of climate change	14	21	46	14	4	0
Attacks on humanitarian, protection and health workers, facilities and services	41	14	10	28	7	0

Based on the results of surveying protection risks & concerns in 27 Protection Clusters

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
Breach of the right to privacy and data protection	32	16	40	4	4	4
Risks related to housing, evictions, land and property	0	12	54	25	25	1
Early marriage	8	15	42	27	27	3
Family and child separation	3	7	55	27	28	0
Forced recruitment or labor	11	7	50	32	32	1
Gender-based violence or abuse		7	17	59	59	0
Psychological distress and mental health		7	34	41	41	0
Sale or exchange of sex as a coping mechanism	7	30	33	26	26	2
Trafficking of persons	7	25	57	11	11	1
Violence against children	7	7	28	48	48	0

Based on the results of surveying protection risks & concerns in 28 Protection Clusters

Almost all field operations report psychological distress and mental health concerns as a top protection risk in their context, with half of all field operations reporting this to be a severe risk. Increased attacks from non-state armed groups in Nigeria have led to a reported increase in psychological distress, often linked to reported cases of SGBV. In Colombia, the rise in civil unrest and protests during the reporting period has increased psychological distress. Similarly in Mozambique, the recent rise in armed violence in Palma has led to a rise in mental health concerns amongst IDPs as many have faced atrocities and been subject to physical violence. In Mali there continue to be regular reports of social exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination, racism and xenophobia, all of which lead to significant psychological distress. The recent escalation of conflict in Palestine between Israeli Security Forced and armed groups Gaza, has exacerbated the already extremely high levels of psychological distress and the need for increased psychosocial support.

In Gaza, where around 43% of the population are under the age of 15, the psychosocial needs amongst children are particularly acute. Protection clusters generally report a need for increased provision of mental health services.

Gender-based violence is the top protection concern highlighted by field operations, **with over 60% reporting GBV to be of severe risk, and 14% reporting it as an extreme risk**. The rise in armed conflict and displacement in parts of Darfur in Sudan, and in Mali have heightened the risk of GBV. Similarly in Mozambique, the spike in armed conflict has heightened the risk of GBV amongst new IDPs, most of whom are women and girls. In South Sudan, GBV remains of high concern in and around IDP sites and women are particularly vulnerable when collecting firewood, highlighting the continued need to improve security these areas. Growing insecurity in the Anglophone region of Cameroon is also exacerbating the risk of GBV. Both Mali and Cameroon, highlight the need for more Post Exposure Preventative treatment kits. Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador all report GBV to be a severe risk, and although underreported, incidents continue to be recorded regularly. In Myanmar the risk of GBV has significantly increased after the military takeover on 1 February. In Colombia there has been an increase of femicides, including against female social leaders and human rights defenders, amidst the rise in civil unrest during the reporting period. At least 17 femicides were reported in the months of March and April in Norte de Santander and La Guajira.

Protection Clusters are active in countries with some of the highest rates of **child marriage** world wide, including Niger, CAR, South Sudan, Chad and Burkina Faso. The majority of field operations report child marriage to be amongst the top protection concerns, 46% of Protection Clusters reporting it to be of moderate risk, and **34% report it to be of severe risk,** including Cameroon, Nigeria, South Sudan and Mozambique. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, rates of child marriage have increased globally due to school closures as well as increased food insecurity and economic uncertainty pushing families to resort to child marriage as a negative mechanism.

Violence against children is reported to be a **severe to extreme risk by more than half of all field operations**. The impact of the pandemic, particularly the closure of schools for long periods of time, has placed millions of children in a more vulnerable position. They are more vulnerable to the risk of recruitment in to armed groups, as well as child labour, and millions have also missed out on early intervention programmes normally provided in schools. Children in contexts of armed conflict are particularly vulnerable. For example, in Mali there has been an increase in attacks on schools and in April, public schools were forced to close due to the rising insecurity. Family separation has also been reported as being of particular concern in Mali, and between January and March the Child Protection sub-Cluster reported 312 unaccompanied or separated children (UASC). CAR also reported the heightened risk of UASC within the context of ongoing mass displacement, placing them at greater risk of abuse. The recent upsurge of fighting in Ituri province in DRC, has led to at least 275 reported cases of UASC since the start of the year. In Cameroon, the ongoing conflict has taken its toll on children, and there are increasing reports of violations of children's rights perpetrated by different parties to the conflict, including by government forces. In Myanmar, there are concerns that children face increased vulnerability following the military takeover in February, and the subsequent rise in conflict that swept across the country. Following the coup, schools across the country were occupied by security forces, and the risk of child recruitment has increased.

Trafficking in persons is reported on as risk of moderate concern by **60% of Protection Clusters**, with the associated phenomena – **forced recruitment and forced labour – reported as either a moderate or severe risk by 85% of Protection Clusters**. Trafficking has been highlighted by the Mali Protection Cluster as being of particular concern and there are calls for improved analysis, coordination and advocacy on the issue.

In Nigeria, where there has been an increase in NSAG activity in recent months, there have been reports of **child recruitment** in to armed groups. There have also been a growing number of children associated with armed forces or armed groups in Cameroon. During the reporting period, about 100 cases have been reported by humanitarian actors in the North West/South West as children have reached out to faith-based organizations to seek help once after leaving the armed groups. In Somalia, child recruitment by both state and non-state armed forced is flagged as one of the main reasons for family separation. In Colombia the recent spike in violence coincides with a stark rise in the recruitment of children by organized armed groups and organized criminal groups. The recent escalation of conflict in DRC in Ituri and North Kivu, exacerbate the already extremely high risk of child recruitment in this part of the country, Child labour increased over the past year across multiple contexts as a result the loss of income and livelihoods due to the impact of the pandemic. In CAR child labour is highlighted as a protection risk that is on the rise, particularly in the mining areas. Child protection actors continue to advocate for more support in addressing this issue.

Explosive ordinance contamination is a highlighted a severe risk across by 43% of all field operations and a number of Protection Clusters report an increase in the incidents relating to explosive ordinance since the start of 2021. In Colombia, at least 57 people have been killed or injured as a result of explosive ordnance this year. Across parts of the country the high presence of mines continues to limit movement and inhibit access to basic services. In April, over 3,000 people were affected by mobility restrictions in Chocó and Antioquia. CAR has also seen an increasing trend of explosive ordnance. Since January 2021, eight incidents involving explosive devices have been recorded and a total of 17 people were killed. In 2020, only two explosive incidents were reported. In Cameroon, protection actors report the increased use of IEDs in both the North West/South West and in the Far North regions of Cameroon since the start of the year. In the past IEDs have primarily targeted security forces, however 2021 has seen the indiscriminate placing of these devises in areas where civilians have become victims. There is currently no dedicated expertise or funding in support of mine action. In Myanmar, landmines continue to constitute a serious protection risk across the country, with an increase in landmine incidents reported from Kachin state in particular during the first quarter of 2021. Since the start of the year at least 57 people, including 18 children have been killed in landmine related incidents, mostly in Shan and Rakhine states. In Ukraine between January and April there has been a 50% increase in the number of reported mine/ERW incidents in comparison to the same period in 2020.

Risks related to **housing, evictions, land and property** remain significant in most countries, with over **80% of Protection Clusters reporting this to be of moderate to severe concern**. During the reporting period returnees to Nigeria from neighbouring countries resulted in disputes between communities and risks relating to housing, evictions, land and property consequently increased. In Mali, the rise in armed violence has led to an increased number of attacks on civilian homes, violating rights to property. In Mozambique risks relating to housing, evictions, land and property are highlighted as being of particular concern in light of forced displacement and relocation of IDPs to areas where they do not have the right to legal tenure, whilst also being at risk of losing land in their areas of origin. In the North West and South West regions of Cameroon there is an increasing

number of IDPs and returnees without adequate housing or land tenure. Since early 2021, HLP-related incidents in Cameroon represent between 20 and 28% of the total number protection incidents reported on a monthly basis by protection monitoring partners. In Iraq, the risk of eviction from informal IDP settlements in the Mosul district remains. The informal settlements mostly host people who were previously forced to leave the formal IDP camps. The IDPs are highly vulnerable, and most are unable to return to their areas of origin due to perceived affiliation with extremist groups.

Almost all operations indicate that the needs of People Living With Disabilities (PLWD) increased during 2020, whilst at the same time, the services that did exist faced massive disruption due to the impact of the pandemic. In situations of crisis, including both natural disaster and situations of armed violence, PLWD are more likely to be left without access to needed assistance. During periods of conflict PLWD are often unable to flee and may find themselves stuck in areas under siege. Furthermore, there is a heightened risk that PLWD may experience targeted violence and abuse because of their disability. Targeted violence against persons with disabilities may include physical attacks, killings, denial of food and medicine, harassment, emotional abuse, profound neglect, shackling, and confinement. Over the reporting period, conflict has escalated in a number of contexts including Myanmar, Nigeria, Mali and Sudan, amongst others. In Myanmar for example, it has been highlighted that PLWD are likely to face additional vulnerabilities following the escalation of violence since February.

Across most of the contexts where a Protection Cluster is active, the need for additional services to support PLWD is regularly highlighted. The Protection Cluster in CAR for example, reports that while partners are making increasingly concerted efforts to take in to account the needs of PLWD in their response, it remains insufficient.

In coordination with the Protection Cluster in Mozambique, the Forum for Elderly Persons (Forum da Terceira Idade) has sent activists into the Centro Desportivo to assess the needs of the elderly. Mobility issues have prevented many from reaching safe havens where they could be evacuated either by plane or by boat. An element that has been observed in this situation is the high numbers of elderly persons and persons with disabilities fleeing Palma.

Across most contexts there remains a lack of data on PLWD, which therefore limits ability to ensure response plans target these specific needs. Across the board, efforts need to continue to raise awareness on the issue of PLWD.

IN FOCUS – Human Rights in Crisis

In February 2020, the Secretary General of the United Nations launched the Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action for Human Rights, in an effort to bring about a transformational change in the way that the UN and its partners engage with human rights. The Call to Action sets out overarching principles to achieve this goal and identifies seven domains where urgent action is required. 'Rights in Times of Crisis' is one of these; the main focus here is on the development of an Agenda for Protection, which would help bring about a common understanding of the centrality of protection across the UN system. The Agenda will contain a short vision statement that sets out the key principles and parameters for more protection-sensitive approaches, and an operational plan that will offer concrete guidance and resources on how to implement these.

Since the launch of the Call to Action, an inter-agency task force has been established, bringing together 15 Secretariat departments, agencies and programmes, to develop a draft operational plan for the Agenda for Protection. The Global Protection Cluster is part of this task force. The Agenda for Protection is expected to be launched in September 2021 as part of the Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda report to the General Assembly.
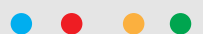
In his 'Call to Action for Human Rights', the Secretary-General commits to develop an agenda for protection for the United Nations system, underpinned by a common understanding of the centrality of protection, based on full respect of human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law. This agenda must take account of the different experiences and protection needs arising from differences in age, gender, and other diversity. The Call to Action sets out the general contours of the UN common agenda for protection: it must deliver concrete protection actions and impact for those most often excluded, to the most marginalized and those with specific needs; and it must focus on preserving human dignity, preventing human rights violations, and responding promptly and effectively when such violations occur.
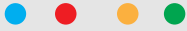
An agenda for protection must examine and address gaps and challenges that have marred the different protection systems for years, such as insufficient capacities and funding, political constraints, real and perceived dilemmas for engagement, insufficient national and local ownership of human rights protection issues, as well as the lack of a sufficiently coordinated UN approach to protection that involves the human rights, peace and security and development pillars.

Example from Nigeria
Based on the Call to Action, the Protection Sector in Nigeria has put a greater focus in its analysis on human rights. Protection concerns are assessed with the human rights framework in mind, while the Sector is also looking to highlight the impact of various interventions on the ability of affected individuals to better enjoy their human rights. The Sector's protection monitoring tool, which is to be rolled out later this year, takes a human rights-based approach. Similarly, advocacy initiatives that addressed movement restrictions during the COVID-19 lockdown and IDP camp decongestion, emphasized the principle of proportionality. For example, the Sector maintained that even when health and safety considerations may justify some limitation of the right to move and travel freely, the Government's restrictions must not exceed what is absolutely necessary, and less harmful measures shall be explored.

In order to draw global attention to the crisis in north-east Nigeria and to gross human rights violations against civilians, the Sector encourages engagement with human rights bodies, for example, with the National Human Rights Commission, the UN Human Rights Council and its Special Procedures, as well as with other monitoring processes such as the Secretary General's Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

The Sector considers the Call to Action for Human Rights a shared responsibility in which everyone has a role to play. First and foremost, the parties to the conflict in the north-east must protect civilians, including IDPs and aid workers, in accordance with their obligations under human rights and international humanitarian law. Other stakeholders are reminded of the centrality of protection in humanitarian action, and that adequate access to life-saving assistance is not only a human right in itself, but a prerequisite for the enjoyment of all other human rights. Building on the Call to Action as a reference, the Sector urges all relevant actors to prioritize in their activities – for example, those related to the return or relocation of IDPs – the safety and well-being of civilians, as well as the promotion of a conducive environment for the provision of humanitarian assistance. This collective effort covers both protection and non-protection partners, including Federal and State authorities, UN agencies, Member States, NGOs, the private sector, and other non-State actors. It importantly entails the meaningful participation of civil society in UN and national decision-making processes.
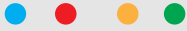
Example from Chad
Engagement with human rights mechanisms has served as a useful platform for the Protection Cluster in Chad to give visibility to, and strengthen advocacy for, the growing protection and assistance needs of over 400,000 IDPs in the Lake Chad province. In 2020, the cluster contributed to the Thematic Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, which examined internal displacement in the context of the slow-onset adverse effects of climate change. The recommendations stemming from the Special Rapporteur's thematic report, have since been used at country level to inform the 2021 protection response plan, advocacy initiatives as well as the work of the inter-agency Anticipatory Action Task Team charged with natural disaster contingency planning; ensuring that a rights-based approach is central to these activities. The cluster has also supported OHCHR with local capacity building efforts, such as a training on protection in the context of internal displacement for the newly reformed national human rights commission.

From a field perspective, the Call to Action and Agenda for Protection sets out useful guidelines and focus areas that will inform discussions with partners on what actions can be taken to advance respect for human rights at country level. The fact that it's an initiative of the UN Secretary General, that concerns all Member States, donors, humanitarian, and development actors, sends a strong signal on the importance of advancing respect for human rights and will help foster wide stakeholder consultations at country level involving decision makers. Looking ahead, and among actions yet to be defined, the protection cluster in Chad has committed to strengthening its relationship with local and international human rights actors including the national human rights commission and OHCHR on protection analysis as the basis for rights-based programming and joint advocacy.

Example from Mali
The Protection Cluster in Mali identified various opportunities vis a vis the Call to Action and Agenda for Protection. Firstly, shaping the narrative to be more human rights centered; the situation in Mali is a 'protection crisis', with grave human rights violations being documented. The narrative shifted when the Protection Cluster reinforced its protection monitoring system and was able to produce comprehensive protection analysis identifying main protection risks and threats. Secondly, building on national capacities is key. The National Human Rights Commission is an active member of the Protection Cluster and strategic use of extensive resources also existing within OHCHR/MINUSMA HR Unit (investigation capacity on grave human rights violations, training, monitoring, advocacy) is to be leveraged.

There are several good practices that have been identified in Mali. As an example, UNHCR's protection monitoring is placed under the Protection Cluster – this means that protection data and analysis is made available for all Cluster members with the ultimate goal of information and shaping programme planning, response and advocacy. The protection monitoring system reports on 6 categories and 33 types of human rights violations and human rights are at the centre. It should be noted that 65% of advocacy initiatives led by the Protection Cluster are based on protection data and analysis coming from the protection monitoring system. Advocacy is therefore evidence-based and rights-based.

At the same time, the power of joint advocacy is being used more proactively. Protection Cluster recently collaborated with the Health Cluster and Food Security Cluster to reinforce common messaging. Human rights violations are at the core of the intersectoral analysis (e.g. note on the implication of protection incidents and conflict on food insecurity; note on the increased attacks against health facilities).

Complementarity of Protection Cluster Strategy and HCT Protection Strategy in which advocacy on human rights is a focus area is an opportunity to bring human rights to the centre. The first strategic objective of the HCT Protection Strategy is about "preventing and ending recurring violations through leadership engagement and rights-based advocacy". The Protection Cluster strategy is based on preventing and responding to human rights violations.

Recent engagement with human rights mechanisms (e.g., MRM) and provision of information feeding into human rights special procedures have been a powerful advocacy tool (Annual Report of the Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Mali).

Nevertheless, major challenges still remain. This includes navigating humanitarian action in a politicized context – including possible detrimental effects such as public human rights discourse becoming more restricted, and shrinking protection space (e.g., access issues, impact on dialogue/relationship with parties to the conflict).

Protection Access

Protection access refers to the ability of humanitarian protection actors to reach affected people, as well as the affected population's ability to access humanitarian protection assistance and services in a timely and unimpeded manner. Multiple constraints varying from armed hostilities or physical difficulties to excessive and time-consuming administrative requirements, hampers humanitarian protection access in different contexts.

The most common access restrictions faced by Protection Clusters relate to security, logistical challenges, and/or constraints from local authorities, including non-state actors.

Although successful delivery of any humanitarian service requires trust from affected people and host communities, the nature of protection work, in supporting individuals to access their rights, requires sustained presence and trust in communities.

The Global Protection Cluster is working to establish systems to better monitor access for protection to help improve our reach to vulnerable communities.

During this reporting period Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, Mali and Yemen all report to have between 25% and 50% access, while South Sudan and Nigeria report to have less than 25%.

Throughout the first quarter of 2021 the access situation deteriorated in a number of contexts, largely due to a rise in conflict. For example, in Myanmar, the spread of violence that followed the coup and installation of new checkpoints has complicated the ability of humanitarian actors to reach the population in need.
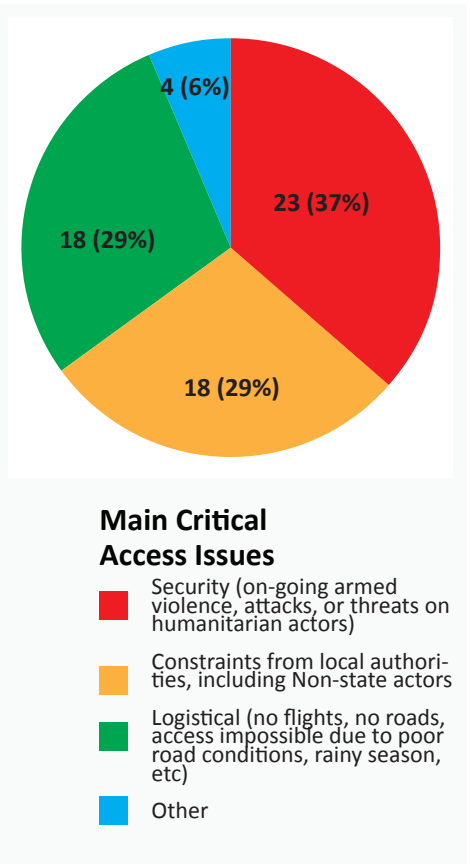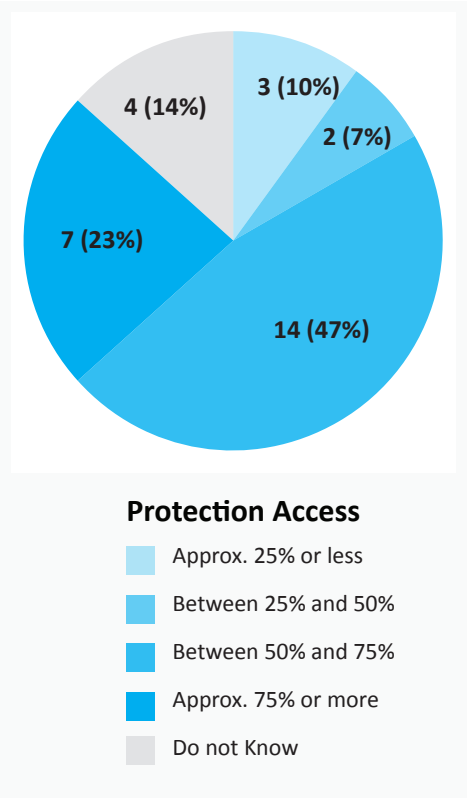
In Nigeria, the increase in the activity of NSAGs including several targeted attacks against humanitarian assents led a number of aid workers to be relocated away from Damasak, Dikwa, and Marite to Maiduguri in April. This led to a temporary suspension of some humanitarian activities.

In South Sudan conflict escalated in the Equatorias during the reporting period, causing widespread displacement and interfering with the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Elsewhere across the country intercommunal violence and rising criminality continue to disrupt humanitarian activity. There are also reports that bureaucratic impediments on humanitarian actors are due to interference by local authorities on the ground. There have also been regular demands for jobs by local youth groups in Bentiu, Renk, Pibor and Melut, which at times have led to protests and violence against humanitarian assets.

In Afghanistan, data collected by the Humanitarian Access Group (HAG) shows that the total number of access related incidents has increased by 23 %, from 336 incidents in Q4 2020 to at least 436 incidents recorded during Q1 2021. This includes incidents of violence and threats against the humanitarian personnel as well as interference in humanitarian programming.

While in some contexts restrictions on movement, previously in place to limit the spread of Covid-19, have been lifted, in others contexts, movement restrictions remain. For example, in Colombia, certain parts of the country are only accessible to humanitarian missions considered as essential.
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Protection Access

- 3 (10%)
- 2 (7%)
- 14 (47%)
- 7 (23%)
- 4 (14%)

Legend:
- Approx. 25% or less
- Between 25% and 50%
- Between 50% and 75%
- Approx. 75% or more
- Do not Know

Main Critical Access Issues

- 23 (37%)
- 18 (29%)
- 18 (29%)
- 4 (6%)

Legend:
- Security (on-going armed violence, attacks, or threats on humanitarian actors)
- Constraints from local authorities, including Non-state actors
- Logistical (no flights, no roads, access impossible due to poor road conditions, rainy season, etc)
- Other

Field Coordination and Operational Response

Over the first quarter of 2021, the GPC has continued its efforts to develop and enhance the implementation of its Operational Footprint. First, wrapping up the 2020 the Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) with over 600 coordinators and operational partners – including 33% of NNGOs – from the Cluster and AoRs in 28 operations responded to the new CCPM online survey, and 15 operations submitting full performance review and action plan. Second, the GPC identified strategic priorities for field support in 9 priorities countries. Finally, the GPC launched a pilot exercise on funding data collection to enhance data on funding in protection operations, and complement information available on the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) – with FTS reporting 540 million USD, field operations and partners reported 318 million USD in current protection funding. The data collected was used for the GPC 2021 Mid-Year Review "Thermometer" report. This pilot exercise will help the GPC in launching a more sophisticated tool to support field operations during the upcoming strategic planning for 2022 HPC.

1. DELIVER ESSENTIAL QUALITY SERVICES TO POPULATIONS IN NEED

■ Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory   ■ Weak

32%   45%   19%

0   25   50   75   100

4%
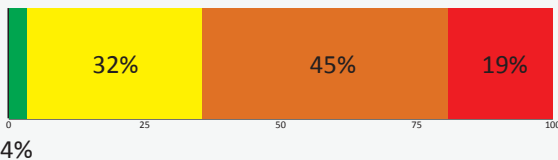
Protection partners continue to deliver critical life-saving protection services despite dire operational contexts and low level of funding significantly impacting the coverage of essential protection services.

As a result, half 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 11% of field operations most services remain available to more than 65% of target populations.

2. COORDINATE SERVICE DELIVERY

■ Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory   ■ Weak

35%   35%   20%   10%

0   25   50   75   100
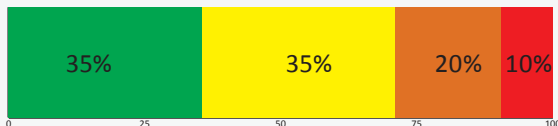
All operations have a system tracking who is doing what where when to track progress and coverage of activities. The GPC will engage with field operations to improve its systems and enhance the quality and timeliness of information shared by partners for the 5W.

About 2/3 of operations have services mapping and referral pathways in place. Nevertheless, progress remains to be made to ensure greater coverage, harmonization and information sharing within the cluster and with other clusters.

3. INFORM HUMANITARIAN STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

■ Good   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory   ■ Weak

32%   42%   13%   13%

0   25   50   75   100
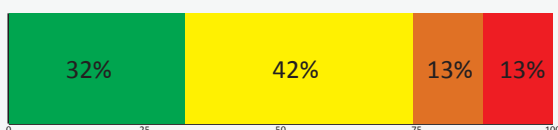
With protection analysis as a key priority for the GPC, 2/3 of field operations report having protection monitoring and needs assessments systems in place.

81% of operations report undertaking joint and collective protection analysis. However, only half do it at least on a quarterly basis and produce regular reports More than half of all operations provide briefings to HCT at least quarterly, most of them with positive results in influencing HCT decision making.

4. PLAN AND IMPLEMENT CLUSTERS STRATEGIES

| Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Weak

| 61% | 20% | 6% | 13% |
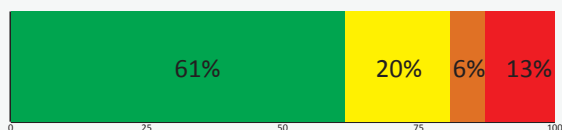
Strategic planning remains a strong point of field operations. Virtually all field operations have a specific strategy. All promoted the Centrality of Protection in inter-sectoral and other clusters' needs analysis and planning, and report at least some level of success.

All operations engage in interagency funding processes such as Pooled Funds and CERF. Most operations actively engage in durable solutions processes. Although still limited, operations show good practices in engaging with development and peace actors.

5. MONITOR AND EVALUATE RESPONSE

| Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Weak

| 29% | 35% | 23% | 13% |
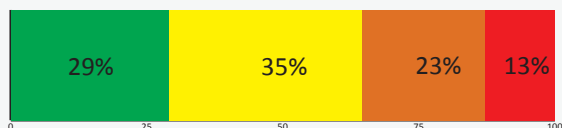
76% of operations conduct reviews of progress against objectives, targets and requirements, two third of those do it at least quarterly.

However, there are important gaps in relation to mechanisms to monitor the quality of protection services. 60% of field operations completed their 2020 CCPM process with active participation and contributions from operational partners marking a major increase from previous years. The lessons learned from the 2020 review will contribute to improving the process for the 2021 CCPM to further enhance strategic and proactive technical support for field operations.

6. BUILD NATIONAL CAPACITIES IN PREPAREDNESS AND CONTIGENCY PLANNING

| Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Weak

| 10% | 29% | 13% | 48% |
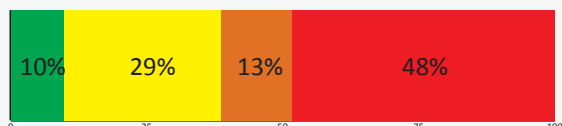
More attention needs to be given at ensuring preparedness and contingency plans, with a strong component of localisation through capacity building of local authorities, civil society, local partners and communities for different type of recurrent hazards (i.e. conflict/violence, natural hazards, diseases outbreaks).

Over the next quarter, the GPC will be conducting a series of regional consultations with field operations on disaster and climate change preparedness to build on good practice and provide relevant guidance to enhance preparedness in field operations.

7. SUPPORT ROBUST ADVOCACY

Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Weak

| 16% | 32% | 26% | 26% |

2%
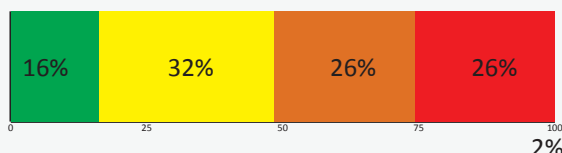
Most operations produce regular advocacy briefing notes and reports. Almost all operations contribute to HCT advocacy messaging, with half of them contributing or advising systematically the HCT on advocacy.

About half of field operations conduct multilateral meetings with donors, but only a third at least quarterly. To improve performance, the GPC will produce a 2-pager of best practices and recommendations to be disseminated with field operations by the end of June 2021.

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

■ Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Unsatisfactory ■ Weak

| 45%	16%	26%	13%

0   25   50   75   100
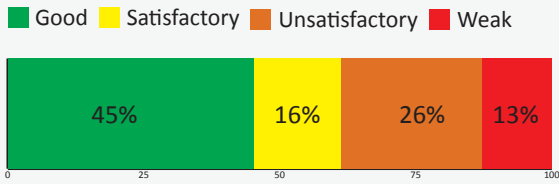
3/4 of operations report facilitating training for partners on Code of Conduct, PSEA or Child Safeguarding. 45% required adherence to at least one of those policies as a condition for cluster membership.

Only a third of field operations report facilitating trainings on AAP and feedback mechanisms highlighting lingering lack of clarity on the role of the cluster. Finally, while rights awareness-raising and community-based protection constitute some of the strongest programming in field operations, only 26% of field operations have developed harmonized approaches for community engagement and RCCE.

9. CLUSTER RESOURCES AND LEADERSHIP

■ Good ■ Satisfactory ■ Unsatisfactory ■ Weak

25%	31%	19%	25%

0   25   50   75   100
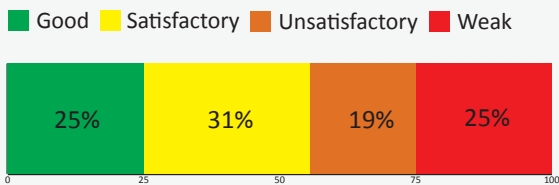
Effective protection coordination requires dedicated resources, appropriate structures, and collective ways of working. While 71% of field operations report having a dedicated coordinator, only 38% count on a dedicated IMO. Half of field operations have established UN-NGO co-coordination. While Child Protection and GBV AoR are active in all operations, only half have set up a formal HLP coordination.

Last but not least, half of field operations have a Strategic Advisory Group in place. 76% include representation of local NNGOs and more than half meet at least quarterly showing recent progress towards ensuring inclusive, participatory and collective approaches to coordination.

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.

Child Protection AoR
Global Protection Cluster

Gender Based Violence AoR
Global Protection Cluster

Global Protection Cluster

Housing land and Property AoR
Global Protection Cluster

Mine Action AoR
Global Protection Cluster

Global Protection Funding (as of June 2021)

REQUIREMENTS (US$)	FUNDED (US$)	COVERAGE
$2.1B	**$540M**	**25%**

Funding Received per Type of Recipient

- 53% INGO
- 38% UN
- 9% NNGO
- 2% NNGO indirect fund

Funding per AoRs

- **Child Protection** — 18% — $ 295 M Unmet
- **GBV** — 18% — $ 311 M Unmet
- **HLP** — 24% Funded — $ 24 M Unmet
- **Mine Action** — 55% — $ 65 M Unmet
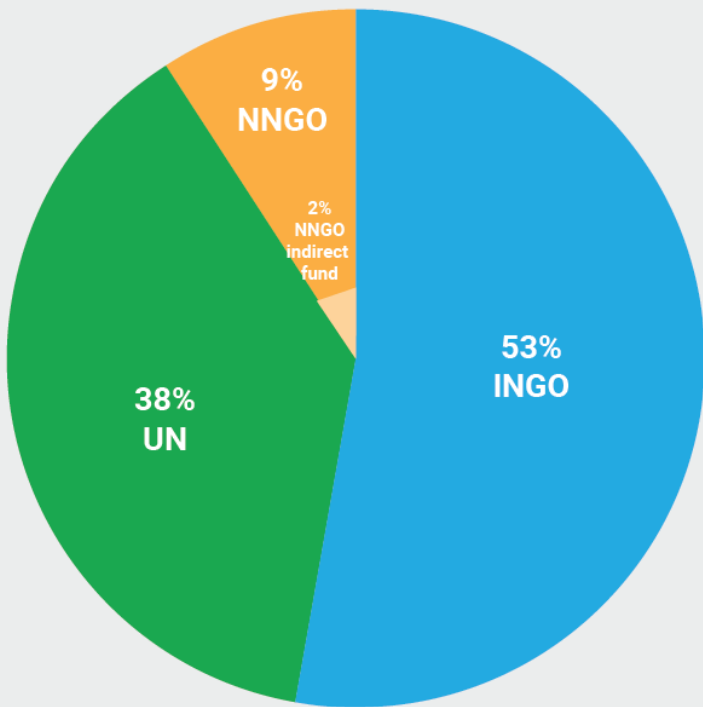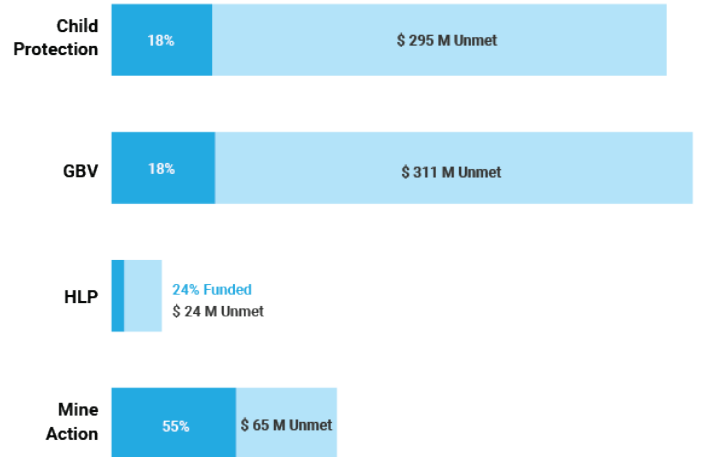
NATIONAL PROTECTION CLUSTERS (as of June 2021)
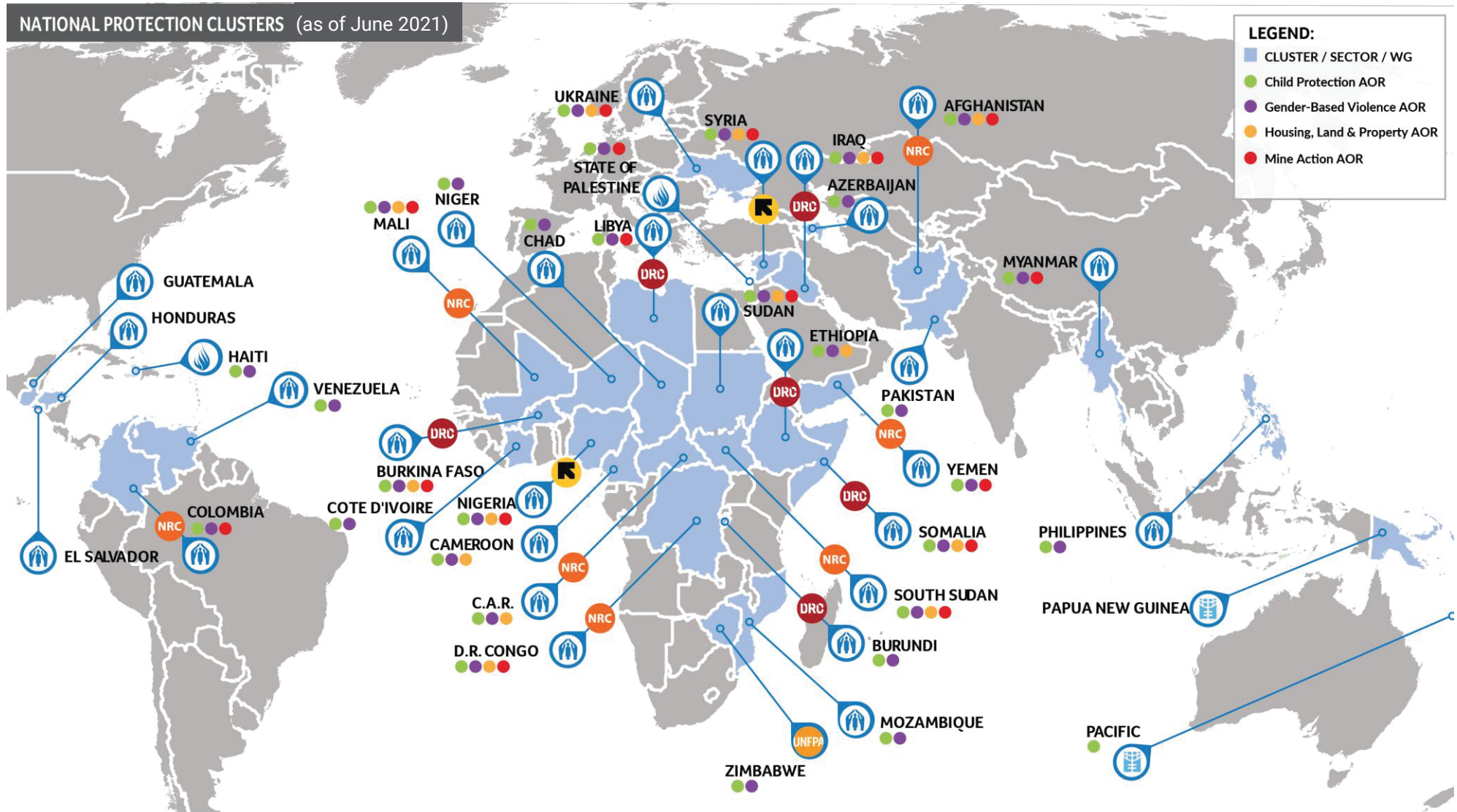
LEGEND:
- CLUSTER / SECTOR / WG
- Child Protection AOR
- Gender-Based Violence AOR
- Housing, Land & Property AOR
- Mine Action AOR

UKRAINE

SYRIA

AFGHANISTAN

STATE OF PALESTINE

IRAQ

NIGER

AZERBAIJAN

MALI

CHAD

LIBYA

GUATEMALA

MYANMAR

HONDURAS

SUDAN

HAITI

ETHIOPIA

VENEZUELA

PAKISTAN

BURKINA FASO

YEMEN

COTE D'IVOIRE

NIGERIA

COLOMBIA

CAMEROON

SOMALIA

PHILIPPINES

EL SALVADOR

C.A.R.

SOUTH SUDAN

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

D.R. CONGO

BURUNDI

MOZAMBIQUE

PACIFIC

ZIMBABWE

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

UNFPA

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

United Nations Human Rights OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

unicef

UNMAS

UN WOMEN United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

DRC DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE