

DON'T I MATTER? CIVILIANS UNDER FIRE



“

This crushing feeling of being alone. No one knows. No one cares.

No one is willing to go one extra mile to save us: don't I matter?

The feeling of being insignificant is the hardest part of surviving attacks, crimes, conflicts, madness.

This invisible loneliness is the machete that chops off dignity, the mine that explodes peace, the bullet that kills hope”

All protection responders would have heard an echo of what the Global Protection Cluster was told in DR Congo earlier this month by a lady that, with another 10 mothers, set up a group that save and reintegrate boys and girls recruited by armed groups. For them, like for us, Protection of Civilians is not an abstract idea. It is a village, a hospital, a school, a market, a water network, a camp for boys, girls, men, women, elderly, displaced who have names and dreams.

Since our last global protection update we have seen the protection and coping crisis in our operations deepen due to the converging challenges of armed conflict, the pandemic, economic downturn, rising inequality and climate change. It is complex. Yet our operations report it simply.

Conflict and violations of basic norms remain the single biggest driver of protection challenges today. Individuals and local communities are under fire. People we work with and who are already pushed to the back of the queue – women, children, people with disabilities, displaced, minorities, the elderly – continue to be hit the hardest and are increasingly marginalized.

Today, civilians are not only collateral damage in wars but deliberate and direct targets. Displaced persons increasingly find themselves caught up in or near armed conflict with States and non-State groups who often disregard the basic principles of the law. With 90% of our Clusters (28 out of 31 field operations) operating in active conflict settings, the protection of civilians remains critical and deserves greater consideration in humanitarian decision-making and response.

Sixteen years after the establishment of the cluster system, this report features good practices from our Protection Clusters in Afghanistan, CAR, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Ukraine, where we exert efforts in providing more effective protection to civilians through a collective push and a system-wide response. It highlights the use of protection tools, programming, and collective advocacy – connecting the dots between the global protection of civilians' agenda in the Security Council and the reality of our field work. It reinforces our understanding that local networks are the main framework for protection, like Jeel Albena, this year's UNHCR - [Nansen Refugee Award winner](#), supporting displaced persons on the frontlines of the crisis in Yemen.



CONTEXT UPDATE

In May 2021, the Secretary-General published his [annual report](#) on the global state of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, depicting that armed conflict continued to be characterized by high levels of civilian deaths, injury and psychological trauma. In September 2021, the [High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#) made concrete recommendations on how to better prevent, respond to and achieve solutions for IDPs. During this reporting period, Protection Clusters across multiple operations reported an intensification of attacks against civilians, threatening the safety of millions and damaging vital infrastructure needed for the response.

Despite the reiteration by the Security Council of its call for a global ceasefire ([Resolution 2565 \(2021\)](#)), conflict continues to exact a **devastating toll on civilian populations**. In **Afghanistan**, civilian casualties reached record levels, with a total of 5,183 civilians killed or injured. Civilian casualties during May and June were the highest since UNAMA began systematic documentation in 2009 ([Protection Analysis Afghanistan](#)). In **Ethiopia**, public reports have recorded at least 4,000 fatalities as a result of conflict and political violence across the country (excluding Tigray) between January and August 2021. When violence escalated in **Gaza** in May, 260 Palestinians were killed and over 2,200 injured, some of whom may suffer a long-term disability requiring rehabilitation. On 28 July, the situation escalated in Dara'a Al-Balad, **Syria**, causing civilian casualties and the displacement of around 38,600 people. In addition, 73 people were killed in Al Hol camp in north-east Syria in the first half of 2021 alone, compared to 57 killed in all of 2020; the majority of the victims were women, sometimes under the guise of "honour killing". Similarly, the escalation of the crisis in the North-West South-West regions of **Cameroon** is also reflected in the number of civilian casualties with more than 70 civilians killed in July. In **Niger** between 25 July and 20 August, more than 160 civilians were killed during a series of attacks in Banibangou, Tillabéri region, bringing the total to 635 as of August 31, and in **Burkina Faso**, the attack of the Solhan village on June 4, killed more than 130 people, becoming the biggest attacks since 2015. In Ukraine, civilian casualties and critical infrastructure damage were also reported in 120 (77%) settlements.









In many contexts, **objects and goods essential to the survival of civilians** are deliberately targeted, damaged or destroyed, sometimes involving the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects. Besieged villages, burning of granaries and crops, and looting of livestock have become commonplace in the **Sahel** ([Protection Analysis Burkina Faso](#) and [Protection Analysis Mali](#)). Similarly, in **South Sudan, Nigeria** and **Yemen**, the destruction of stocks and agricultural assets has had a direct impact on food security and raised the spectre of famine. In **Ukraine**, July 2021 saw a 50% increase in collateral damage to civilian property. Similarly, July was marked by the second highest rate of demolitions in **Palestine**, culminating in 627 structures demolished in 2021. Despite the adoption by the Security Council of [Resolution 2573 \(2021\)](#) on the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such attacks are still common.

Meanwhile **violence, threats and attacks against medical care** persist, and significantly weaken the ability of health systems to function. Five years after the adoption of the Security Council [Resolution 2286 \(2016\)](#) which addressed the protection of the wounded or sick, and of medical and humanitarian personnel carrying out medical duties in a conflict setting, and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of people are left without access to health care. According to [WHO](#), since January 2021, 666 probable or confirmed attacks on health care took place in **14 countries**: Myanmar, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, CAR, DRC, South Sudan, Sudan, Yemen, Libya, Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ukraine.

Similarly, **attacks on education** continue to expose children to heightened risks of recruitment, forced labour, early marriage, trafficking, sexual violence and exploitation. In **Burkina Faso**, 2,250 schools are closed and over 305,000 students are deprived of education. In **Yemen**, 2 million children are out of school, putting them at heightened risks of child labour and recruitment. Attacks on education also continued in the North-West South-West regions of **Cameroon** where protection monitors reported in July several incidents against school buildings and personnel by the NSAGs.



Protection Trends

AT A GLANCE	SEVERITY OF PROTECTION RISKS AS REPORTED BY PROTECTION CLUSTERS		
 <p>Active conflict or violence is occurring in 28 operations. 82% report the situation as severe or extreme.</p>	 <p>30 operations report forced movement and displacement, including forced returns. 58% of operations classify the situation as severe or extreme.</p>	 <p>Explosive ordnance contamination is a risk across 24 operations. In 48% of operations the risks for civilians are severe or extreme.</p>	 <p>Every field operation describes psychological distress and growing mental health needs amongst the affected populations. 71% rate the risk of distress as severe or extreme.</p>
 <p>Every field operation reports Gender-Based Violence as a protection concern; 80% describe the GBV risk as severe or extreme.</p>	 <p>30 operations report violence against children as a major concern, with 61% describing the risk as severe or extreme.</p>	 <p>30 operations report risks related to housing, evictions, land and property. 36% rate the risk as severe or extreme.</p>	 <p>26 operations report child marriage is occurring. 42% of operations rate the risk as severe or extreme.</p>

KEY COUNTRY NEWS

In **Afghanistan**, HALO Trust faced a deadly attack in June as 10 people were killed, and 16 injured, when gunmen burst into a demining camp in Baghlane-Markazi district and opened fire. With the Taliban takeover of the capital on 15 August, the severity of armed conflict has reduced overall in the country, however in some parts such as Panjshir Province the conflict is ongoing between the Taliban and Panjshir resistance movement.

In **Burkina Faso**, unidentified militants, mostly children between the ages of 12 and 14, killed more than 130 people in the Solhan village on the night of 4 June, the biggest attacks since 2015.

In August, inter-communal clashes in Logone-et-Chari, **Cameroon's** Far North region, caused the displacement of 13,000 people to the surrounding localities and 11,000 across the border to Chad. 19 villages have been torched and at least 45 people have been killed, with 74 others injured.

In **Colombia** a court accused 10 members of the military and a civilian of forcibly

disappearing 24 people and murdering at least 120 civilians. In August, one MA operator was caught in a crossfire between NSAGs and the Army in Puerto Leguizamo, and similar situations reported in Caquetá and Cauca.

In September, the **CAR** Protection Cluster drew the attention of the Government and the HCT to the risk of eviction of IDPs. The UN announced that all Gabonese military units deployed to the MINUSCA, are to be sent home, following credible reports of sexual abuses.

In **eastern DRC**, members of the ADF raided a village in Irumu Territory, killing 15 civilians, followed by another attack in the Ituri province where militia members reportedly raped 10 displaced women.

On 28 June, **Ethiopia's** government declared an immediate cease-fire in its Tigray region after nearly 8 months of conflict. The conflict spilled over into the neighbouring regions, including Amhara, with reported incidents of killing civilians, looting health centers and schools and displacement of thousands of people.

The two last IDP camps in Federal **Iraq** (Jeddah 5 in Ninewa, AAF in Anbar) remain open but are at risk of being forcibly closed and IDPs being evicted and forced back to their areas of origin.

As of August 1,616, refugees and 5,826 migrants were recorded in **Libya's** official detention centers. The limited presence of partners and access issues pose challenges for the response. Repeated incidents of xenophobic violence towards refugees and migrants have been reported in Zwara and Tripoli.

August has been marked by several attacks on villages in Mopti, Badiangara, Koro, Djenne and Douentza in **Mali**, forcing people to flee. As the crisis has intensified in the central region, it is now extending to the south, particularly in Sikasso and Kayes. As of August, 4,537 violations were recorded.

In **Mozambique**, an estimated 100,000 people have fled Palma due to insecurity fostered by NSAGs. The deployment of troops from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and from Rwanda has prompted NSAGs to



retreat to some extent from civilian areas in Cabo Delgado.

The security situation continues to deteriorate in several regions of **Myanmar**, with reports of increased armed clashes between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed groups as well as the People's Defense Force.

The Government of **Niger** has adopted a policy for the return of IDPs to their region of origin. These measures are already effective in Diffa and Tillabéri regions.

NSAGs in **Nigeria** have been reported

to attack humanitarian hubs with two abduction incidents targeting humanitarian workers taking place in the past two months.

Forced evictions continue to undermine efforts to assist IDPs and hinder their path to recovery and obtaining durable solutions in **Somalia**.

In **South Sudan**, close to 80,000 people have been displaced by fighting in Tambura County since June, with reports of civilians killed and wounded.

The UNSG condemned the attempted 'coup d'état' in **Sudan** on 21 September,

calling for support to Sudan's political transition, as disagreements between military and civilian components of the transitional government have intensified.

Since January 2021, there has been a 51% increase in civilian casualties in **Ukraine**. Most cases took place in Non-Government Controlled Area (NGCA), where humanitarian access is very limited.

In June, armed confrontations between Government security forces and armed gangs in western Caracas, **Venezuela** displaced 70 families, threatened by armed clashes, child recruitment and raids from police forces.

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	2	3	3	16	7	0
Social exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination, racism and xenophobia	1	5	13	8	3	0
Forced movement and displacement of people including forced returns	1	5	7	15	3	0
Explosive ordnances contamination	7	4	5	13	2	0
Arbitrary or unlawful arrest and / or detention	6	3	9	9	3	0
Arbitrary limitation on freedom of movement	6	2	8	11	3	0
Discriminatory practices by authorities and/ or non-state actors	1	6	12	7	4	0
Disasters and the adverse effects of climate change	3	6	12	8	2	1
Attacks on humanitarian, protection and health workers, facilities and services	10	5	6	7	2	0

Based on the results of surveying protection risks & concerns in 31 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	7	3	9	4	2	6
Risks related to housing, evictions, land and property		3	16	8	3	1
Early marriage	2	5	9	11	1	3
Family and child separation	0	2	17	10	2	0
Forced recruitment or labor	2	2	16	9	1	1
Gender-based violence or abuse		1	5	17	8	0
Psychological distress and mental health		1	8	15	7	0
Sale or exchange of sex as a coping mechanism	1	6	14	7	1	2
Trafficking of persons	2	7	12	6	1	3
Violence against children	1	1	10	16	3	0

Based on the results of surveying protection risks & concerns in 31 Protection Clusters





All 31 operations report **psychological distress and mental health** concerns amongst the affected populations, with 71% rating the risk of distress as severe or extreme. In [Palestine](#), the recent violence has exacerbated already extremely high levels of psychological distress and increased the need for MHPSS services, including individual counselling and case management, particularly for women and children. Psychological violence is particularly high in [Burkina Faso](#), [Mali](#) and [Niger](#), where civilians are threatened, killed or arrested on suspicion of being informants for armed groups. Mobilization of protection partners to provide mental health and PSS services continues in [Niger](#). [Afghanistan](#), [Chad](#), [Mozambique](#), [Niger](#), [Pacific](#), and [Syria](#) describe the level of psychological distress as extreme.



Every field operation reports **Gender-Based Violence** as the top protection concern. 80% describe the GBV risk as severe or extreme. In [South Sudan](#), safety audits conducted in Juba, Bor, Bentiu, Wau IDP camps and Malakal PoC site, from May to August, identified a surge in rape and sexual assaults. In [Palestine](#), following the May 2021 escalation, an increase in the number of GBV cases in need of medical and sheltering services was reported. Women and girls are further exposed to GBV risks in [Colombia](#) due to the consequences of the pandemic, loss of livelihood and incomes, and limited school attendance. [Afghanistan](#), [CAR](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Mozambique](#), [Papua New Guinea](#), [South Sudan](#) and [Syria](#) describe GBV as extreme. [Syria](#) reports sale or exchange of sex as a coping mechanism as an extreme risk.



26 operations report the occurrence of **child marriage**. 42% of operations rate the risk as severe or extreme and 32% as moderate. Child marriage is reported as extreme in [Syria](#) and severe in [Afghanistan](#), [Cameroun](#), [Chad](#), [Iraq](#), [Mozambique](#), [Nigeria](#), [Syria](#), [Papua Guinea](#) and [South Sudan](#). 30 operations report **violence against children** as a major concern, with 61% describing the risk as severe or extreme and 32% as moderate. In [Afghanistan](#) 32% of all civilian casualties recorded in 2021 were children, with 468 killed and 1,214 wounded. Attacks on schools and threats to students and teachers are dominant in [Mali](#), [Niger](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Cameroun](#), [Yemen](#), exposing children to increased risks of forced labour, sexual exploitation, and forced recruitment. [Mozambique](#) and [Syria](#) report violence against children as being an extreme risk. **Family and child separation** is reported in all 31 field operations with the majority (55%) describing the risk as moderate, 32% as severe and 6% as extreme. In [South Sudan](#), family tracing services for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) has been essential after the recent floods. Increased intercommunal tensions in [Libya](#) resulted in an increase of UASC. [Mozambique](#) and [Syria](#) report the risk of family and child separation as being extreme.



Forced recruitment or labour is occurring in 28 operations, with 30% describing the risk as severe or extreme and 53% as moderate. In [Colombia](#), an increase in the risk of recruitment, use, and sexual violence of children by armed groups is identified in 37 municipalities of 7 departments, generating the need to strengthen prevention and response mechanisms. In [Venezuela](#), armed confrontations between Government security forces and armed gangs in western Caracas led to the displacement of 70 families, threatened by the risk of child recruitment. Abduction and forced recruitment remains a severe risk in [Nigeria](#). In [Afghanistan](#) the risk of forced recruitment is reported as extreme.



Trafficking in persons is reported in 26 operations, with 42% stating that the risk is moderate and 21% as severe. Associated phenomena of forced recruitment and forced labour are also on the rise. Trafficking is a severe concern in [Afghanistan](#), [Chad](#), [Colombia](#), [Mali](#), [Somalia](#) and [Venezuela](#). The risk of trafficking is reported as extreme in [Libya](#).



Explosive ordnance contamination is reported as a risk in 24 field operations. In 48% of operations the risks for civilians are severe or extreme, namely in [Afghanistan](#), [CAR](#), [Chad](#), [Colombia](#), [Iraq](#), [Mali](#), [Myanmar](#), [Niger](#) and [Syria](#), [Somalia](#), [South Sudan](#), [Ukraine](#) and [Yemen](#). Explosive device threat also continues to grow in western CAR, where partners recorded 29 incidents, compared to 2 incidents in 2020, injuring 24 civilians and killing 15. In [Palestine](#), 16 deep buried bombs (DBB) need to be excavated before people can safely return to and use the sites. As schools in Gaza entered summer vacation during the reporting period, children played in open areas and abandoned buildings where ERW contamination is often reported. In [Colombia](#), in the year to July 31, 2021, 84 people were killed or injured by EO, nearly 2/3 of them civilians (53). Indigenous communities continue to be disproportionately affected by the presence of EO, as 21 civilians from these communities suffered from EO injuries this year. In [Myanmar](#), an increased number of landmines incidents were reported from Shan and Central Rakhine States during the second quarter of 2021. The installation of IEDs on roads and the sabotage of bridges in Koro and Bandiagara ([Mali](#)) and in Boni ([Niger](#)) caused civilian casualties and significantly hampered humanitarian access. Civilian casualties due to mines/ERWs increased by 38% since the ceasefire in [Ukraine](#) and accounted for 68% of civilian casualties in 2021. Large parts of South Kordofan, Blue Nile States, as well as parts of Jabal Mara of Central Darfur in [Sudan](#) remain contaminated by UXOs and landmines.



30 operations report risks related to **housing, evictions, land and property**. 36% rate the risk as severe or extreme, namely in [Afghanistan](#), [Cameroon](#), [Iraq](#), [Mozambique](#), [Syria](#), [Somalia](#), [South Sudan](#), [Sudan](#) and [Venezuela](#). In the Far North region of [Cameroon](#), the majority of incidents reported remain incidents related to theft, looting and destruction of property. In all three regions, access to land and housing is a key gap in the protection response, with 60% of IDPs from NWSW in need of access to cultivable land, and an increasing number at risk of forced eviction. In [Iraq](#), there has been an increase in evictions of IDPs, predominantly in Mosul, Ninewa Governorate, where local authorities evicted IDPs occupying government or municipal land or property to rehabilitate facilities and/or as part of urban planning, with short eviction notice and no offered alternative solution for shelter. The risk of IDPs being evicted from sites is also becoming a growing protection concern in [CAR](#), where immediate or threats of evictions by armed groups or landowners were reported in Bamari, Kabo, and Batangafo, impacting at least 13,223 people. A particular 50% increase in collateral damages to civilian property was recorded in July in [Ukraine](#). Damages to civilian housing increased from 8 cases in June to 25 cases in July.



Across most contexts there remains a lack of data on **People living with Disabilities (PLWD)**, which therefore limits the ability to ensure response plans target these specific needs. [Ukraine](#) approved a new [Law 'On State Social Assistance to Children with Disabilities'](#) (August, 2021), to increase the monthly social assistance by 50% when a child's disability resulted from mine/UXO. In all three regions of [Cameroon](#), access to PLWD and elderly persons is very limited due to security and operational constraints and the operation continues to plead for international organizations with expertise and funding to support efforts for disability mainstreaming into the humanitarian response.

IN FOCUS - PROTECTING CIVILIANS IN PRACTICE

What is Protection of Civilians?

In situations of armed conflict, the protection of civilians is first and foremost the responsibility of the parties to the conflict, both State and armed groups. It is also a priority for United Nations peace-keeping operations, and a humanitarian system-wide objective.

In 1999 the United Nations Security Council added Protection of Civilians (or "PoC") in armed conflict as a thematic item to its agenda, describing PoC as the measures aimed at limiting the effects of hostilities on civilians and civilian objects in situations of armed conflict, notably through promoting respect for international humanitarian law, applicable human rights law, refugee law and UN Security Council resolutions. The UN PoC agenda draws on the expertise and experience of political, security, humanitarian, human rights and development actors.

UN peace-keeping operations are therefore often mandated by the Security Council to promote the protection of civilians, along three tiers of work: 1) dialogue and engagement with parties to the conflict and affected communities, 2) protection from "threat or imminent threat of physical violence" and 3) establishment of a protective environment. Humanitarian actors have a responsibility to put protection at the centre of humanitarian action. With a broad rights-based approach, the IASC defines protection as "... all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (IHL, IHRL, IRL)", which encompasses advocacy, protection monitoring, analysis and reporting, and the direct provision of assistance and specific protection programmes.

The peacekeeping and humanitarian approaches to protection of civilians are complimentary, with clear synergies at the three levels of responsive, remedial and environment building protection activities. Effective coordination between UN peace-keeping missions and humanitarian actors, as well as human rights actors, is therefore essential to improve protection of civilians.

In 2020, during the Global Protection Forum, the GPC held a [thematic discussion](#) on the role of Protection Clusters and operational actors in strengthening the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, identifying three areas for reflection and further action to improve protection of civilians: 1) Engaging with parties to the conflict; 2) Engaging with conflict-affected communities to support their own self-protection, 3) Engaging with UN Missions or Humanitarian Country Team. For this edition, the GPC collected a series of good practices from field Clusters speaking to the engagement with each of these stakeholders.

Afghanistan

The GPC Diagnostic Tool on the Interaction between Field Clusters and UN Missions helped boost the relationship between the Afghanistan Cluster and the UN Mission. Of the seven areas of interaction, three have been considered as collective successes in Afghanistan. **Information sharing** between the Protection Cluster and UNAMA was a key factor enabling engagement and improved coordination, resulting in better protection outcomes. **Advocacy and communications** based on systematic data collection on civilian casualties, mortality and morbidity rates resulted from the concerted efforts of the Mission, the agencies and the Cluster working together. **Strategy development** included policies to increase the protection and assistance to civilians.



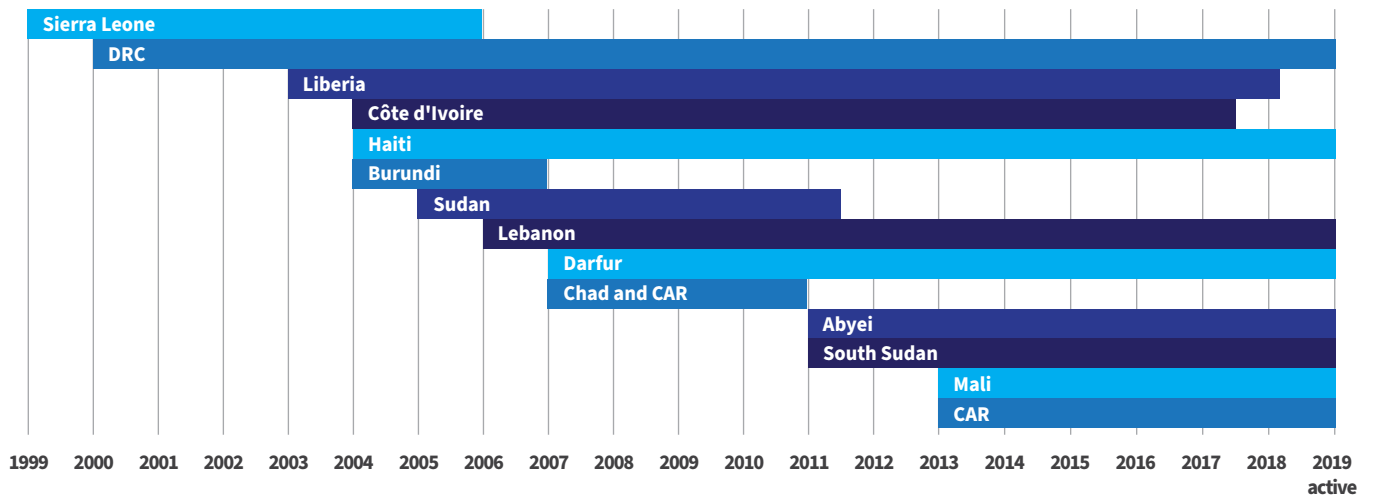


CAR

Joint Protection Team (JPT) mission, composed of both civilian and uniform components of the MINUSCA, was conducted in Alindao to address protection concerns raised by community protection mechanisms, in the context of the armed attack which took place in June 2021. The JPT made concrete recommendations to the senior leadership of MINUSCA on enhancing the prevention and mitigation measures to address reported protection threats. Alindao is one of the recent examples of MINUSCA protection response which has been triggered by findings made by the Protection Cluster and discussed through the Protection Working Group (PWG), which is the forum of coordination on protection of civilians chaired by the POC Unit, and to which the Protection Cluster and OCHA are members. Members of the PWG are also used to develop **joint analysis of protection risks** to provide recommendations meant to influence the MINUSCA force footprint (temporary operational basis, patrols, etc.). The joint analysis has proven useful in a variety of responses to localized protection threats in hotspots areas. Finally, the Protection Cluster, OCHA, and MINUSCA worked together to address the challenges of the **respect of the civilian and humanitarian character** of IDPs sites in Bria, Batangafo, and Alindao. The coordinated endeavours included analyses of protection risks, collection of weapons on sites, awareness raising sessions for IDPs, and support to the deployment of the penal chain in CAR. A joint SOP has been drafted in the framework of the PWG and validated by the MINUSCA in July 2021.

Mali

The Protection Cluster in Mali developed a **community-based protection monitoring system**, based on a network of 57 protection monitors, 188 community focal points and 168 local protection committees covering the six regions affected by the conflict, and recording 6 categories and 33 types of protection incidents ([Protection Monitoring Dashboard](#)). “Flash alerts” of serious incidents against civilians are communicated within less than 48 hours by the community focal point, channelled through the Cluster, and shared with a wide range of actors (i.e., CMCoord, MINUSMA Human Rights and PoC units, protection partners). [A Monthly Protection Risk Index](#) is established to build a community-level perception of the protection severity in 200 municipalities and inform advocacy, policy making and programming. Finally, advocacy notes, highlighting critical PoC issues, are shared to trigger the HCT engagement and maximize cross-sectoral advocacy ([Interdependence between Conflict and Food Insecurity](#), [Attacks on Health Facilities](#), [Besieged Villages](#)). The Protection Cluster also conducted a **mapping of community-based mechanisms**, identifying 883 community structures and produced an analysis on [Community-led Approaches for Protection](#), sharing a series of good practices such as the role of child protection committees in leading dialogue and advocacy with armed groups for the prevention of child recruitment, which resulted in the self-demobilization of hundreds of children by the communities themselves.



PoC mandates in peacekeeping operations from the year of inclusion to the termination of the mission.





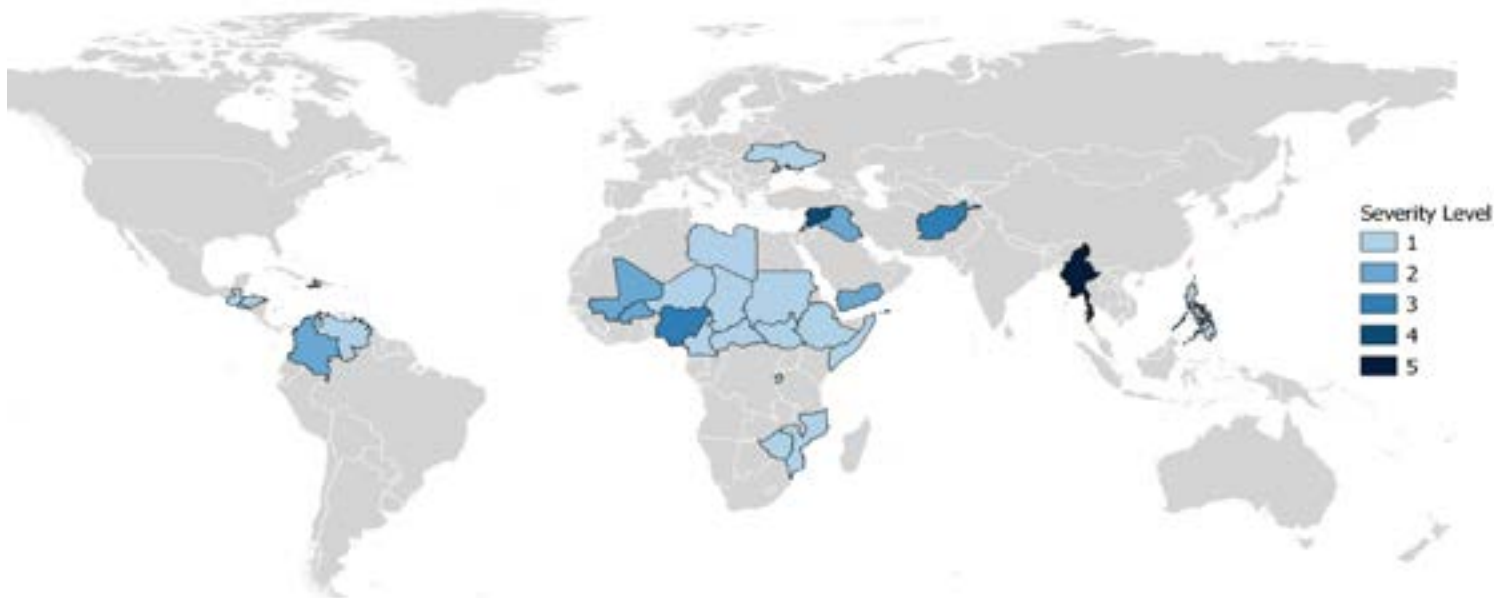
Somalia

The HCT [Centrality of Protection \(CoP\) Strategy 2020-2021](#) in Somalia lists the Protection of Civilians as a priority issue; seeking to reduce indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on civilians and civilian assets vital for their survival. As part of the implementation of the strategy, the inter-agency Implementation Support Group (ISG) designed and conducted an **online Protection of Civilians Survey** with humanitarian partners in August 2021 to understand the scope of current PoC programming, identify gaps in the response and capture recommendations. Main results of the survey concluded that PoC programming is feasible in Somalia, with over 85% of respondents having an operational presence in the areas with heightened risk. The survey also indicated that national actors are at the forefront of the civilian protection response in these areas. In addition, several opportunities to engage directly with armed actors to negotiate against indiscriminate attacks on civilians and their assets resulted from the survey. It could be assumed that organizations may have networks of contacts established with armed actors or be aware of negotiations being conducted at the community level to protect civilians. Close to 89% of respondents reported working directly with communities as a form of PoC activity, reflecting a core aspect of the HCT CoP Strategy related to support their own efforts in self-protection in conflict areas. The prevention of grave violations against children, including forced recruitment, protection monitoring in high-risk areas and promotion of women's leadership were also reported as key activities to achieve PoC outcomes.

Sudan

The Protection Cluster in Sudan is interacting, prior to or during humanitarian missions in the field, with UNITAMS, which is engaging directly with armed groups, to discuss issues related to access and service delivery. It also engages with the **National and State level Mechanisms for Protection of Civilians**, which includes the Minister of Cabinet Affairs, and key line ministries, through committees in North, East, South and Central Darfur, as well as advocates for the establishment of PoC committees in West Darfur and South Kordofan States. The Protection Cluster and UNITAMS are discussing a **joint UN Protection of Civilian Strategy**, issuing **PoC Advocacy Briefs** and launching a **PoC Incident Tracking Tool** and have recently drafted a Joint UN Support Plan for the implementation of the **National Plan for Protection of Civilians**. Finally, the Protection Cluster in Sudan is mapping **community-based protection networks** (conflict resolution, peaceful coexistence, crop protection, women and child protection, and youth committees), to better support these structures, ensuring they take a role in the delivery of protection programming, including by engaging them in early warning activities, as per the Protection Cluster Strategy.

Level of Severity of Violence Against Civilians



Source: ACLED. Only events in Global Protection Cluster's countries of operation were included. Severity level is calculated from both events involving violence against civilians as well as the number of civilian deaths.



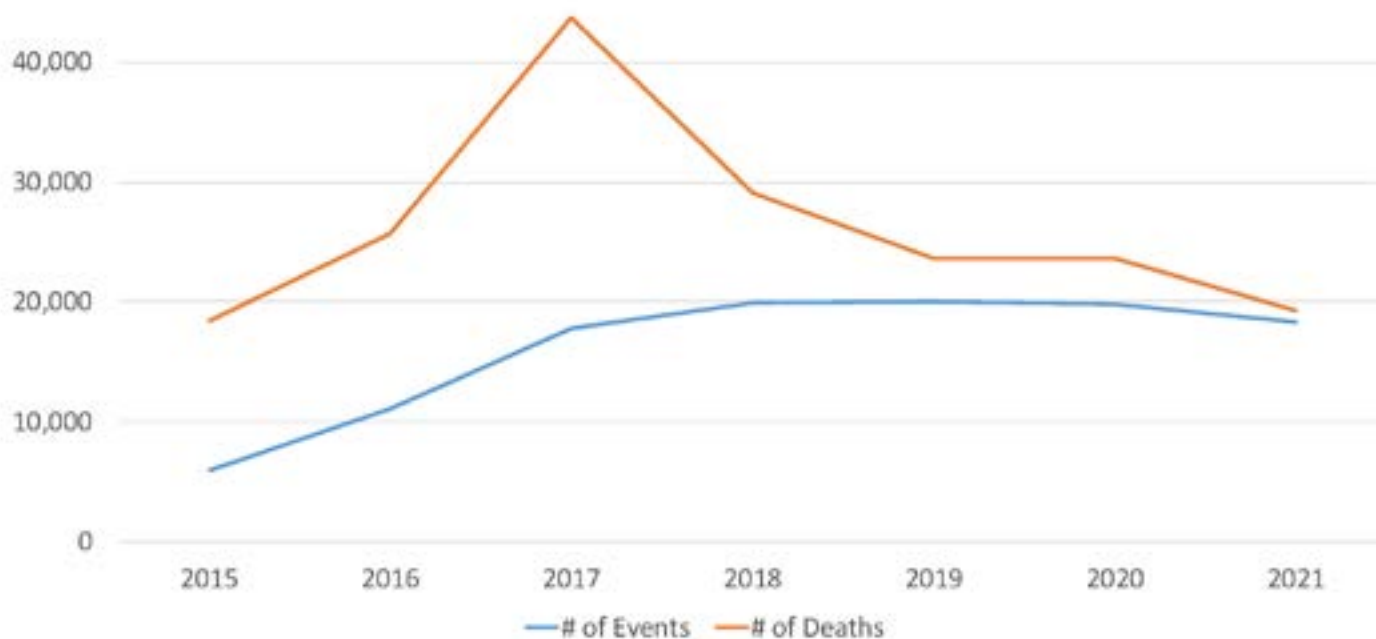


Syria

Following the situation in Dara'a governorate, the Protection Cluster supported partners to coordinate assessments and highlight key protection concerns. The Cluster provided **guidance on evacuation of civilians** during the armed conflict. In addition, the GPC issued a [Statement on the Protection of Civilians in Dara'a al-Balad](#) for conflict parties to meet their obligations under IHL and IHRL. In Al Hol camp, the Protection Cluster worked closely with partners, the HCT and Camp Authorities to promote a range of measures aimed at preventing and responding to violence and crime, with a focus on GBV. These included providing advice on a Camp Reorganisation proposal, supporting the set-up of safe spaces for women at risk and producing **key advocacy messaging for high-level discussions** with Camp Authorities. In addition, protection interventions in Syria are **community-based** and are delivered through a network of static facilities and mobile/outreach interventions. The presence of more than 194 community and satellite centres and 158 mobile units in 14 Governorates enhances the community's capacity for self-protection. Around 3,000 outreach community volunteers are currently working inside Syria, assessing needs, supporting referrals to services as well as leading **advocacy and humanitarian negotiation initiatives** with parties to the conflict. By way of examples: 1) outreach community volunteers in Aleppo rural areas negotiated the freedom of movement for older persons during the COVID-19 lockdown to ensure their access to health services; 2) in Al Hol camp, volunteers identified women at risk and refer their cases for safe shelter and protection; 3) volunteers supported returnees from Rukban with civil documentation.

Ukraine

Following attacks on hospitals, educational facilities and water infrastructure in the Donetsk region, in May 2021, the Humanitarian Coordinator issued [a statement](#) calling on all parties to comply with obligations under IHL. In August 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the [Safe Schools Declaration implementation action plan](#); with concrete actions on protecting schools during the armed conflict, including monitoring of attacks, mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity into education and creation of an inter-ministerial working group on the issue. In October 2020, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine endorsed the **National Strategy on Protection of Civilians** and submitted it to the President of Ukraine for his final approval and adoption as a national policy. The adoption and effective implementation of the Strategy is still pending, but once approved will help to establish a safer environment for conflict-affected communities, enhance the prevention of civilian harm incidents, as well as provide assistance to those harmed in the conflict. Protection partners (CIVIC and Geneva Call) are implementing **community-based activities** to train civilians from affected communities and civil-military coordination officers to develop their skills in civil-military dialogue and IHL. The objective is to support civilians to play an active role in their protection and improve their ability to solve protection issues. The HCT Protection Strategy lists PoC as a priority area.



Source: OCHA, Policy Paper, Building a Culture of Protection: 20 years of Security Council Engagement on the Protection of Civilians, 2019.





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, hamper humanitarian protection access in different contexts.

The most common access restrictions faced by Protection actors 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 engagement with communities.

During this reporting period 1 operation (Afghanistan) has a mere 25% or less protection access, 7 operations (Cameroon, Colombia, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Pacific and Somalia) have between 25-50% protection access, 5 operations (CAR, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Niger and Nigeria) have between 50-75% protection access and 1 operation (Iraq) has 75% or more protection access.

In Cameroon, there is no humanitarian presence in the West, Littoral and Centre regions where growing number of IDPs from the NWSW have relocated. Humanitarian actors in the NWSW face increasing challenges to operate including due to direct threats posed against staff and assets of NGOs and UN agencies by NSAGs.

Since June, humanitarian access in Ethiopia has dramatically improved within Tigray region, however other restrictions prevent the delivery of aid in practice. Road and air transportation into and out of Tigray, as well as the supply of fuel, electricity, cash, telecommunication and internet access remain challenging. The humanitarian response is also negatively affected by administrative impediments concerning visas and work permits, delaying staff recruitment and deployment.

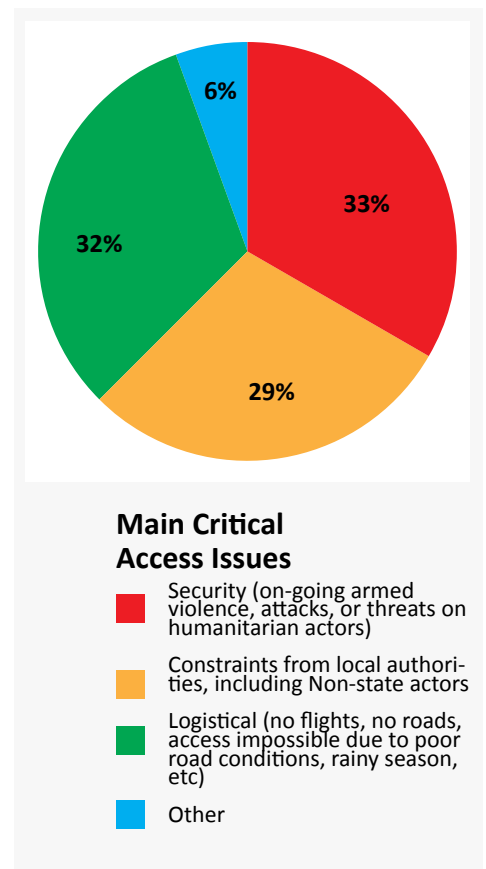
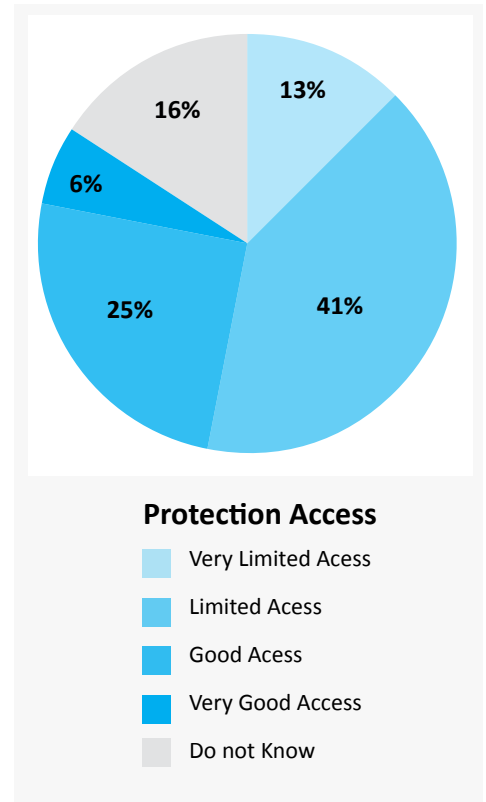
Humanitarian actors face increasing challenges to operate due to direct threats posed by NSAGs or due to explosive devices in CAR and Mali, where attacks on civilian infrastructures such as roads and bridge is hampering humanitarian access.

In Libya, issuance of visas to international NGO staff has been suspended. Despite advocacy efforts at highest level the issue remains unresolved until today.

In Myanmar, the third wave of COVID-19 has hit the country severely. Preventive measures and related movement restrictions were put in place and have created further challenges to humanitarian partners for providing services to people and for people to have access to basic services and livelihood activities. In Pacific, due to COVID-19 aid workers have been contained in the Suva/Nasouri zone.

In Philippines, assistance to IDPs, particularly from the indigenous communities living in remote areas, remains limited.

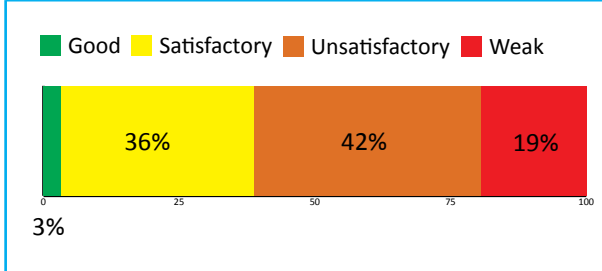
In several countries (Cameroon, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso) the rainy season also affects humanitarian access as well as law enforcement due to poor road condition resulting in an increase of the number of reported incidents. The raining season is known to protection monitors has a period of increased reporting.



FIELD COORDINATION AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSE

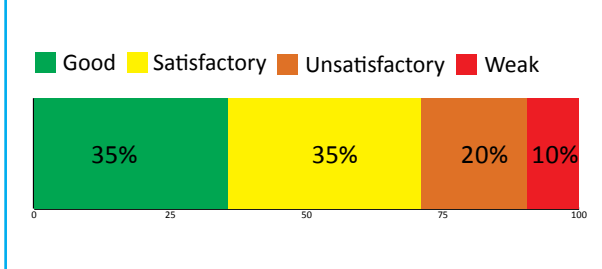
Over the third quarter of 2021, the GPC has continued its efforts to develop and enhance the implementation of its Operational Footprint. Based on its pilot exercise on protection funding data collection in field operations, the GPC developed an integrated online platform and tool to monitor response progress and funding monitoring and tracking progress against HRP strategic objectives in field operations. The tool is aimed at ensuring better data collection and analysis at global and field level for enhanced coordination, strategic planning, and advocacy. The GPC also launched a revamped online platform for its [Community of Practice](#) to foster more effective technical support and peer-to-peer experience sharing.

DELIVER ESSENTIAL QUALITY SERVICES TO POPULATIONS IN NEED



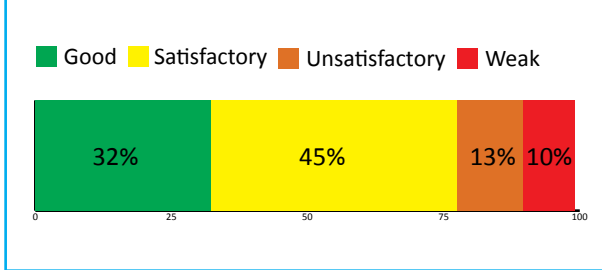
Protection partners continue to deliver critical life-saving protection services despite dire operational contexts and low level of funding significantly impacting the coverage of essential protection services. As a result, almost half of field operations report that most of their services reach less 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.

COORDINATE SERVICE DELIVERY



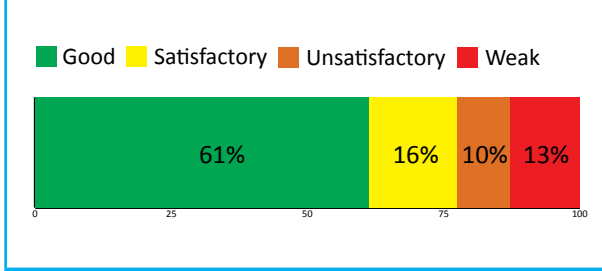
All operations have a system tracking who is doing what, where and when, to track progress and coverage of activities. The GPC is engaging field operations to launch a new monitoring tool to enhance the quality and timeliness of information shared by partners for the 5W. About 2/3 of operations have 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.

INFORM HUMANITARIAN STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING



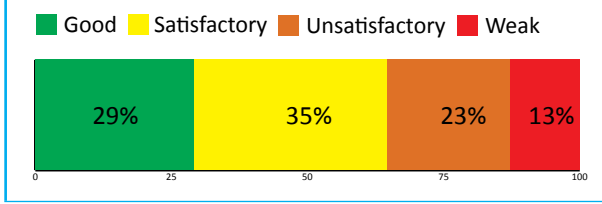
With protection analysis as a key priority for the GPC, 2/3 of field operations report having protection monitoring and needs assessments systems in place. 81% of operations report undertaking joint and collective protection analysis. However, only half do it at least on a quarterly basis and produce regular reports. Operations providing regular briefings to HCT has increased to 77%, with most of them with positive results in influencing HCT decision making.

PLAN AND IMPLEMENT CLUSTERS STRATEGIES



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.

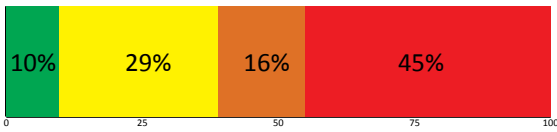
MONITOR AND EVALUATE RESPONSE



76% of operations conduct reviews of progress against objectives, targets and requirements, 2/3 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.

BUILD NATIONAL CAPACITIES IN PREPAREDNESS AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory Weak

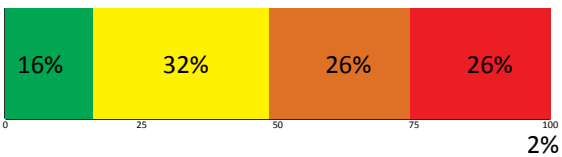


More attention needs to be given to ensuring preparedness and contingency plans, with a strong component of localisation through capacity building of local authorities, civil society, local partners and communities for different type of recurrent hazards (i.e. conflict/violence, natural hazards, diseases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

SUPPORT ROBUST ADVOCACY

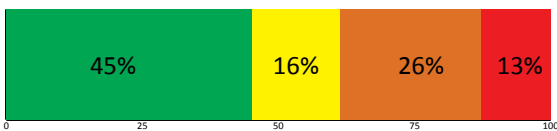
Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory Weak



Most operations produce regular advocacy briefing notes and reports. Almost all operations contribute to HCT advocacy messaging, with half of them contributing or systematically advising the HCT on advocacy. About half of field operations conduct multilateral meetings with donors, but only a third at least quarterly. The GPC produced a 2-pager of best practices and recommendations to be disseminated with field operations to support donor meetings during Q3 & Q4 of 2021.

ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS AND STRONG ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITIES

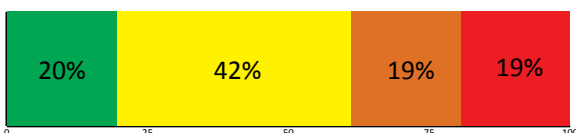
Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory Weak



3/4 of operations report facilitating training for partners on Code of Conduct, PSEA or Child Safeguarding. Less than half required adherence to at least one of those policies as a condition for cluster membership. A quarter of field operations report facilitating trainings on AAP and feedback mechanisms highlighting lingering lack of clarity on the role of the cluster on AAP. Finally, while rights awareness-raising and community-based protection constitute some of the strongest programming in field operations, only 23% have developed harmonized approaches for community engagement and RCCE.

CLUSTER RESOURCES AND LEADERSHIP

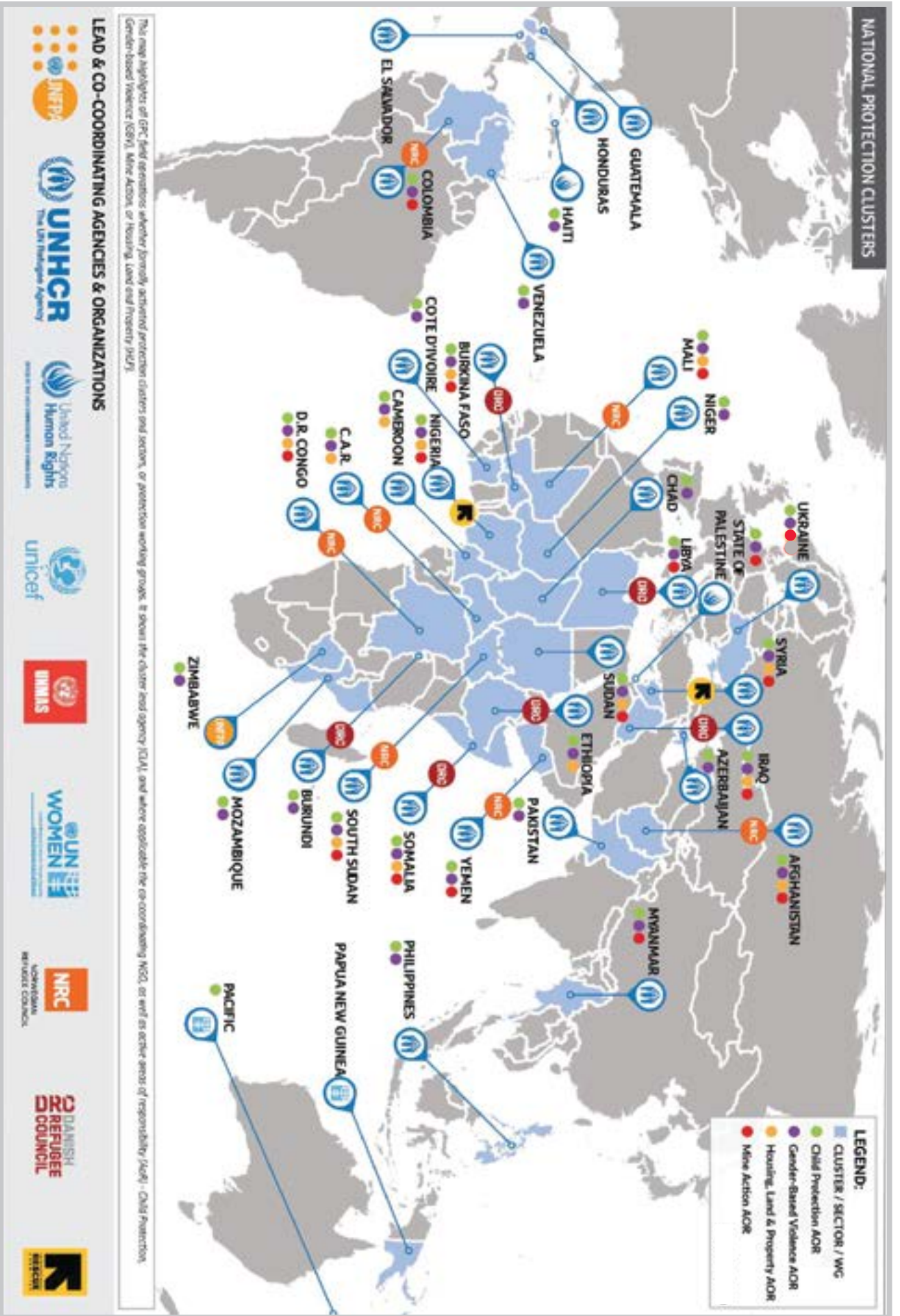
Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory Weak



Effective protection coordination requires dedicated resources, appropriate structures, and collective ways of working. 72% of field Protection Clusters & Sectors have a dedicated coordinator and 55% have a dedicated IMO (up from 38%). These numbers are balanced by lower number of coordinators (55%) and IMOs (28%) on FTA leading to high turnover and regular gaps in field capacity and resulting in reliance on short-term deployments. Half of field operations have established UN-NGO co-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.





This map alphabetizes all GRC field operations whether jointly 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 other areas of responsibility (AoR) - Child Protection, Gender-based Violence (GBV), Mine Action, or Housing, Land and Property (HLP).

LEAD & CO-COORDINATING AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

Logos of various organizations including: UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), UNICEF, UN Women, NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council), and the Danish Refugee Council.