

THE PROTECTION CLUSTER INCLUDES SUB-CLUSTERS ON CHILD PROTECTION, GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND MINE-ACTION



Photo: Charitable Foundation "Right to Protection"

PROTECTION CONCERNS

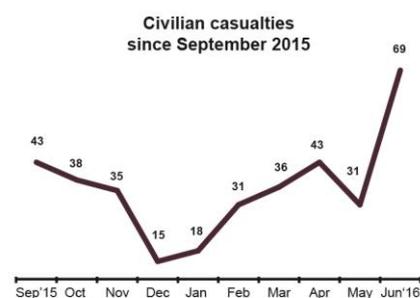
- In June 2016, the number of **civilian casualties** in the conflict zone of eastern Ukraine recorded by OHCHR was the highest since August 2015 with **69 cases recorded**.
- The number of civilians crossing the contact line in June 2016 has increased by 100,000.** Long queues at checkpoints, where shelter from the heat, sanitation facilities, and water are limited or not available pose a serious protection risk. There have been cases of people fainting and several deaths at checkpoints have also been reported. The situation is particularly critical for elderly people, people with disabilities and people with children. In addition, the government announced the relocation of the Zaitseve and Novotroitske checkpoints closer to the contact line - to Maiorsk and Berezove respectively, where there is no infrastructure (sanitation, potable water, first aid points, etc.). This will increase the security risk for civilians, while at the same time limit access for humanitarian actors trying to provide assistance.
- Freedom of movement** remains a key protection concern in NGCA, particularly for single-headed families with children where the whereabouts of the second parent are unknown as written authorization of both parents is required for children to move from NGCA to GCA.
- The **suspension of social benefits and pensions** to IDPs have had a devastating impact on pensioners living in NGCA, for whom registration as an IDP in GCA is the only way to access their pension. For many, pensions are the only source of income and they face additional challenges in travelling to the GCA, including difficulty with mobility, as a result of age and health problems, insecurity and hardship in crossing checkpoints.
- Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 365 was adopted on 8 June 2016, and introduces **additional verification mechanisms for payment of pensions and social benefits to IDPs**. Mobile groups composed of representatives of different state agencies, including State Security Service and national police, will check IDPs who receive social payments. No other vulnerable group receiving social benefits in Ukraine is subject to this type of monitoring and verification. There is no clear understanding as to how the home checks by these mobile teams will be conducted and no guidance has been sent to regional social protection offices on how to apply the provisions of this Resolution.
- In Severodonetsk a number of cases were identified where **children deprived of parental care and orphans** were evacuated from the NGCA without civil documents. Without documents confirming their status as children deprived of parental care, they cannot be adopted. There is a need to develop a mechanism to either reissue these documents or transfer them from NGCA, so that these children (most of whom were relocated from institutions in NGCA) can have a chance to be adopted and be raised in families rather than being relegated to institutional care. Moreover, children deprived of parental care and orphans evacuated from NGCA have difficulty accessing free state accommodation when they turn 18. According to Ukrainian legislation, free accommodation must be provided to children deprived of parental care, by local authorities, but this does not extend to IDP children.

This leads to serious protection risks for IDP adolescents as they come of age: homelessness, destitution, harmful coping practices, and may lead to involuntary return to NGCA as they hope to find accommodation there. It is necessary to introduce legislative changes, to ensure that this group of children can exercise their legal right to obtain free accommodation in areas of displacement.

- GBV Sub-Cluster partners in Mariinka, Krasnohorivka and Novosilka report the **need for free contraceptives**, especially in healthcare and social service institutions close to the contact line. In addition, there is a need for **dissemination of life-saving information on GBV health services, in particular HIV and STI prevention**, as the state run healthcare and social institutions do not have enough materials for distribution.

For more information, please contact:

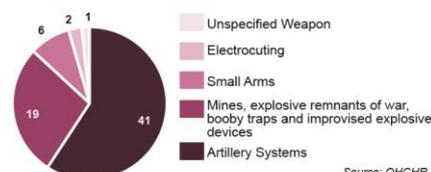
Anna Rich, Protection Cluster Coordinator, rich@unhcr.org
Gabrielle Akimova, Child Protection Sub Cluster Coordinator a. i., gakimova@unicef.org
Ekaterina Kristesashvili, GBV Sub Cluster Coordinator, kristesashvili@unfpa.org
Martin Oubrecht, Mine Action Sub Cluster Coordinator, martin.oubrecht@undp.org
Becky Achan, Age and Disability TWG Coordinator, becky.achan@helpage.org
Miradije Hodza, House, Land and Property TWG Coordinator, miradije.hodza@nrc.no



Civilian casualties in June 2016

12 killed: 8  2  2 
57 injured: 32  19  6 

Major causes of civilian casualties in June 2016



Source: OHCHR

HIGHLIGHTS

PROTECTION RESPONSE

- **In an effort to mark the area around the checkpoints contaminated with mines, warning signs have been installed at two checkpoints.** At Zolote checkpoint in Luhansk region, 200 mine warning signs have been installed on the GCA side and the installation of notice boards will start soon. At Pishchevyk checkpoint in Donetsk region, 125 mine warning signs and five notice boards were installed on both the GCA and NGCA side. In addition, the NGO “Responsible Citizens” conducted an information campaign on mine risks in the area along the contact line.
- Although the issue of accreditation for UN agencies working in NGCA remains unresolved, **several local organizations have been accredited and are able to undertake protection activities.** Programs implemented by Protection Cluster partners in Donetsk region include legal aid hotlines, psychosocial support, livelihoods, a women’s community centre, as well as a safe house for GBV survivors. In Lugansk region, protection is mainstreamed into humanitarian aid delivery, and assistance focused on persons with specific needs, including persons with disabilities and those living in institutions.
- To challenge the linkage of pensions to IDP registration, NGO “Right to Protection” supported **three successful law suits regarding the restoration of pensions in Kharkiv Regions.** The court ruled in favor of the IDPs, basing its argument on the European Court for Human Rights case law: “State in question must endeavor, with all the legal and diplomatic means available to it vis-à-vis foreign States and international organizations, to continue to guarantee the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms defined in the Convention”.
- DRC opened a new office in Sloviansk which will cover northern Donetsk Oblast. The DRC office will undertake protection activities, including legal assistance and child protection, as well as a livelihoods programme.
- **Donetsk Regional Social Center of Mother and Child has been reestablished in Druzhkivka, Donetsk Region.** The institution’s primary beneficiaries include pregnant women and women with children up to 18 months old in difficult life circumstances or at risk of abandoning a child. The centre provides comprehensive services, including psychosocial support, and can potentially be used as a temporary shelter for women survivors of GBV.
- NGO “Unity for Future Together” based in Zaporizhzhia and Save the Children issued a [booklet](#) that provides a guide on the existing state assistance procedures for a lost child, children separated from parents, children victims of domestic violence, child survivors of GBV, and children with disabilities. These were the five most common issues reported in 2015 at the child friendly spaces run by Save the Children.

ADVOCACY

- Upon request of Protection Cluster partners, the Ministry of Social Policy agreed **to create a Working Group consisting of Ministry officials and NGOs and chaired by the Deputy Minister of Social Policy to work on amendments to Resolution 365.** The first meeting took place on June 24. The Protection Cluster partners will use this Working Group as a platform to advocate for non-discriminatory access for IDPs to social benefits and pensions. Protection Cluster members will also have an opportunity to contribute to the development of guidance materials for regional Ministry of Social Policy offices prepared by the Ministry.
- The Protection Cluster **prepared an [update of the suspension of IDP social benefits and pensions](#),** to assist with advocacy efforts. It was shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada in advance of the Canadian Prime Minister’s visit to Ukraine, as well as with G7 government members for advocacy purposes. The Protection Cluster is concerned that thousands of IDPs are being excluded from receiving targeted assistance to which they are entitled, including social payments and pensions. The Protection Cluster calls on the government of Ukraine not to introduce additional verification mechanisms for payment of pensions and social benefits to IDPs, that are not established by law for citizens of Ukraine who have not been displaced.
- UNHCR and CrimeaSOS supported a community initiative of elderly IDPs residing in Brovary, Kyiv oblast, to organize a benefit concert to raise awareness about the particular challenges faced by displaced elderly people and to celebrate their courage and the life experience they can share with the local community.

TRAINING/EVENTS

- The Norwegian Refugee Council organized a **seminar for judges of local courts and the Appeals Court of the Luhansk oblast** on protection and promotion of human rights of IDPs and conflict-affected persons through the justice system in Severodonetsk. Speakers included the Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights Non-Judicial Rapporteur, representatives of NRC, UNHCR, Council of Europe and the Luhansk Oblast Appeals Court.
- DRC organized a **round table in Kramatorsk to discuss with local authorities and NGOs the challenges faced by IDP and conflict-affected youth.** Participants expressed concern about potential risks stemming from changes to the system of financing vocational technical education, that may lead to substantial reduction or even cessation of funding. This in turn could put young people at a high risk of criminalization in the aftermath of the conflict.
- Humanitarian actors in Mariupol, Kramatorsk and Severodonetsk representing the Protection Cluster, GBV Sub Cluster and Health Cluster received **training on the [IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action](#).** Ukraine is among eleven countries that piloted the roll out of the Guidelines.
- A **series of two-day workshops on [“Multi-sectoral Response to Gender Based Violence based on Global Package of Essential Services and Standard Operating Procedures”](#)** were organized by UNFPA in partnership with the East European Institute for Reproductive Health. Representatives of centers for social services for family, children and youth, social protection, healthcare, police, free secondary legal aid centers from Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk regions participated in the workshop.
- The Age and Disability TWG provided training to the REACH Inter-agency Vulnerability Assessment team on inclusive data collection and communication skills for older people and people with disabilities. REACH is conducting an inter-agency vulnerability assessment in Donetsk and Lugansk (GCA) of Ukraine, which will be used to inform humanitarian response programming.