



CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION



GPC 2017 REVIEW



European Union
Humanitarian Aid
and Civil Protection

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
Country case studies.....	8
Countries selected.....	8
Methodology.....	9
Basic survey questions shared with each selected protection cluster	9
KEY ISSUES, INSIGHTS AND GOOD PRACTICES	10
Examples of good practice.....	10
Mainstreaming Protection	13
Examples and Good Practices from the field	14
IRAQ	16
Context.....	16
HRP strategic objectives	16
Progress of strategy, response and centrality of protection in 2017	16
Protection Cluster strategy and response	19
Challenges and next steps	19
MYANMAR	20
Context.....	20
HRP strategic objectives	20
Progress of strategy, response and centrality of protection in 2017	21
Protection Sector strategy and response.....	23
Challenges and next steps	23
SOMALIA	25
Context.....	25
Progress of strategy, response and centrality of protection in 2017	25
Protection Cluster strategy and response	26
Challenges and next steps	27

WHOLE OF SYRIA	28
Context.....	28
HRP strategic objectives	28
Progress of strategy, response and centrality of protection in 2017	28
Protection Sector strategy and response.....	30
Challenges and next steps	31
THEMATIC CHALLENGES	32
Hunger and protection.....	32
Explosive Remnants of War – Saving Lives and Limbs	34
Engagement with State and Non-State Parties to Conflict.....	35
Challenges.....	36
OVERVIEW	37
Global Protection Cluster at a Glance	37
Dashboard/Stats 2017.....	38

INTRODUCTION



In 2016, the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) Operations Cell and the Protection Standby Capacity Project (ProCap) carried out a desk review of field and global protection cluster actions to promote the centrality of protection.¹ To build on this initiative, the GPC again sought to review global and field efforts to reinforce the centrality of protection in humanitarian action. This 2017 review aims to enhance the understanding of the range and diversity of approaches to the centrality of protection, as well as reflect on good practices, challenges and learning opportunities. The four countries selected for desk review are Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia, and the Whole of Syria response.

The thematic articles are based on the work and reflections of Task Team members and examine the link between hunger and protection; the severe protection risks associated with explosive remnants of war; and engagement with parties to conflict. These are not the only major challenges we face, but it is critical that we strengthen our abilities to address these challenges appropriately. This review was drafted by a ProCap Advisor and the GPC Coordinator, with substantive inputs from GPC members. OCHA and InterAction co-lead a GPC Task Team on the Centrality of Protection which served as a forum within which to collaborate, discuss, and review the content and substance of the review. It is expected that the process and substance of the review will be continually developed and strengthened.

The IASC has now recognized that system-wide responses to critical protection concerns are essential to achieve protection outcomes. However, gathering all the necessary actors to respond to such issues in a cohesive manner remains challenging. Using the example of ensuring safe, dignified, and voluntary IDP return or resettlement, protection actors can facilitate the development of comprehensive strategies which fulfill critical norms and standards for return or resettlement, and can undertake steps to ensure free and informed decisions by IDPs. This, for example, can be done by helping to create community-based

committees for informed planning and decision-making, and by working with relevant authorities and IDPs to manage two-way information flow campaigns. However, comprehensive pre-conditions for durable solutions as a protection outcome, equally depends on repair and reconstruction of damaged infrastructure access to clean water, health services, and education; food security and livelihoods; clearance of ERWs; rule of law; community cohesion; and other broader security conditions.

Other severe and prevalent risks to conflict-affected people can similarly demand the mobilisation of diverse capacities and resources to take practical measures to reduce threats, reduce vulnerabilities in relation to these threats, and enhance capacities to overcome threats, and thereby effectively reduce overall risk. We have repeatedly seen, for example, the critical importance of well-integrated multi-sectoral solutions to address the strong link between food insecurity, erosion of positive coping mechanisms, and certain patterns of gender-based violence. As another example, comprehensively mitigating child recruitment may depend on a diversity of measures, for example, to address the attitudes and behaviours of parties to conflict and harmful cultural practices present among affected communities, as well as lack of education, water, food, and livelihood opportunities.

Protection-minded humanitarian leadership and multi-sectoral efforts are critical to ensure that the right mix of resources, capacities, and mandates are mobilized and coordinated to address the complex and multi-faceted risks people face in humanitarian crises. This will often require not only effective coordination among humanitarian actors but with development and peacebuilding actors as well as the donor and diplomatic community.

Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), in particular, play a critical role. The leadership of Humanitarian Coordinators is indispensable to ensure that critical protection concerns are factored into the overall humanitarian

¹ The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action – A Review of Field and Global Clusters in 2016, February 2017.



response and receive regular attention by senior humanitarian leaders. HCTs have a unique role to help mobilize a diversity of actors with unique capacities and mandates to collectively tackle the most severe and prevalent protection concerns through coordinated protection strategies. This includes ensuring that every sector of humanitarian response to analyses and address protection concerns which intersect with their area of responsibility and response objectives.

HCTs are additionally encouraged to consider the potential need for an HCT protection strategy to mobilise whole-of-system efforts to address protection concerns which are beyond the capacity of protection clusters to address alone. Such strategies should not try to address every protection issue faced in a given crisis but, rather, concentrate attention and resources to focus on one or two of the most severe and prevalent risks that require comprehensive and multi-faceted strategies for effective problem-solving.

Practical steps to fulfil the centrality of protection in practice are outlined in the IASC Protection Policy, and in the associated GPC Guidance on HCT Protection Strategies. These promote inter alia investing in a strong evidence-base for analysis, programming and advocacy; in-depth, integrated and continuous protection analysis; integrating protection objectives into sector-specific responses; and appropriate referral pathways to protection.

The 2017 Review of the Centrality of Protection looks at how the humanitarian community responds to the main protection issues identified in a certain humanitarian response. The country snapshots reflect on the role of Protection Clusters to create strategies and support the HCTs and HCs in gathering other sectors behind a protection response. The Review also focuses on the processes and guidelines that protection actors produced for the wider humanitarian community, such as HCT protection strategies, advisory notes, integration activities, and monitoring reports.

In 2015, the Independent Whole of System Review of Protection in the Context of Humanitarian Action pointed to a broad “knowledge and learning deficit on protection in the humanitarian system”. While it is beyond the scope of work of this Review to evaluate protection strategies, a broad effort by implementing organizations and donors to invest in the evaluation of protection outcomes would yield valuable new information and lessons for the centrality of protection in humanitarian action. In 2018, the GPC

Task Team will seek to facilitate ongoing collection of experience and lessons emerging from efforts to ensure the centrality of protection in practice, including with respect to the role of Humanitarian Coordinators and Inter-Cluster Coordination Groups. It is expected that this will provide a basis for future reviews to reflect an increasingly rich and rigorous overview of the roles of a range of actors contributing to protection outcomes.

Examples of system-wide efforts to ensure the centrality of protection in humanitarian action include:

- ➔ **IASC Standard Terms of Reference for HCTs:** endorsed by the IASC Emergency Directors Group in February 2017, makes ensuring the centrality of protection a mandatory responsibility of the HCT, alongside specific and other mandatory responsibilities for collective approaches to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), accountability to affected populations (AAP); protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).
- ➔ **Development of HCT protection strategies:** recognising the necessity of having a strategic approach to achieving collective protection outcomes, many HCTs have taken steps towards developing overall protection strategies at HCT level, drawing upon the GPC guidance developed in 2016. At the end of 2017, there were HCT protection strategies developed in CAR, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. South Sudan and Sudan are currently in the process of updating their respective strategies. In addition, in 2017, HCT protection strategies development processes were initiated in Burundi, Chad, DRC, Myanmar and Philippines.
- ➔ **Overall humanitarian response-wide protection analysis:** as part of the process of developing an HCT protection strategy, understanding the overall protection risks is necessary. Protection clusters in various country operations, such as Somalia and the Whole of Syria have supported the HCT and all clusters to prepare a broad-based protection analysis to understand better the types of protection risks that should be addressed cross-cluster and collectively.

Country case studies

By reviewing the activities of field protection clusters/ sectors to support the centrality of protection in selected country case studies, this review provides an opportunity for critical reflection and learning across country contexts, with a focus on progress, challenges encountered and how these are being addressed. Considering the steps taken by protection clusters to advance protection across the humanitarian response recognises the role they are expected to play technically and practically, as well as the complementarity of such progress with the implementation of protection cluster strategies and workplans.

The main objectives for each case study country are to establish an overview of the:

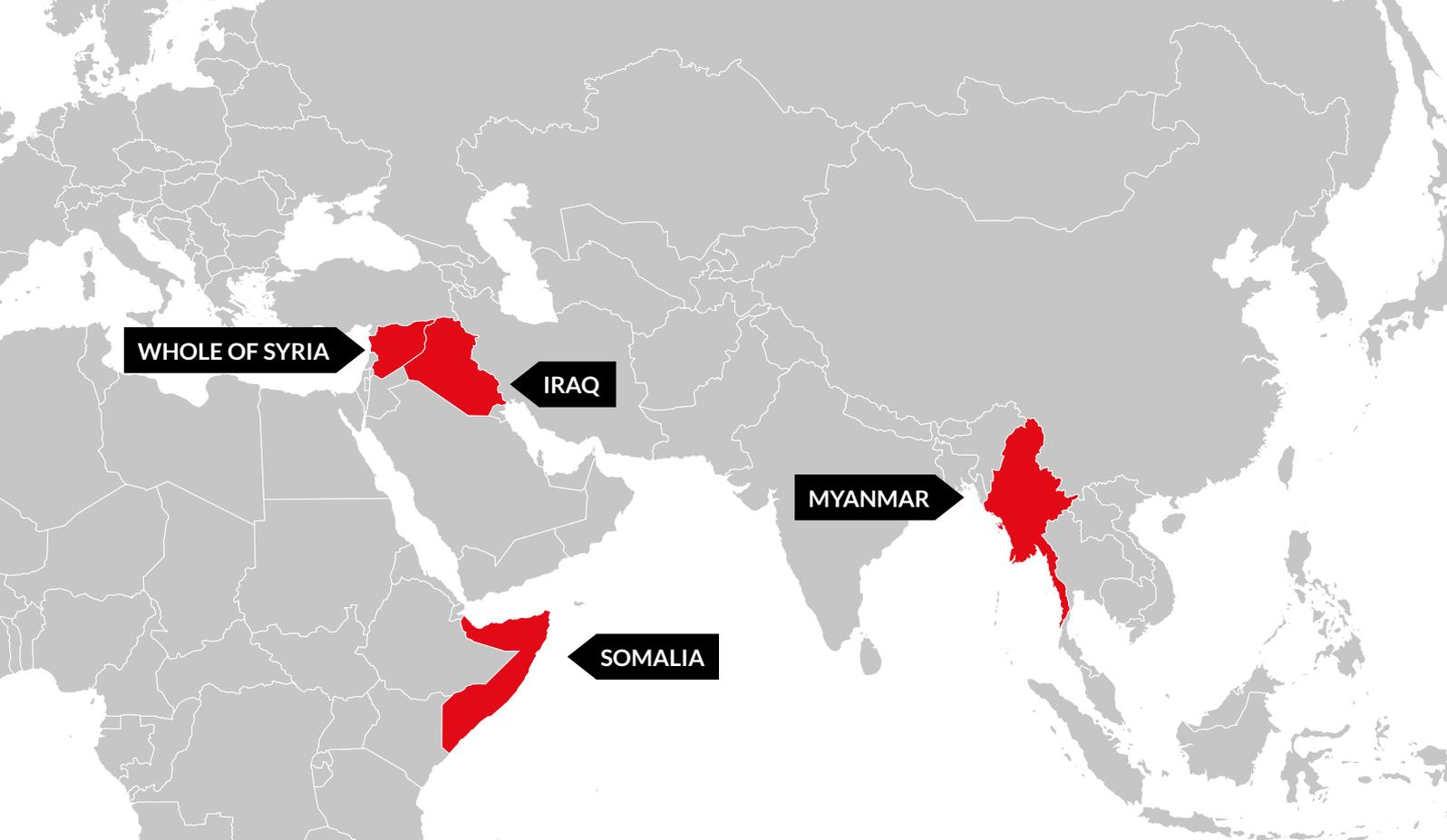
- a) 2017 protection-related objectives – as part of the respective Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and Protection Cluster Strategy;
- b) best practices and challenges in achieving protection objectives in humanitarian action; and
- c) planned next steps for Protection Cluster members in 2018.

Countries selected

The country operations selected by the GPC Task Team are:

- ➔ Iraq;
- ➔ Myanmar;
- ➔ Somalia; and
- ➔ Whole of Syria.

The countries were selected as case studies to have a range of contexts and examples of activities undertaken to advance protection outcomes. In addition, selection was based on data available in English and availability of field protection cluster colleagues to participate in the process. Iraq and the Whole of Syria operations were both included in the 2016 review and so including them for further review in 2017 allows for a more in-depth understanding of progress, challenges and reflection on how efforts to include protection as part of a system-wide response develop over time. In each case study, examples are used to highlight good practices, lessons learned and challenges identified in the course of efforts to advance the centrality of protection in 2017. These are illustrative but not an exhaustive list.



Methodology

This review is based predominantly on a desk review of documents relating to each country operation and case study protection clusters. In addition, the GPC Task Team provided documents related to global activities to support country operations. Most of the documents are available publicly, mainly online, or can be obtained by request from the GPC or relevant protection cluster.

Information was also provided directly from each selected field protection cluster based on the basic survey questions listed below. Written input was provided and supplemented with interviews with each field protection cluster lead/co-lead colleagues who readily and fully participated in the process.

Many of the documents used, particularly each Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), have figures from late 2016/early 2017 and, unless otherwise stated, are not necessarily the most up to date at the time of the writing. This is to reflect the data available when strategies and objectives were developed for 2017.

BASIC SURVEY QUESTIONS SHARED WITH EACH SELECTED PROTECTION CLUSTER

- Is the Protection Cluster's 2017 strategy (the Strategy) multi-year or for a single year?
- When and how will the Strategy be updated for 2018?
- Which of the stated objectives for protection in (a) the HRP; and (b) the Strategy were met in 2017?
- For the objectives not met, what are the main reasons for this?
- How does the Protection Cluster coordinate and work with the other protection sub-clusters?
- How does the Protection Cluster interact and support other clusters and the Humanitarian Country Team with protection?
- Which Protection Cluster activities do you think had the most impact in 2017?
- What will the Protection Cluster priorities be for 2018?
- Please include any other information about protection initiatives or activities in 2017 which have been part of implementing centrality of protection in the humanitarian response.

KEY ISSUES, INSIGHTS AND GOOD PRACTICES



This review has been an opportunity to consider the progress of ensuring protection is central within the broader humanitarian response, with a focus on four country case studies. There are several common themes regarding the steps taken to put protection at the core of any humanitarian response; the challenges encountered; and the role of protection clusters. The need to understand protection; its position in any response; and the role of all humanitarian actors is largely acknowledged. Considerable efforts have been made to reiterate these points in the countries reviewed, as well as at a global level and in other countries. These efforts have often been translated into strategic approaches, including conducting overall protection analyses; highlighting critical protection issues at HCT levels; and developing HCT protection strategies. What has been less prevalent is a systematic approach to operationalising, establishing accountability or monitoring and reporting for these strategic activities and intentions to centralise protection in a response.

As the GPC's second year of reviewing centrality of protection efforts, an indicative pattern has emerged. This concerns the difficulties encountered in each country of identifying clear priorities and a strategic approach and then rendering it into tangible actions with participation by all actors to achieve collective protection outcomes. The goal remains getting to a stage where much of this work is instinctive, part of each humanitarian actor's planned and implemented activities that feed into a larger purpose to ensure the protection of affected populations with their rights upheld. However, this remains a real challenge and, in many ways, a work in progress. More emphasis needs to be placed on the responsibility of in-country senior level leadership to play a prominent role to ensure that reduction of the most severe and prevalent protection risks are central to the overall humanitarian response. It is critical that difficult and

challenging issues have the attention and concerted efforts of the entirety of the humanitarian system if there is to be effective collective solutions to complex problems. Too often, the responsibility of pushing centrality of protection forwards often lies with the protection cluster in a response. While the technical support and many of the activities can be taken on by the relevant protection cluster, if done alone, this can result in a lack of involvement, understanding and collective approach within the response. The default position of the protection cluster being in charge seems to resonate with each of the countries reviewed. However, it was coupled with the resolve to find a more balanced approach and ensure a division of responsibilities between the strategic and operational aspects of protection across the response.

Noting the experiences documented in this review, the good practices identified and the determination of humanitarian actors at all levels; ongoing dialogue and innovation is necessary to keep on gaining momentum to get to the next stages of operationalising the centrality of protection. More sharing of field practice should be helpful to complement the available tools and support globally to enhance overall protective responses. Given the varying context of each response, efforts will need to be focused at a field level, with levels of accountability agreed at strategic and operational levels; as well as documentation and feedback regarding progress and obstacles. The strategic approaches taken to date should not be seen as the end but the vital means to keep on trying to get closer to placing protection at the core of any humanitarian response.

Examples of good practice

These examples are not exhaustive and are based on the experiences shared from the four country case studies. Each country operation has shown a range of useful ways to encourage the strategic and operational elements of centrality of protection.

Strategic leadership on protection

Having a strong strategic direction for developing HCT protection strategies and action plans and then overseeing their implementation is often challenging. The processes can be complicated, disconnected, lengthy and difficult to navigate. Having a very process-oriented approach can slow momentum, create unnecessary additional layers of work and lead to the perception by some actors that the process

is very complex. Ensuring that the humanitarian leadership understands this and, therefore, leads strategically while delegating operational and technical aspects is necessary. It's also critical that the Protection Cluster, in supporting the HCT and other clusters, avoids a focus on process. Coherent strategic leadership can address some of the common challenges that arise. Some of these challenges include the following: (a) the belief that protection is solely the responsibility of the protection cluster; (b) weakness in the cluster's ability to support the process; (c) the perception of some actors that their involvement in protection work will compromise their ability to be operational and deliver assistance (often seen as the balance between the principles of humanitarian imperative and do no harm); (d) the lack of capacity to operationalise protection throughout the response; or (e) not all actors are fulfilling their agreed role and responsibilities.

An effective strategic leadership requires regular monitoring and reporting on progress and addressing any challenges encountered to ensure there is no gap between the established strategic direction and effective operationalisation. Some useful practices are set out below.

- ➔ Including protection as a regular item on the HCT and ICCG agenda, as followed in Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia and the Whole of Syria responses.
- ➔ Ensuring that there are regular updates on the implementation of protection activities; with each relevant actor providing information about the progress of their designated activities, in accordance with the agreed action plan and timeline.
- ➔ Establishing a committee or taskforce to oversee the implementation of the HCT protection strategy, as done in Somalia.
- ➔ Having a dedicated staff member to take forwards specific aspects of the action plan with relevant actors.

The HCT can also take the lead in ensuring that all relevant actors and stakeholders are included in the strategic and operational aspects of protection. Having an inclusive approach has proven to be

an important part of increasing understanding, awareness and involvement in protection, as seen in Myanmar, Somalia and the Whole of Syria. As in Somalia, involving development actors and the UN mission more widely has resulted in identifying complementary activities and initiatives for protection. Also important has been ensuring that civil-military coordination is part of the process and involved in understanding joint approaches to protection, as relevant. Useful examples of this can be found in Iraq and the Whole of Syria responses.

Role of protection in the humanitarian programme cycle

In addition to highlighting the commitment to ensure protection is central to the response in HRPs, practical ways to include protection in the process include the following:²

- ➔ **Protection risk analysis for each sector/cluster** – similarly to efforts taken in the Whole of Syria, Iraq and Somalia responses, each cluster should be required to conduct an overall protection risk analysis. The relevant protection cluster can support this process, with trainings and tools, until each cluster becomes more familiar with undertaking a risk analysis, identifying protection risks and how to plan for avoiding and mitigating them. It is important to emphasize that this should not be viewed as a one-off process at the early stages of an intervention, but as an iterative process throughout and independent of the programme cycle to capture changes in the risk environment – supported by mechanisms for data collection and information management. And it should be focused on specific risk patterns (identify risks most prevalent and severe) – not try to continuously analyse everything.
- ➔ **Section on protection risks and protection mainstreaming in each sector/cluster chapter** – the four elements of protection mainstreaming can be used as a guide for each cluster in its respective HRP chapter. This would mean setting out how the proposed overall response for that cluster would avoid causing harm; ensure meaningful access without barriers or discrimination; have accountability to affected populations; and ensure participation and empowerment. An example of

² The GPC Protection Mainstreaming Toolkit includes guidance for clusters and coordination mechanisms to conduct and use protection risk analysis (Chapter 1). A process scorecard is also available (Tool #A4) to track how these key actions are being implemented. (<https://tinyurl.com/yco3dcym>)



this is can be seen in the 2017 HRP for the Whole of Syria, where each sector includes a section on its protection risk analysis and proposed mitigating measures.

- ➔ **Include protection mainstreaming requirements within template documents** – the requirements for including protection mainstreaming for each cluster can be encouraged by ensuring that they are reflected in all template documents (for the HNO or HRP) to be completed by each cluster. This approach was used in Iraq and the Whole of Syria for their respective 2018 HRPs. The completed parts on protection mainstreaming can then be used for the relevant sections in the HNO and HRP.

Common humanitarian funding mechanisms

In Myanmar and the Whole of Syria, each project proposal submitted for consideration for funding from the respective common humanitarian fund is required to consider protection risks as part of the submission. In addition, the submission should also identify how their project will mitigate these risks. As shown in the Whole of Syria 2017 and 2018 HRP processes, this approach can be encouraged by supporting partners (especially non-protection ones) to understand how to

identify and analyse protection risks and then ensure that their projects do not exacerbate any of these but, instead, serve to avoid or mitigate them. To support the process, training for the inclusion of protection mainstreaming in submissions has been undertaken in the Whole of Syria and Myanmar responses. Including the protection mainstreaming requirements in any template for common humanitarian funding should also be considered. This may be difficult if the template is prepared at a global level but should still be a priority for all common humanitarian funding.

By requiring all partners to undertake this process and to avoid it becoming a 'box-ticking' exercise, the risks should be followed-up and monitored throughout the implementation of projects. This could be done as part of the monitoring and evaluation activities for each project, with the support of the protection cluster and ICCG as relevant.

Role of donors

Many donors have shown commitment and involvement in advocating for and supporting efforts to promote protection and their role should not be viewed only in terms of funding action but also in lending support through their diplomatic functions

and policies in response to crisis and on specific issues. Donors scrutinising and following the implementation of a system-wide approach to protection can be very helpful. As seen in Somalia, donors can support the implementation of an HCT protection strategy by requiring aspects of it to be included in project proposals. For example, donors can systematically require project submissions to include more substantive protection risk analyses and proposed methods to address any identified protection risks. To ensure a meaningful approach, it is also necessary for donors to ensure that their partners monitor the implementation of mitigating measures and review protection risks through the life of any project funded by that donor.

Funding for protection

As part of taking on responsibility for the strategic oversight of efforts to mainstream and integrate protection in the broader response, the HCT will have to identify how these are to be funded. This could either be from a common funding mechanism or a part of each sector/cluster budget which is set aside for their respective protection efforts. This approach highlights the collective responsibility of all humanitarian actors for protection; encourages funds to be set aside for activities; and does not leave all efforts to be funded by the protection cluster.

Technical support by protection cluster/sector

This is still needed as humanitarian actors, including humanitarian leadership, navigate their way to making protection central to any response. Specific resources for supporting protection, such as standalone staff or deploying ProCap Senior Protection Officers, may be necessary to ensure that there is capacity and continuation of support to all clusters. For implementing HCT protection strategies, additional protection support is often necessary so that action plans can be progressed. While ProCaps or standalone staff often support the development of an HCT protection strategy, as for Somalia or the Whole of Syria, having support for the implementation is also important and can be a method to provide some structure for the system-wide protection activities which are complementary but separate to those of the protection cluster.

GPC technical and practical support

Global support and connection between different countries continues to be an excellent way to share lessons learned; benefit from good and bad experiences in other countries; and connect with colleagues who are often facing similar challenges. The community of practice framework which is led by the GPC has been an important way to enhance this connection and learning amongst protection colleagues globally. In addition, the GPC's missions to support field protection clusters and centrality of protection efforts can provide practical support and initiate processes: for example, the coordinator of the GPC's mission to South Sudan in March 2017 led to the development of a protection cluster strategy.

In addition to direct field support the GPC organises thematic discussions based on recurring questions from the field. In response to a specific request from the DSRSG/RC/HC in Iraq the thematic focus in 2017 was on increasing knowledge and practice on issues of international humanitarian law and roundtables were held on (1) the civilian character of IDP sites and settlements (February 2017); and (2) civil-military coordination for protection outcomes (October 2017).

Mainstreaming Protection

Protection mainstreaming is reflected in the IASC Protection Policy as an imperative for all humanitarian actors engaged in humanitarian response.³

In 2017, the Global Protection Cluster continued (1) to define the concept of Protection Mainstreaming as well as develop operational tools, guidelines, and training materials to promote it, and (2) to support field clusters and others in ensuring effective Protection Mainstreaming across humanitarian programs and sectors.⁴ As part of these efforts the Global Protection Cluster Task Team on Protection Mainstreaming, led by the International Rescue Committee and OCHA, developed a [Protection Mainstreaming Toolkit](#) to assist humanitarian actors to design and implement programs that are based on an analysis of the risks of violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation. The Toolkit highlights the role and responsibilities of different duty-

³ <https://bit.ly/2IK28qZ>

⁴ Main Funding Sources: ECHO, Sida, OFDA, IRC/OCHA/World Vision/Members Time & Effort

bearers (Protection Cluster, Clusters, Inter-Cluster Coordination Groups, Humanitarian Country Team, Donors, National/International Non-Governmental Organizations) alongside the necessary Monitoring & Evaluation tools. The Toolkit provides guidance on how to conduct risk analysis and risk mitigation across sectors by highlighting the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality programming.

The Task Team has also developed Sector-Specific Guidance Notes with the support of Global Clusters (Available in the Protection Mainstreaming App ([Google Play](#) & [iTunes](#)) alongside an [e-Learning](#) module) and, with the IASC Task Team on Accountability to Affected People, a set of Suggested Actions for cluster coordination groups to strengthen Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection in the Humanitarian Program Cycle.

The Global Cluster Coordination Group adopted a new **Standard Terms of Reference for Inter-cluster/sector Coordination Groups**, recognizing the important role the group plays in working together to deliver meaningful protection outcomes.

In spite of the examples below, the *application* of Protection Mainstreaming continues to be inconsistent, especially at the strategic/coordination level (e.g. cluster strategies and HRP). Research also needs to continue on measuring the impact of mainstreaming Protection at the collective level.

EXAMPLES AND GOOD PRACTICES FROM THE FIELD

Yemen – Collective Monitoring of Protection Mainstreaming

In coordination with OCHA and the Inter-Cluster Coordination Mechanism (ICCM), UNHCR (Protection Cluster) and IOM conducted on behalf of the Task Force on Population Movement (TFPM) a [Multi-Cluster Location Assessment](#) to gather in-depth data on the needs of the IDP, host, returnee and non-displaced populations. The assessment includes a section on Humanitarian Assistance (p. 41) which includes data on the perceptions of IDPs, host community members, returnees and non-displaced community members of the delivery of humanitarian assistance, information needs related to humanitarian assistance, and accountability to affected populations.

The following indicators are used to measure those perceptions:

- % of communities reporting that humanitarian assistance meets their priority needs.
- % of communities reporting that they know how to access humanitarian assistance.
- % of communities reporting that they feel involved in the way the humanitarian assistance is provided.
- % of communities reporting that the most vulnerable and in need population is receiving humanitarian assistance.

This is a good practice of a collective assessment to monitor the quality of the response at the inter-cluster level. From a protection mainstreaming perspective, it was recommended adding two indicators to measure the principles of safety/dignity and access:

- % of communities reporting that humanitarian assistance is delivered in a safe and dignified manner.
- % of communities reporting that they have meaningful access to services.

[Nigeria – Protection and Conflict Trends in the HRP](#)

The Protection Sector Working Group in Nigeria issued a [Guidance Note](#) on mainstreaming protection in the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan. In addition to setting out the main conflict and protection trends, the document provides recommendations intended at supporting all sectors to mainstream protection in their response plans. Those recommendations are based on the GPC Protection Mainstreaming Sector-Specific Checklists and adapted to the context.

[Global – Humanitarian Country Team Commitments & Protection Strategies](#)

Reflecting their responsibility to ensure that protection is central to the humanitarian response, several Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) have made specific commitments to guide their operational approach. The following commitments developed in 2017 are good examples of the use of Protection Mainstreaming to guide sector responses:

- [Somalia HCT Protection Strategy 2018-2019](#)
 - ▶ HCT to mandate the development of an inter-cluster plan on Protection Mainstreaming with 6 month plans building upon existing/ongoing mainstreaming initiatives
 - ▶ ICCG Coordinator and Protection Cluster Coordinator to be tasked and to report back to HCT on a regular basis. This includes, clusters/sectors revisiting their existing sector performance indicators and development of a basic Protection Mainstreaming training package.
 - ▶ HCT to encourage the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF) and other humanitarian funding mechanisms to include Protection Mainstreaming as one of the criteria for funding of all clusters and organizations.
- [Colombia HCT Protection Strategy 2018-2020](#)
 - ▶ Staff members of UN agencies and national and international organizations to be trained on the centrality of protection, protection mainstreaming and do no harm approaches as well as age, gender, ethnic and
 - ▶ Actions for the prevention and closing of protection gaps to be adequately incorporated in HNOs, HRPs, Pacific Plan, Response Plan for the Venezuela border and Peacebuilding Plans.
- [Yemen HCT Protection Strategy 2016-2017](#)
 - ▶ Cluster Coordinators and Focal Points to be trained and take on responsibility to include elements of protection mainstreaming throughout cluster activities, as outlined in each cluster’s response in the YHRP.
 - ▶ Protection indicators – for (a) avoid causing harm; (b) meaningful access; (c) participation and empowerment; and (d) accountability to affected populations to be included as requirement in project documentation.
 - ▶ Protection Cluster to support the development of skills and practical inclusion of protection mainstreaming principles.
 - ▶ Each Cluster to provide the financial and technical resources to ensure protection principles form a meaningful part of all stages of programming. At least 1% of each Cluster YHRP budget to be allocated to achieving protection mainstreaming aims.
- [CAR HCT Protection Strategy 2017](#)
 - ▶ Key principles of protection mainstreaming to be presented in each cluster
 - ▶ An protection mainstreaming NGO Focal Point to be activated in each cluster
 - ▶ Protection mainstreaming tools and guidance to be adapted for each cluster
 - ▶ Commitments, geographical areas and priority activities to be defined to implement protection mainstreaming in each cluster
 - ▶ Joint analysis of the barriers to access and threats to safety and dignity that might affect the delivery of humanitarian services (analyzes of risks based on gender and age) to be developed
 - ▶ Protection mainstreaming principles to be integrated into clusters strategies based on joint analysis of risks.

IRAQ



Context

Key issues identified in the 2017 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO)⁵ and the HRP include, for all affected populations, high levels of vulnerability caused by continuous conflict and persistent economic stagnation for all affected populations. According to the HNO, people lack effective protection and are subject to grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Mine survivors, families of mine victims, and children exposed to continuous explosive hazards and threats have specific protection needs. Areas under the control of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), namely Mosul, Hawiga and Tel Afar, reflected the gravest protection risks to affected populations, including risks of cross-fire, bombardment, execution, abduction, gender-based violence (especially sexual violence); looting, detention or expulsion. Starting in October 2016, the long military operation in Mosul to take back areas from ISIL involved intense fighting, leaving many civilians stuck in their homes and unable to flee to safety as well as causing huge civilian displacement, destruction and damage to infrastructure, irregular supplies of food, water and other basic services; risks associated to finding shelter in camps/emergency sites; and many areas contaminated by explosive hazards, which can take years to clear.

Affected populations who return to areas that have been retaken by the Iraqi authorities also face serious protection risks. These include explosive hazards, lack of adequate shelter, damaged infrastructure, lack of basic services, restricted freedom of movement, forced evictions, forcible transfers of displaced people, and social tensions between communities – particularly where populations are perceived as having supported ISIL. The screening procedures (by Iraqi security entities or non-state armed actors) of individuals to determine if they are security risks are in some cases

not carried out formally or consistently and the lack of due process can lead to protection risks, such as exploitation and abuse (sexual and physical).

HRP strategic objectives

The strategic objectives for the country⁶ build on those identified in the 2016 HRP and are based on a prioritised approach providing emergency support packages, particularly for mass displacement and mass returns, sequenced across first-line, second-line and full-cluster responses. Unlike the 2016 HRP, clusters have not included a section on how they will operationalise protection mainstreaming into its response. The HRP does note the importance of the coordination of mainstreaming protection and gender into the response and has a separate section on priorities for keeping AAP central to the response.

IRAQ – HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2017 – STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 1 Reach as many people in need as possible across Iraq.
- 2 Facilitate and advocate for voluntary, safe and dignified returns.
- 3 Help people brutalised by violence cope and recover from trauma.
- 4 Give options to families to live in Iraq in dignity.

Progress of strategy, response and centrality of protection in 2017

Throughout 2017, the Protection Cluster, including the AoR, worked towards implementing the strategic objectives at national and field levels (through established working groups). There is also a Communicating with Communities (CwC) Taskforce under the national Protection Cluster which provides technical guidance and support on AAP-related activities. Protection priorities continue to be

⁵ Iraq Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, January 2017

⁶ In addition to the overall objectives and cluster response plans for the entire country, the 2017 HRP also includes separate sections on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Mosul emergency operations. Each section provides more details on the response in these two areas.



identified and there are plans to formulate these into a separate Protection Cluster workplan in 2018 as part of a process involving all the AoRs, building on the strategic objectives in the 2017 and 2018 HRPs.

HCT protection strategy

The HCT endorsed a ‘Strategic Protection Framework for Iraq’ in October 2015 which emphasised an imperative to reach people in areas outside Government control, insists on the need for principled returns and outlined shared HCT responsibilities. This has informed some of the protection activities, including those carried out by the Protection Cluster, such as the preparation of advisory and guidance notes on key protection issues. However, the framework approach means that it is not a comprehensive strategy and has not been updated recently to bring together an overall protection analysis and agreed prioritisation of protection risks to address throughout the response. Such a strategy could be used by the HCT as a basis for identifying key protection issues and agreeing how to address them collectively in a more structured and consistent manner.

Advisory and guidance notes on key protection issues

The Protection Cluster prepares notes providing technical input and practical recommendations on key protection risks. These are usually prepared in response to a request from the HCT, other clusters or

other actors involved in the response. The Protection Cluster Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) is involved in preparing and reviewing the technical guidance. Examples of these in 2017 include the following:

- ➔ **Protection Cluster Guidance – Screening Sites and Related Facilities (January 2017):** this outlines key protection actions and messages regarding security screening; addresses confusion of terminology related to various types of facilities; and clarifies the role of protection actors, in relation to maintaining the civilian nature of any facility and prioritising protection of affected populations in the complex and unfolding situation.
- ➔ **Protection Guidance on “Evacuations” in the West Mosul Context (March 2017):** this sets out guidance and recommendations for the Government of Iraq (GOI) and the Iraqi Security Forces on how to ensure civilian protection during military operations in West Mosul. The guidance considers that, during fighting, civilians were either fleeing their homes; or, often in accordance with GOI advice, staying in their homes or neighbourhoods.
- ➔ **Strengthening the collection and analysis of protection information in the Mosul Emergency (July 2017):** recognising the nature of the situation in Mosul as a protection crisis and the various sources of data from all actors responding to the

Mosul emergency, this note aims to clarify the process by which the Protection Cluster receives, analyses and follow-ups on any protection information. These methods intend to complement the usual protection reporting and coordination mechanisms in place.

- ➔ **Protection Cluster Note on Protection of Families and/or Individuals with Special Protection Needs (last updated: 27 August 2017):** this provides advice and practical guidance on how to provide support and uphold the rights of people who have special protection needs, particularly due to their places of origin; or perceived affiliation with extremist groups.

Plans for centrality of protection within Mosul military operations

The Protection Cluster supported advocacy and practical efforts to encourage the Government of Iraq's adoption of a concept of operations with protection of civilians at its core. Planning included avoiding or limiting civilian casualties and damage to properties and critical infrastructure. Also included were suggested methods for the security screening of fleeing civilians and supporting their move to displacement camps. However, in practice these plans were not upheld, and the military operations led to serious protection risks faced by civilians as measures to screen displaced persons and deal with those considered to be a security risk were carried out in an ad hoc and inconsistent manner. The Protection Cluster continues to support efforts to advocate for more consistent methods in line with international standards, using the agreed concept of operations as a benchmark and example of how to improve the situation for civilians who continue to be affected.

Support to Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG)

As part of the preparation work for the 2018 HNO, the Protection Cluster has supported each cluster, in their respective submissions, to identify relevant protection risks for each cluster and ways to prevent or mitigate them. This has been included as a section to complete in the template for each cluster's submission for the HNO.

Critical Protection Issues (CPI) note

This is a regular note that is prepared by the Protection Cluster and usually presented on its behalf by the UNHCR Representative to the HCT.

The CPI note sets out relevant protection risks to be considered and addressed by the humanitarian community, with high level recommendations to be led by the HCT. The purpose of each note is to allow for protection to be regularly included in HCT meetings; priority issues to be discussed; and roles and responsibilities for follow-up to be identified. The CPI note can be used as a basis for bilateral follow-up with relevant actors to agree on actions to be taken to address identified priority protection issues.

Protection mainstreaming

Following the training of trainers and follow-up on protection mainstreaming in 2016, there were fewer similar activities in 2017. Reasons for this include the focus of so much of the humanitarian response, including the Protection Cluster on emergency responses such as Mosul. One new initiative in 2017 to provide practical protection mainstreaming support involved the Protection Cluster seconding a consultant to a protection partner to provide immediate and on-the-ground protection mainstreaming support to non-protection partners involved in the emergency responses. The consultant was able to conduct on-the-spot protection advice, mainly in partnership with shelter/NFI and food security actors. These efforts were ultimately limited because of challenges related to security and access to partners.

Other mainstreaming activities included GBV and child protection mainstreaming with other clusters. As part of the GBV activities, focal points were designated; and they carried out further trainings on GBV mainstreaming at national and field levels. Future mainstreaming options will include incorporating mine action in education and learning as without mine clearance and mine risk education, families will be left dealing with this threat alone.

IDP Information Centre (IIC)

As a toll-free number, operating across Iraq and increasingly recognised, the IIC and continues to be an essential inter-agency tool to support accountability to affected populations in practice. The IIC receives calls from people across Iraq; coordinates with each cluster for providing general and individual-level responses and provides information consistently on identified issues affecting communities. The IIC has also progressed to be a sound platform for raising complaints (including those related to sexual exploitation and abuse); providing feedback (positive

or negative) about any aspect of the response; and receiving reports on ongoing issues identified in difficult to reach areas.

Protection Cluster strategy and response

The Protection Cluster – including Child Protection, GBV, Mine Action, and Housing Land and Property Areas of Responsibility (AoR) – identified 8.7 million people in need of protection, with 3.4 million targeted in 2017. The overall aim is to help protect newly displaced and other highly vulnerable people. The first-line response focuses on providing targeted, urgent protection support to highly at-risk people, referring priority cases to specialised programmes. The second-line response then provides specialised protection support for vulnerable people, helping individuals secure appropriate documentation and facilitating community support for vulnerable people. The full cluster response aims to scale-up community protection mechanisms, strengthen local, governorate and national institutions responsible for protection and facilitate mass awareness on protection and prevention.

Planned response activities include evidence-based advocacy; collecting and disseminating information relevant for the promotion and defence of civilians' rights; providing specialised protection assistance and referrals; protection monitoring; and strengthening linkages with other clusters to achieve effective protection outcomes and strengthen the capacities of authorities and communities for protection.

Each cluster, including the Protection Cluster, sets out its exit strategy and steps to lay the groundwork for this in 2017. Planned activities under the exit strategy for the Protection Cluster include strengthening the capacity of authorities, civil society organisation and community-based structures to support the most vulnerable people, address protection risks and prevent violence.

Challenges and next steps

Efforts to ensure protection is anchored within the humanitarian response have largely been part of the emergency responses that were the primary focus of the response in 2017. The HCT Strategic Protection Framework, endorsed in 2015, provides elements for an overarching and structured inclusion of protection

into the response but has not been recently updated with a context analysis identifying priority collective protection outcomes for the response. There is also no supplementary action plan with shared responsibilities for all actors to ensure that identified protection outcomes are progressed. Such an action plan, based on agreed priorities, could support a more coherent approach to an overall protective response, including advocacy efforts across the response, particularly with sensitive issues which require a more strategic approach.

As part of the emergency responses and the aftermath, the Protection Cluster supported advocacy and the provision of technical guidance on protection principles and international humanitarian and human rights law. Examples include the work with OCHA's Civil Military Coordination Unit (CMCoord) on advocating for all parties to uphold obligations in relation to international humanitarian and human rights law. Following up on how this guidance is used and the progress of advocacy is difficult given the fast-paced nature of the response and number of actors involved. Also challenging has been establishing a consistent approach with regards to principled engagement so that humanitarian imperative is balanced with a do no harm approach. The Protection Cluster supported the development of a principled engagement framework (which is yet to be endorsed by the HCT) with the aim of supporting the delivery of principled humanitarian assistance to the affected population in complex and volatile operating environments. Finalising this and implementing the principles in practice proved to be difficult. Nevertheless, good practices from the process may be used for similar initiatives so that the experiences can continue to inform the response.

With most of the emergency phases of 2017 coming to an end, there is an opportunity to review the HCT's Strategic Protection Framework and identify shared priority objectives, as well as ensure that assistance continues to be in line with protection principles. Discussions for the development of the 2018 HNO and HRP have included making stronger linkages with development actions for aspects of the response, with the national authorities taking on more responsibility for delivery. As part of the planning for 2018, the Recovery and Resilience Programme (RRP) is being developed. If the RRP includes the planned response for returnees, it will be important to coordinate with the response activities in the HRP so that the protection elements are more consistently approached.

MYANMAR



Context

The 2017 HRP describes the key humanitarian issues in Myanmar as a complex combination of vulnerability to natural disasters; food insecurity; armed conflict; inter-communal tensions; statelessness; displacement; trafficking and migration. All of this is compounded by chronic poverty; years of authoritarian rule; structural inequalities and discrimination (including on the basis of ethnicity, gender and religion). The HRP also highlights the risk of landmines and need to appropriately address this, including through mapping, demarcation, and clearance. In the southwest, landmine risks and land ownership issues continues to impede the restoration of the livelihood of displaced people. Furthermore, people remain highly vulnerable to disasters, including cyclones, tropical storms, droughts and earthquakes with Myanmar being one of the most disaster-prone countries in Asia. In 2017, there was severe flooding in a large part of the country which temporarily displaced over 300,000 people.

Protection risks faced by affected populations include: repeated displacement, limited freedom of movement, physical insecurity, GBV, forced prostitution, lack of civil documentation, limited access to basic services and assistance, inadequate shelter conditions, human trafficking, people smuggling, tensions between communities, and presence of explosive remnants of war. Humanitarian access continues to be a serious challenge, including new lengthy and bureaucratic travel authorisation procedures introduced by the government in 2016. Many of these risks are interlinked and exacerbate each other, particularly for vulnerable populations.

HRP strategic objectives

Protection features significantly in the 2017 HRP strategic objectives. In addition to ensuring meaningful access (without barriers or discrimination) to essential services and livelihoods opportunities, the HRP aims to ensure the protection of civilians by 'contributing to the protection of civilians from violence and abuse by reducing exposure to harm, mitigating its negative impact and responding to serious protection needs; and advocat[ing] for full respect for the rights of individuals in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.'⁷

Framing the response within the 'Agenda for Humanity' in line with the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the HRP also highlights the HCT's commitment to ensuring centrality of protection, with the protection of affected communities informing all aspects of the response. It also stresses the importance of ensuring a conflict-sensitive/ do no harm approach to all humanitarian activities; promoting respect for humanitarian principles and international humanitarian (IHL) and human rights law (IHRL); and ensuring a people-centred and gender-inclusive approach. Development of a comprehensive HCT protection strategy is cited as necessary to address the most urgent and serious protection risks and to stop the violations of IHL and IHRL.

MYANMAR – HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2017 – STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 1 Meeting needs of displaced people and supporting efforts to achieve durable solutions.
- 2 Ensuring that vulnerable crisis-affected people have access to essential services and livelihoods opportunities.
- 3 Ensuring the protection of civilians.
- 4 Strengthening national capacities and the resilience of communities.

⁷ Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2017, December 2016, page 15

Progress of strategy, response and centrality of protection in 2017

Update on centrality of protection in Myanmar response

In May 2017, the Protection Sector prepared an update of efforts to progress protection within the humanitarian response. This followed on from workshops and consultations that were held in 2016 where the primary focus was to develop a common understanding on protection and support field and national level actors to operationalise protection in current and future programming. Key objectives were: (1) protection is integrated into the planning, implementation and monitoring of activities undertaken by all clusters/sectors; and (2) at the national level, the consultations considered protection and linkages with other protection and human rights initiatives. As a result of the consultation process, the HCT endorsed a Statement of Commitment to Protection on 25 November 2016. Updates noted by the Protection Sector included the following activities:

- inclusion of protection as a core element of the 2017 HRP;
- protection as a standing agenda item of ICCG and HCT meetings since December 2016;
- roll-out of IASC GBV guidelines across sectors through a series of trainings in January 2017;
- protection mainstreaming trainings and events in May 2017;
- protection mainstreaming within the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund; and
- planning for the development of a comprehensive HCT protection strategy to build on the HC's Statement of Commitment to Protection.

GPC Task Team on Protection Mainstreaming (TPPM) mission

This 10-day mission in May 2017 supported the Protection Sector with protection mainstreaming initiatives at national and field levels (in Kachin, northern Shan and Rakhine). Activities included trainings (in English and Myanmar language); training of trainers, an introduction to the GPC protection mainstreaming toolkit; appointing designated protection mainstreaming focal points; developing context-specific protection checklists for each sector; and discussions with actors and sector leads at national and field levels about how best to monitor

protection mainstreaming throughout the programme cycle. For a more systematic approach to protection mainstreaming in Myanmar, the Protection Sector supported the preparation of an action plan, including a training plan for awareness-raising and trainings throughout 2017. The GPC mission also made several other recommendations for ensuring the momentum gained with the mission continues and that the GPC, through the Protection Sector, continues to support the protection mainstreaming efforts in Myanmar.

Overall protection analyses

The Protection Sector finalised detailed protection analysis of Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states in December 2015. These are updated on an ongoing basis and will inform development of the HCT protection strategy. The Protection Sector plans to lead a consultative process at national and field levels as part of the methodology of updating the analyses comprehensively and inclusively. The plan is to prepare them concisely, linking them with regular protection monitoring activities and based on community consultations.

Inclusion of protection mainstreaming elements in Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF) proposals

All project submissions under the MHF are reviewed to ensure that protection mainstreaming has been part of the proposal process. The Protection Sector (including the Child Protection and GBV AoR) review all submissions and provide feedback, requesting responses and clarifications as necessary. The Protection Sector has also advocated successfully to include protection mainstreaming as part of the training on the MHF, at national and field levels so that applicants understand what is expected from them when drafting a project proposal. The next steps will be identifying how best to monitor the actual implementation of protection mainstreaming in each project.

Protection considerations for cash programming

The Protection Sector has supported efforts to ensure that potential protection risks related to planned cash programming are identified and analysed as part of any assessment to determine whether cash programming is appropriate as a response. This included a global Cash Capacity (CashCap) support mission in May 2017. The main objectives of the mission were to build the capacity of humanitarian actors involved in cash programming; improve the understanding of good practices on cash programming

and protection in Myanmar; and support planning processes of cash programming with an increased consideration of protection aspects. The context in each geographical area and sector differs and, therefore, requires a separate protection risk analysis. The Protection Sector has also been advocating on these protection considerations at HCT and ICCG levels, as well as with donors who are funding cash initiatives.

Protection notes and guidance

The Protection Sector has prepared a number of notes and guidance on key protection issues in 2017. These include those listed below.

- ➔ **Relocating Internally Displaced Persons from Ramree, Ka Nyin Taw and Kyein Ni Pyin Camps, A Protection Sector Position, Rakhine State, Myanmar (15 May 2017):** this note provides information and analysis on the relocation process for IDPs which was being undertaken by the authorities in Rakhine State. The process was ostensibly the implementation of some of the recommendations made by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, as led by Kofi Annan. The note sets out recommendations on how to ensure that humanitarian principles and protection standards are met when considering or implementing any relocations of people. Particular focus is given to the analysis of each relevant situation and the minimum standards of ensuring voluntariness, consultation, safety, dignity and property rights.
- ➔ **Advocacy Note, Situation in Tanai, Kachin State (5 July 2017):** this note provides information and analysis about the main protection risks faced by the civilian population caught up in a conflict situation. It reiterates the rights of civilians and the IHL and IHRL obligations of all parties in situations of conflict and calls on all parties to take urgent measures to comply with these obligations and ensure the protection of civilians at all times.
- ➔ **HCT update on situation in Tanai and Mogaung Townships, Kachin State (5 September 2017):** the Protection Sector provided the HCT with an update on the protection situation for people caught up in conflict in these areas. The update included the main protection risks faced; challenges regarding the provision of humanitarian assistance; and key advocacy messages for the HCT to pursue with the relevant stakeholders.

- ➔ **Minimum Protection Standards and Principles for IDP Return/Relocation/Resettlement Operations in Myanmar: a Humanitarian Country Team Position (24 November 2017):** with the support of the Protection Sector, the HCT prepared a note on its position regarding the main protection concerns due to returns, relocations or resettlement, bringing together the key points from the previous notes on various situations. The HCT note emphasises the importance of ensuring compliance with minimum protection standards to be met in such interventions and sets out the position to be used as a basis for consistent advocacy to meet such standards.

Protection integration activities

The Protection Sector has supported a number of cross-sector initiatives to have an integrated approach. An example has been with the Shelter/NFI and CCCM colleagues in relation to a new shelter design for IDPs in Rakhine. The lack of privacy in previous shelters was raised as a protection risk over a long period of time. For the new design of shelters, addressing this lack of privacy was a priority and was done with the inclusion of internal and external solid doors that can be locked. The authorities have agreed to including this in the design as a minimum standard for new shelters in Rakhine. CCCM colleagues are also working with the Protection Sector to provide a more inclusive approach for people with disabilities by assessing the situation in camps to understand the challenges for people with disabilities. The results of these assessments will then inform response activities to ensure that there is full access to services and assistance for all people in need.

Protection monitoring

Key protection issues are monitored at national and field levels. For instance, the Protection Working Group in Kachin has developed an assessment checklist with protection partners. These are used for monitoring emergency needs; protracted displacement; or returns.



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Protection Sector strategy and response

In the 2017 HRP, the Protection Sector targeted 244,336 people with protection assistance, which is all those identified with protection needs in Myanmar. The Protection Sector is represented at national and field levels and includes Child Protection and GBV Areas of Responsibility (AoR).

The Protection Sector's overall goal in 2017 was to establish an environment conducive to protection, with improved access to quality protection services. The objectives were: (1) protection services are improved, expanded and more accessible; and (2) the protective environment is improved by mitigating threats to mental wellbeing, physical safety and legal protections.

Protection activities focus on the most vulnerable, mainly IDPs, returnees and relocated people. In addition to providing specialised protection services, the Protection Sector worked to

increase the capacity of government, local and community-based organisations to deliver quality protection services. Other priority activities include strengthened information management; protection monitoring; increased linkages with other sectors to ensure protection mainstreaming; and advocacy interventions on increased humanitarian access and respect for IHL and IHRL.

Challenges and next steps

Despite the serious protection risks faced by affected populations in Myanmar leading to ongoing humanitarian needs, some actors (including donors, diplomats and some international organisations) have framed the context primarily as in need of development. However, development that does not integrate a human rights-based approach will not address the root causes of the humanitarian situation and its consequences. As set out succinctly in the InterAction 2017 mission report,⁸ this narrative may

⁸ Findings and Recommendations, InterAction Protection Mission – Myanmar, February 26 – March 9 2017

be a way of supporting political progress and the new government; however, acknowledging, understanding and responding to the humanitarian situation in a more consistent way remains essential. Downplaying the critical humanitarian needs in the country, and its causes and possible solutions, may lead to the failure to craft a cohesive humanitarian strategy. Ultimately, the humanitarian response should also complement and form the basis for necessary development efforts. The InterAction mission report sets out important and practical findings and recommendations for a system-wide approach to achieving collective protection outcomes. The overall suggestions made include (a) using a whole-of-system approach to achieve protection outcomes; (b) establishing good information flow and analysis as a basis for problem-solving; (c) diversifying ways of working in pursuit of protection outcomes; and (d) designing and implementing protection strategies.⁹

The Protection Sector has been involved in a number of activities to transform protection from a concept to a practical reality for the broader humanitarian response in Myanmar. Initial consultation activities, leading to the HCT's Statement on Commitment to Protection and incremental steps in 2017 have laid the foundations from which the HCT protection strategy can be developed in 2018. Strategic direction and ownership by the HCT will be necessary to ensure that all actors take on their responsibilities and are part of the process to build protection much more into the response. Sharing information and joint analysis of protection concerns is a necessary foundation of the centrality of protection. InterAction's report from its mission to Myanmar in February/March 2017 provides a number of findings and recommendations which should be used as part of this process of having a more consistent approach to building a protective environment and including a wide range of international, national and local actors.

Having a more strategic and overarching approach should be a valuable way to meet the challenges of engaging with the national and local authorities, which, to date, has not been coherent enough amongst actors. Some international, as well as local actors, refuse to name the Rohingyas as Rohingyas, denying their right to self-determination. There are varying contexts in different parts of Myanmar with specific realities that need to be understood. Having an overall approach which considers the specific

protection concerns, including serious violations of human rights, needs and circumstances of each area will be necessary for actors to divide responsibilities and have a more consistent and protective approach to meeting the needs of affected populations and helping them to claim their rights. To achieve this, data collection would need to be strengthened, including on victims of landmines or ERWs. This will also allow for interventions to be adapted to each particular context and the involvement of affected populations and those working at a local level.

⁹ Ibid, Executive Summary

SOMALIA



Context

As noted in the 2017 HRP, all strategic objectives were developed to consider protection within the humanitarian response. Plans include ensuring protection is a core aspect of the humanitarian programme cycle, including as part of preparedness efforts and immediate and life-saving activities. The response aims to provide protection and assistance to the most vulnerable and at-risk groups; strengthen resilience; support the provision of basic services; and enable durable solutions.

Cross-cutting issues that are also emphasised in the HRP include coordinating with development actors; strengthening engagement with national actors; ensuring a system of accountability; advocating consistently; and improving humanitarian access. In addition, there is a focus on considering gender throughout the response and accountability for affected populations (AAP), with the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) tasked with establishing a collective approach to AAP and Communicating with Communities (CwC) to bring together all current and planned efforts.

SOMALIA – HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2017 – STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 1 Provide life-saving and life-sustaining integrated multi-sectoral assistance to reduce acute humanitarian needs among the most vulnerable people.
- 2 Reduce acute malnutrition levels in settlements for internally displaced and host communities through integrated multi-sectoral emergency response.
- 3 Reinforce the protection of the displaced and other groups at risk and enable durable solutions.
- 4 Support the restoration of livelihoods, promote basic services to build resilience to recurrent shocks and catalyse more sustainable solutions.

Progress of strategy, response and centrality of protection in 2017

Protection risk analysis

The Protection Cluster (including the AoRs) at national and sub-national levels led a protection risk analysis process to inform the 2018 HNO and HRP, and the HCT protection strategy. The aim was to conduct a comprehensive and structured analysis of protection risks faced by affected populations identifying triggers, underlying causes and factors increasing exposure. Focusing more on underlying causes and the protection consequences of the situation was important to consider how assistance can have an impact in the longer-term. This was done through workshops held at sub-national cluster level and then national level. The protection risk analysis process was followed by protection response meetings to define appropriate responses. The main output of each workshop was a completed matrix (a template was prepared by the Protection Cluster) of protection risks. The Protection Cluster also plans to use this process to inform and structure protection monitoring activities throughout the country.

HCT Centrality of Protection Strategy, 2018-2019

Supported by the Protection Cluster and a UNHCR colleague deployed for over three months, the HCT Protection Strategy was developed in 2017. It includes an implementation plan. An implementation committee – the HCT Implementation Support Group (ISG) – including representatives of the HCT, OCHA, the ICCG, the Protection Cluster, NGOs and donors has been set up to monitor implementation on behalf of the HCT. In the implementation plan, the accountabilities of each HCT member is emphasised, referring to the HCT Accountability Compact 2017 signed by all members. Also noted is the importance of having the New Way of Working to serve as a guide for cooperation with development actors and the roles of the Protection Cluster (and AoR) and OHCHR as technical support to the implementation. An inclusive process has resulted in more active data sharing between clusters and the Protection Cluster being consulted on a frequent basis by other clusters and agencies who request protection support for the development of projects and activities.

The HCT Protection Strategy sets out three protection priorities for the humanitarian response and three priority ways of working to achieve

the priorities. The priorities are: identifying and addressing differential risks of exclusion and discrimination; addressing critical protection concerns linked to displacement; and Enhancing the protection of communities in conflict zones. The ways of working relate to strengthening (1) system-wide data collection and analysis; (2) HCT-led advocacy; and (3) protection mainstreaming, AAP and PSEA. Also included is the importance of complementarity with other ongoing initiatives such as the National Development Plan; the Durable Solutions Initiative; UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) initiatives such as Community Recovery and Extension of State Authority; and UNSOM rule of law projects. Some of the agreed steps in the implementation plan include the following:

- ➔ **Protection as a regular agenda item** – as part of the HCT Protection Strategy, the ICCG, Somalia NGO Consortium, and each cluster is required to include protection as a standing item on the agenda.
- ➔ **Cluster updates to the ICCG** – each cluster should update the ICCG on how protection is being incorporated into the cluster’s work.
- ➔ **Basic module on centrality of protection** – to provide training and support to agencies who would like to have more instruction about protection and their role in implementation of the HCT Protection Strategy.
- ➔ **Role of donors** – funding should be prioritised for activities outlined in the HCT Protection Strategy and partners should be encouraged to include elements of the priorities in projects. For example, one donor requires a protection risk analysis for each project proposal submitted; as well as a protection mainstreaming indicator, usually focusing on safety, dignity and meaningful access of beneficiaries.

Guidance on incorporating HCT protection strategy priorities in 2018 HNO and HRP (October 2017)

The Protection Cluster supported each cluster to incorporate priority protection risks into their response plans. This included guidance notes on (a) how to analysis the context for each cluster from a protection perspective; and (b) setting out the overarching protection risks that require a collective response. In the guidance note for the HNO preparation, the Protection Cluster advised how to consider humanitarian needs in relation to the

vulnerabilities and capacities of affected populations to cope. Guiding questions and practical examples are included for clusters to use in conducting a contextualised needs analysis, taking into consideration the perspectives and experiences of affected populations.

The HRP guidance note set out five protection priorities and included additional questions for each cluster to consider when preparing their operational response plans. The five protection priorities are: (1) risk of exclusion; (2) risks associated to the situation in IDP sites and the challenges for achieving durable solutions for IDPs; (3) accessing populations in conflict zones and ways to address their protection concerns related to active conflict; (4) joint data collection and information sharing, including on protection issues; and (5) protection mainstreaming and AAP.

Protection Cluster strategy and response

The Protection Cluster – including the Child Protection, GBV, Housing, Land and Property (HLP) and Explosive Hazards (Mine Action) Areas of Responsibility (AoR) – targets 922,000 people of the 1.1 million people in need of protection assistance in the 2017 HRP. Stating that protection concerns are at the centre of the humanitarian crisis in Somalia, the Protection Cluster aims to support other clusters to ensure that protection of the civilian population is prioritised and integral to all parts of the response, including efforts to support durable solutions.

The objectives are to improve (1) protection risk prevention, response and access to services for IDPs and other civilians affected by conflict, violence, human rights violations or natural disaster; (2) protective environment for IDPs and other vulnerable groups in particular through enhanced protection interventions to support durable solutions for IDPs; and (3) operational response capacity through capacity development, strategic advocacy and humanitarian dialogue.

Areas of focus for the Protection Cluster include strengthening the protective environment, preventing and responding to protection risks and access to protection services in times of emergency; as well as improving community-based protection structures to build prevention and response capacity at community level.



Challenges and next steps

Throughout 2017, the risk of famine necessarily diverted attention and resources to the emergency response. While famine was ultimately avoided, the risk factors and need for preparedness and prevention remain and are priorities for the 2018 HRP. Understanding the underlying factors, whether for drought, famine or conflict, which lead to the ongoing protection risks continues to be challenging but is essential to provide a longer-term and sustainable response. The protection analysis and HCT Protection Strategy were significant steps towards a more protective response in 2017. Building on the protection analysis, having stronger and more systematic collection of protection data remains difficult and is an area that the Protection Cluster is working on to strengthen and have a more consistent approach to complement data collected by other clusters.

Although there has been a focus on the progress of development activities, including strengthening of governance structures, there remains a need to focus on the humanitarian situation and response. Working to bring together humanitarian and development

aspects of a wider response has already started, including the use of the New Way of Working as a method for doing this. The HCT Protection Strategy has also been a way to bring together humanitarian and development actors and encourage alignment and, as relevant, integration with the Drought Impact Needs Assessment (DINA) and the Recovery and Resilience Framework (RRF).

WHOLE OF SYRIA



Context

Out of the 13.5 million people in need of some form of humanitarian assistance, the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for the Syrian Arab Republic targeted 9 million.¹⁰ This includes 95% of the 450,000 Palestine refugees remaining in Syria¹¹ who are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. With the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation, over half of the country's population have fled their homes, with 4.8 million people displaced in the neighbouring region; and 6.3 million people internally displaced. Throughout 2017, approximately 600,000 IDPs returned to their areas of origin. As noted in the HRP, further analysis of the return situation is necessary to understand the specific vulnerabilities and needs of people who return.

HRP strategic objectives

The 2017 HRP highlights that the three strategic objectives are interlinked, stating that protection and early recovery are mainstreamed across the operation with the aim of having a coherent response. Protection and GBV mainstreaming principles are set out as underpinning the response, including do no harm; meaningful access to assistance without any barriers or discrimination; accountability to affected populations (AAP); and participation and empowerment of communities. Particular attention is given to strengthening protection monitoring throughout the response to identify the negative coping strategies that affected populations increasingly resort to. Protection risk analyses for each sector's strategy and for all HRP projects are also highlighted as integral and mandatory parts of the response process. In the HRP, each sector has

included an overview of its protection risk analysis and proposed mitigating measures for identified risks.

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC – HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN 2017 – STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 1 Provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people.
- 2 Enhance the prevention and mitigation of protection risks and respond to protection needs through supporting the protective environment in Syria, by promoting international law, IHL, HRL and through quality principled assistance.
- 3 Increase resilience and livelihood opportunities and affected people's access to basic services.

The large and complex humanitarian response is delivered from hubs located within Syria, as well as from Turkey and Jordan, under an approach known as the 'Whole of Syria.' The response is guided by (1) protection and vulnerability criteria of groups at risk; and (2) geographical severity of needs. The HRP includes a guide to protection and vulnerability criteria that are to form the basis of interventions.

Progress of strategy, response and centrality of protection in 2017

In addition to the Protection Sector strategy set out in the HRP, the Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey) developed a 2017 strategy and workplan which is based on the HRP. Members of the Protection Cluster (including the Child Protection, GBV and Mine Action AoRs) agreed on the activities, identified additional priority areas as well as key actors to lead on the different initiatives. Progress on protection activities for the Whole of Syria Protection Sector are included in monthly response snapshots and analysis.

¹⁰ Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Response Plan 2017, March 2017

¹¹ In 2011, UNRWA had 556,000 Palestine Refugees registered – 2017 HRP.

Review of Compliance, Impact and Monitoring Opportunities for the Syria HRP 2017, Protection Risk Assessment, August 2017

The Protection Sector supported each sector to carry out sectoral-level Protection Risk Assessments/Analyses (PRA) in 2017 as part of the HRP. Each HRP project proposal had to provide evidence on consideration and efforts to 'do no harm'. Covering the first half of 2017, a review was conducted to examine compliance, impact and monitoring opportunities for the PRAs in the 2017 HRP. This review also concluded with recommendations for how the PRA and related tools can be improved. Some of the main findings included:

- Sectoral PRAs were completed by all but three sectors.
- 65% of HRP projects submitted had some form of a PRA (with 43% having 'thoughtfully-completed and constructive' PRAs).
- The PRA did hold sectors and organisations submitting HRP project proposals accountable for addressing do no harm matters.
- Monitoring protection risks is difficult and should be done by those implementing projects and systems supported by each sector.

The review recommended (a) revision of the HRP project proposal template to include a specific section for PRAs; (b) more training on how to complete the PRA; (c) provision of good and bad examples of sample PRAs; (d) inclusion of this approach for other response planning; and (e) making efforts to ensure that the PRA process does not become a 'tick-the-box' exercise. This was seen as particularly important as the exercise reflects what each sector and actor must do in all cases to ensure sound programming in line with humanitarian principles. The PRA process was used again for the 2018 HRP, with each sector required to develop a PRA at hub level. These were then compiled into Whole of Syria PRAs by sector leads. Also, each project submission for the 2018 HRP was required to complete a section on identified protection risks and mitigating measures. To support the process, the Protection Sector, with OCHA's support, facilitated dedicated training sessions on the PRA in each hub.

Whole of Syria Strategic Steering Group Protection Strategy 2017-2018

This was developed and endorsed by the Strategic Steering Group (SSG)¹² in 2017, updating the HCT Strategy for Protection in Syria which was endorsed by the HCT in Damascus in February 2015. Emphasising the centrality of protection and the shared responsibility of all humanitarian actors to strengthen the protection of affected populations, the SSG Protection Strategy is an overarching approach to protection in the response and acknowledges that the Protection Sector will provide technical support for its operationalisation. Obligations of all actors are reiterated and the joint responsibility of having a protective response underpinning all humanitarian efforts is highlighted throughout, connecting the priorities to those in the 2017 HRP, with the aim of strengthening the ability of each sector to include protection as integral to its own strategy and activities. An action plan sets out overall protection and gender goals; collective outcomes and outputs with indicators, activities, focal points and responsible actors.

Since the SSG Protection Strategy was finalised in July 2017, it has provided a basis for the development of the 2018 HRP; the Protection Risk Analyses conducted by each sector; as well as the Protection Sector's continued analysis of protection risks and development of appropriate interventions. The SSG has requested the Protection Sector to provide updates on the SSG Protection Strategy and to identify priorities from it for immediate implementation. The Protection Cluster (Turkey) has also supported the Humanitarian Liaison Group (HLG) to identify how to ensure that the SSG Protection Strategy is operational at hub level. It will be important to continue to benefit from the momentum created during the process of developing the SSG Protection Strategy so that this valuable approach is put into practice more comprehensively and tangibly.

Advisory and guidance notes on key protection issues

The Protection Sector is regularly requested (often by the HCT, the SSG or the Inter-Sector Group) to provide advice and guidance on protection issues. The requests usually relate to situations which are

¹² Within the Whole of Syria response, the SSG is similar to an overall HCT for the response and is led by the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator based in Amman.

complex and not easily addressed. Examples of some of these in 2017 include:

- ➔ **Protection Sector, Statement on sponsorship procedures implemented by military and local authorities** – this was shared with civil-military coordination actors to set out the protection risks of a sponsorship system being implemented by security forces. The overall recommendation was to discontinue the practice of ‘sponsorship’ as a matter of priority.
- ➔ **Standard Operating Procedures for security screenings (2017)**: the Protection Sector provided an overview and advice on how to ensure that any screenings of people taking place for security purposes was done in line with international and national laws and principles. The SOPs aimed to provide consistency and a basis for any screening implemented by any individuals (such as military actors or local authorities). In addition, it provided guidance for humanitarian actors to understand the relevant law, principles and best practices. Topics covered include the availability and provision methods of any humanitarian assistance required; fast-tracking persons with specific needs; respecting people’s identity documents; preventing family separation; freedom of movement considerations; and best practice for conducting any necessary physical searches.
- ➔ **Conditions for voluntary, informed, safe and dignified returns of IDPs to Ar-Raqqa city (22 November 2017)**: given the insufficient conditions for a safe, dignified and sustainable return of IDPs to Ar-Raqqa, particularly given explosive hazards contamination levels and lack of physical safety, the Protection Sector provided an overview of key principles and pre-conditions necessary prior to the provision of humanitarian assistance and any encouragement of return to the area. This note provided guidance on key principles for activities and advocacy in relation to ensuring that return should only be encouraged if certain conditions are met, including ensuring that any type of return is

voluntary, based on an informed decision; and with the guarantees of safety, dignity and sustainability.

Protection Sector strategy and response

Of the 13.5 million people identified as in need of protection support, the Protection Sector targets 9.7 million in the 2017 HRP. The Whole of Syria protection response is conducted through three main operational response centres – in Amman,¹³ Damascus¹⁴ and Gaziantep¹⁵. Protection Areas of Responsibility (AoR) of Child Protection, GBV and Mine Action are also part of the overall Protection Sector.¹⁶

The main Protection Sector objectives are (1) enhancing the protection of populations at risk from the consequences of the hostilities through tailored protection activities; (2) strengthening the capacity of humanitarian actors and duty bearers to assess, analyse, prevent and respond to protection needs; (3) ensuring survivors have access to quality specialised GBV services and measures are in place to prevent and reduce risks of GBV; (4) reducing the impact of explosive hazards; and (5) increasing and providing more equitable access, for boys and girls, to quality child protection interventions.

Within the identified objectives, the Protection Sector response includes the following four priority components: (1) providing and informing emergency/lifesaving response and services to newly displaced and newly accessible populations; (2) expanding protection services and enhancing their quality in accessible areas through wider geographical coverage and increasing provision of services and outreach capacity; (3) coordination and capacity building with humanitarian actors to support information and advocacy on protection concerns and do no harm efforts; and (4) evidence-based advocacy aimed at duty bearers.

¹³ Protection Working Group, comprising general protection, Child Protection, GBV and Mine Action.

¹⁴ Protection and Community Services Sector, including Child Protection AoR and GBV AoR. From Damascus, five sub-national response centres are supported.

¹⁵ Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey), which is made up of the Protection Cluster and three Sub-Clusters – Child Protection, GBV and Mine Action.

¹⁶ For more details, see the note on the Whole of Syria Protection Response: Who We Are, Protection Sector, Whole of Syria, March 2017



HRP-wide priorities for preventing and mitigating protection risks include livelihoods support to affected populations; supporting access to civil documentation; ensuring HLP rights; and reunification of families. Planned prevention priorities include strengthening protection monitoring; enhancing the capacity of national actors to mitigate protection threats; and enhancing community-based protection.

Challenges and next steps

Efforts continue to include protection as a core element of the Whole of Syria humanitarian response. Finding ways to address the protection risks faced by affected populations remains an essential priority of the response despite the many challenges faced, including unpredictable humanitarian access; bureaucratic impediments; remote programming; interference by the authorities in various protection activities which are often deemed 'sensitive'; undertaking data collection and lack of funding.

The development of the SSG Protection Strategy (with its corresponding action plan) sets out the basis for protection throughout the response and is another step towards substantive progress. The structure of the response can be complex and finding ways to thread protection through all the layers is difficult. Nevertheless, much of the foundational work has already been done and the Protection Sector has continued to provide much-needed technical support for the process. Ultimately the SSG Protection Strategy is a guide and a framework for actions that should be intrinsic to every aspect of the response in order to ensure the protection of civilians and their fundamental rights. Setting out these vital obligations in such a structured way means that collective efforts can be shared; progress monitored; and priorities updated as necessary.

As noted above, there are already numerous activities underway which are part of having a more consistently protective and principled response. The SSG Protection Strategy is one way of bringing these activities together and acknowledges that the responsibility for protection does not fall wholly with the Protection Sector.

THEMATIC CHALLENGES



Hunger and protection

Famines have become less frequent and less lethal over the past few decades. But, tellingly, the remaining risk of famine and hunger is now concentrated in a relatively small number of countries affected by large-scale, severe and protracted conflict. In 2017, there was a 6% increase of people facing acute hunger, largely correlated to an increase in conflict. Nearly two-thirds of the world's hungry live in countries in conflict. Nearly 500 million undernourished people- and almost 80 per cent of the world's 155 million stunted children- live in countries affected by conflict. That includes the four countries where there was a famine risk last year¹⁷. With conflict and climate change being increasingly recognized as key drivers increasing humanitarian crises and hunger, the linkages to protection must not be overlooked.

Conflict often results in forced displacement. It halts agricultural production and disrupts markets. This in turn reduces the availability of and access to food for affected populations. At an individual and household level, conflict can also lead to food insecurity in various ways including disruption of livelihoods, death or injury of heads of household, and loss of access to markets, services and safety nets. Conflict also magnifies the effects of natural and economic shocks by undermining human, financial, natural, and physical 'capital' that are the foundations of resilience at both community and government levels.

Women and girls face differential risks in situations of hunger. Women are often responsible for household-related activities, such as fetching water, cultivating gardens, tending livestock, and these activities are directly affected by drought and consequential hunger. Women and girls also have to travel farther in order to gather resources during conflict, exposing

themselves to additional risks, and some are forced to sell sex for food in order to survive and provide for their families. Women have to make agonising decisions about how much their children can eat or how much water they can drink, or if they can go to school. These stressors expose women to physical violence by an intimate partner and to sexual violence outside of relationships. The number of cases of sexual violence is underreported owing to the severe stigmatization women face after having survived sexual violence – it can make a woman unable to marry and excluded from community engagement which could have supported positive coping mechanisms.

Furthermore, the failure to protect civilians from harm in armed conflict directly affects their ability to stay food secure. Children drop out of school and face higher risks of abuse in conflict settings, increasing the likelihood that they will end up on the streets, be recruited into armed forces, or be abducted or trafficked. There are overlapping protection concerns, e.g. in increased rates of early marriage, and concomitant increased rates of female genital mutilation. Many parents see this from a protection and economic aspect families cannot protect their girls so it is a better scenario to have girls married off to sometimes very old men, and bride prices are often a factor in causing early marriage.

The GPC issued a briefing note on the four famines in April 2017, which highlighted the connection between food scarcity and protection risks; and the urgent need to scale up funding and humanitarian and protection assistance to affected populations in Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen.

- For Somalia, the briefing note sets out that 6.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance with 2.9 million people at imminent risk and a funding gap of 92%. It highlights that displacement has increased, especially as people move from rural to urban areas in search of food, water and livelihoods. Food insecurity and lack of access to humanitarian assistance is increasing the vulnerability of affected populations and leading to negative coping strategies.

¹⁷ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. Building resilience for peace and food security." Rome, FAO, 2017.

- Northern Nigeria has been engaged in years of violent conflict between the government and the insurgent group, Boko Haram. The on-going insurgency in Northeast Nigeria is characterised by extreme violence and destruction as well as violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. As a result of the conflict, there are 1.8 million internally displaced persons in the country. The most impacted states – Borno, Adamawa and Yobe – are located in the Lake Chad basin, an area that has experienced environmental changes over the last few decades. The conflict in the region has exacerbated these issues, leaving 7 million people in the three most impacted states struggling with food insecurity. Insurgency and counter-insurgency measures disrupted family and community networks, triggered family separations and resulted in many child rights abuses. Negative coping mechanisms including drug abuse, begging and survival sex are prevalent. With 81% of internally displaced persons in the North East States living with the host communities, considerable strain is placed on dwindling resources. Vulnerability screening carried out by the protection sector across all six North East States illustrates direct links between food insecurity and protection risks, particularly of those in situations of displacement. The screening underlined a protection crisis in the north-east and pointed to severe food shortages as well as high rates of malnutrition in newly accessible sites. Multiple protection risks exacerbated by the food crisis situation include family separation, sexual abuse and exploitation, grave violations of child rights and forced recruitment as well as marginalisation of vulnerable groups.
- The famine in South Sudan is man-made. Indiscriminate and targeted attacks against civilians, sexual violence and forced recruitment, have caused large-displacement. Civilians face restrictions on their movement, while the humanitarians trying to assist them are impeded and attacked. People caught in the conflict and unable to access assistance are fleeing their communities to other parts of the country or across the border into neighbouring Uganda. This has greatly undermined both food production and the provision of assistance. Conflict and displacement has also eroded people’s capacity to provide for themselves, driving food insecurity to its highest levels since Independence in 2011.
- Yemen was declared by the Famine Early Warning System as “the largest food security emergency in the world.” A report by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation highlighted the fact that 7.3 million Yemenis faced food emergency status with another 10.2 million in crisis. This figure represented a 21% increase in hunger since June 2016, compounded by the on-going conflict, including through the use of food access as a method of war. In particular there was concern about the port city of Hudaydah through which 80% of all imports entered the country prior to the onset of war, and which has recently been a target of the conflict. With Yemen heavily dependent on imports, including for 90% of its food, ongoing attacks on and around the port by parties to the conflict had the potential to inhibit the import of commercial and humanitarian goods, especially in the absence of alternative means of import. The protection cluster documented how restrictions placed on the right to freedom of movement owing to security risks impacted the ability of people to make a livelihood.

In June 2017, the Republic of Korea and the Global Protection Cluster convened a side event at the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, which highlighted how a situation of hunger can quickly slide into famine when the root causes of the situation are not addressed in time. In conflict, a lack of precaution by belligerents or a lack of proactive measures to ensure access to markets can worsen hunger, even when it is not a deliberate tactic to cause hunger. While funding for operations is critical, no amount of money can mitigate the failure to abide by existing norms and states and others need to make a difference to their behaviour; there is a need to end impunity and break the cycle of conflict and hunger by restoring a better respect for the norms of international law and addressing the political failures behind conflict and the lack of respect for International Humanitarian Law.

The event drew attention to the need to address the underlying vulnerabilities in fragile states. A study on why young men join Boko Haram shows clear financial reasons, not ideological, and this requires looking at tools to broaden livelihood inclusion schemes. In the context of long-standing situations the solutions set becomes very limited programmatically owing to access restrictions, conflict etc. Protection has to be central in developing any response to a tangled web which underlies all the crises.

Explosive Remnants of War – Saving Lives and Limbs

The Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor data show that after years of a positive declining trend, the number of casualties from mines and other explosive hazards has begun to rise; in particular, several countries show new contamination from active conflicts occurring at a faster pace than clearance. The number of survivors reporting accidents from ‘unknown’ devices more than quadrupled between 2016 and 2017, for example in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Nigeria and Syria, where non-state armed actors have been employing improvised explosive devices (IEDs). IEDs, combined with unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war (ERW), inhibit freedom of movement, put vital civilian infrastructures at risk, and limit access to food, water, schools, hospitals and shelter, and ultimately they jeopardize the safe and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) refers to activities that aim to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of landmines, ERW and other explosive hazards threatening the lives of civilians. HMA comprises five complementary groups of activities: a) risk education (RE); b) humanitarian explosive hazard clearance, i.e. mine and ERW survey, mapping, marking and clearance; c) victim assistance, including rehabilitation and reintegration; d) stockpile destruction; and e) advocacy for the full implementation and universalization of international frameworks and instruments. Other enabling activities are required to support these five components of mine action, such as national capacity building, information management, quality management and effective and appropriate safety standards. HMA is a clear example of the life-saving nature of the Protection Cluster’s work.

In 2017, Mine Action field coordinators worked successfully with key partners to integrate explosive hazard management in humanitarian needs assessments and response plans in Afghanistan, CAR, Chad, Colombia, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, occupied Palestinian territory, Republic of South Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen.

An analysis of the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) highlighted the following good practices: i) integration of mine action into other Protection Areas of Responsibility, ii) provision of accurate casualty data, and iii) incorporating the views of refugees and IDPs on explosive hazard threats and impacts. Many

HRPs articulated the multiplying effect that mine action can have on strategic priorities.

- ➔ **In Iraq**, for example, mine action was part of the first and second line of response of the protection cluster. More specifically, the first line of response involved conducting threat impact assessments, immediate clearance of explosive hazards, and providing risk awareness to vulnerable populations. The second line of response focused on clearance as well, but also emphasized the importance of providing case management to survivors of explosions and expanding mine risk education.
- ➔ **In Libya**, the protection cluster highlighted that the number of people reached with live-saving mine action assistance was one of its success indicators.
- ➔ **In Mali**, the protection sector prioritized clearance activities and risk education, targeting IDPs, returning refugees and children, who together make up 60% of the victims.
- ➔ **In Myanmar**, the plan called for the integration of child protection themes, including mine risk education and psychological support into education responses.
- ➔ **In Nigeria**, the child protection actors worked with the health and education sectors to help young mine victims.
- ➔ **In Somalia**, the mine action actors worked with UNHCR and IOM to reach IDPs and refugees with risk education, and prioritized clearance activities to enable their safe returns.
- ➔ **In South Sudan**, the mine action sub-cluster destroyed 4 million explosive devices and made safe over 700 boreholes, thus enabling communities to have access to water, to resume education in over 120 schools, and to restore vital medical services for conflict-affected communities in over 130 clinics. The clearance also opened more than 27,000 kilometers of road, enabling humanitarian partners to deliver life-saving aid.

In the current climate of protracted and violent crises, mine action stands out more than ever as a protection issue that cuts across all spheres of humanitarian action.



Engagement with State and Non-State Parties to Conflict

The conduct of armed conflict, and the absence of effective mechanisms and viable solutions to address the root causes of conflict, have contributed to a distressing pattern of civilian harm and lack of respect for norms protecting civilian life. The world is witnessing the greatest population displacement since World War II, both internally as well as across international borders, caused by people fleeing war and violence. Both State and non-State parties to conflict contribute to this trend.

With many current conflicts concentrated in urban centers, civilians continue to bear the greatest burden of the violence as their homes are damaged, livelihoods destroyed, and lives interrupted. The use of explosive weapons in densely populated urban areas exacerbates risks to civilians – both in terms of loss of life as well as due to damage to infrastructure and the reverberating effects this has across a network of urban systems. For example, the destruction of a power plant leaves hospitals, schools, commerce, communications, and public transportation systems unable to function. In turn, this can create conditions for severe food insecurity and the spread of deadly disease, and present post-conflict challenges for governance and rule of law. With the ongoing proliferation and intensification of armed conflict, and with few effective checks on the conduct of State and non-State parties, the immediate and long-term humanitarian consequences will continue to grow.

With civilians close to and located within areas of active conflict, humanitarian organisations increasingly need to operate in or near locations of hostilities. This comes with unique challenges and constraints, including how to communicate with civilians in areas of conflict prior to and during major hostilities, manage mobile services, anticipate and prepare for displacement and other specific risks people face during active fighting, and how to manage operational security of humanitarian organizations. Rapidly shifting frontlines can also mean high unpredictability and potentially increase the risk for civilians. Such circumstances exemplify the importance of taking a holistic and whole-of-system approach to protection, including information collection and analysis, contingency planning and coordination of response.

A critical aspect of anticipating, preventing, and responding to threats people face as a result of active fighting is engagement with the parties to conflict. In the past couple of years, mechanisms to ‘deconflict’ humanitarian operations with military operations, for example, in Syria and Yemen, have become an increasingly common and critical aspect of navigating the complexity of humanitarian response during hostilities. Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord), led by OCHA, have also played especially important roles in Iraq and Syria to help establish and facilitate dialogue on the conduct of hostilities and other protection concerns with military actors. CimCoord capacities, under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, were also critical

in the formulation of a concept of operations to anticipate and mitigate some of the expected impact on civilians leading up to and during the Coalition and Iraqi armed forces Mosul offensives. There is much that can be learned from these experiences for the future, for example, as illustrated in [Protection of Civilians in Mosul: Identifying Lessons for Contingency Planning](#) and the [Summary of OCHA Workshop on Protecting Civilians in Urban Warfare](#).

Additionally, in March and October 2017, the GPC Coordinator convened two roundtables as part of a series looking at issues of international humanitarian law coming from the field. The March 2017 roundtable looked at how to maintain the civilian character of sites and routes for internally displaced persons and led to an aide-memoire issued by the office of the UNHCR and ICRC in March 2018. The October 2017 roundtable brought together humanitarian agencies, military officials and civil-military coordination experts from Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Philippines, Afghanistan and other operations to examine why humanitarian civil-military coordination deserves attention in trying to achieve protection outcomes. The report of that meeting is being published in March 2018. Some key points raised include:

- Early engagement and deployment of UN-CMCoord officers is essential – the deployment of the UN-Civil Military Coordination Unit (CMCU) ahead of the Mosul Operation in Iraq helped prioritise response to protection issues triggered by the Mosul offensive;
- Uncoordinated engagement with military actors is a threat to principled humanitarian action and access;
- Identifying and understanding trends allows for better planning. In the case of Iraq, the UN-CMCoord coordination efforts resulted in consistent messaging with the objective of protecting civilians;
- Establishing relationships with military actors can be both time consuming and sensitive. For this reason, building relationships requires establishing structures to ensure that sustained engagement with military actors is not weakened when a change of staff occurs.

Context-specific coordination mechanisms to build and maintain relationships of trust and confidence, for example in support of operational security or dialogue to achieve protection outcomes is essential.

In this respect, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidance on appropriate interaction between humanitarian and military actors serves as an important tool, in particular to ensure that these interactions are managed in a way that do not compromise the impartiality, neutrality and independence of humanitarian actors. In addition, those working to address protection concerns may find that they increasingly need to develop their capacities to pursue more frequent and sustained dialogue with State and non-State parties to conflict about the conduct of armed conflict and other policies and practices impacting on civilians.

Civil-military dialogue for the protection of civilians necessitates a strong evidence base illustrating how the conduct of military operations impacts on civilians. The example set by [UNAMA in its regular monitoring and reporting on the protection of civilians in Afghanistan](#) is worthy of study with a view to building on this good practice. A good understanding of the practices and behaviours of non-State armed groups (NSAGs) is especially critical as a basis for developing relationships for dialogue. The work of Geneva Call to improve the conduct of NSAGs, for example, by working with them to sign up to and implement a '[Deed of Commitment](#)' covering a range of issues is especially instructive and offers important insight for future protection strategies.

CHALLENGES

- Flexibility and adaptation of humanitarian programming: the humanitarian system is ill-equipped to respond to the rapidly changing nature of military operation;
- Proximity and Presence: risk aversion in the humanitarian community is growing with fewer actors working in conflict ridden areas. There is substantial difference between UN agencies willing to work in proximity to a front line and the same applies to international NGOs;
- Remote Management and duty of care: remote management operations are increasingly transferring risks to national actors who take greater risks by engaging in protection issues and place themselves at serious risks when they raise protection issues with local military actors;
- Neutrality of local actors: there is an assumption that national actors working in conflict situations are neutral in their own civil war, underlining the importance of triangulation of information.

OVERVIEW



The following snapshots highlight some of the key activities the GPC has undertaken over the past year.

Global Protection Cluster (GPC) at a Glance

26

FIELD PROTECTION CLUSTERS

Support from the global level protection cluster is consistently rated well. On scales of 1 – 10 and across the four areas of accuracy, appropriateness, timeliness, and quality.

GPC Help Desk Requests

86 %

of respondents accessing in-country support (technical guidance, missions, trainings) from the Global Protection Cluster Operations Cell ranked this service at an 8 or higher in all four areas

92 %

of respondents accessing the Global Protection Cluster help-desk assistance ranked this service at an 8 or higher in all four areas

700

HELP DESK REQUESTS

Type of Requests

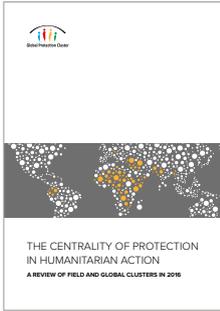
- Information
- Guidance
- Field Examples
- In-depth technical support

Main themes

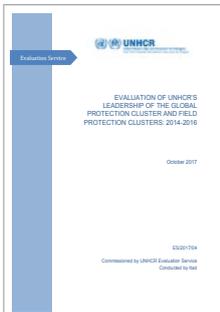
- Durable Solutions
- Coordination mechanisms and structures
- Civil-military Coordination
- Co-facilitation of protection clusters
- Humanitarian Program Cycle guidance
- Operationalising the Centrality of Protection
- Protection analysis
- Protection Information Management
- Strategy development

GPC EVENTS, ACTIVITIES AND PUBLICATIONS

2017



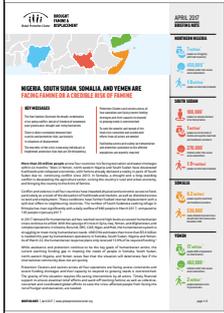
The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action - A review of Field and Global Clusters in 2016, available at: <https://bit.ly/2wMnNgt>



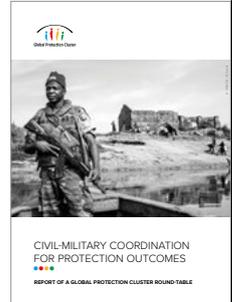
Evaluation of UNHCR's Leadership of the Global Protection Cluster and Field Protection Clusters 2014-2016, available at: <https://bit.ly/2lsxHcQ>



GPC Briefing Note - Four Famines, April 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2KtV8im>



ECOSOC HAS side event held on the connexion between hunger and protection, co-sponsored with the Republic of Korea, June 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2IIBxOZ>



Afghanistan, June 2017, GPC Operations Cell Staff

GPC Thematic Roundtable on the Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Sites and Settlements, April 2017

GPC PiP Training Mission Yemen, April 2017, Task team on learning

GPC Protection Mainstreaming Training Mission Yemen, April 2017, Task team on protection mainstreaming

GPC Protection Mainstreaming Training Mission Myanmar, April-May 2017, Task team on protection mainstreaming

GPC Operations Cell South Sudan Mission, April 2017, GPC Coordinator

Myanmar, April/May 2017, GPC Operations Cell Staff

GPC Kasai Alert, May 2017, available here: <https://bit.ly/2KycTx8>



GPC Operations Cell Afghanistan Mission, May 2017, GPC Coordinator

GPC Operations Cell Somalia Mission, May 2017, GPC Operations Cell Staff

Somalia, May/June 2017, GPC Operations Cell Staff

GPC Briefing Note Update: Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen & A Special In-Focus on Yemen, August 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2lrjtoa>



Humanitarian Response Planning – GPC Quick Guide, September 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2wOYHNZ>



GPC Mine Action And Land Rights Webinar, September 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2lpsdPZ>



GPC PiP Training Mission Sudan, September 2017, Task team on learning

GPC WoS Mission, September 2017, GPC Operations Cell Staff, GPC Operations Cell Staff

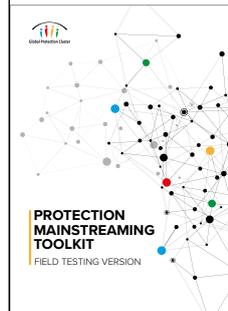
GPC Thematic Roundtable on Civilian-Military Coordination for Protection Outcomes, October 2017

Arabic Glossary on Humanitarian Terms, November 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2wMM8CX>



المصطلحات الأساسية من أجل العاملين في القطاع الإنساني

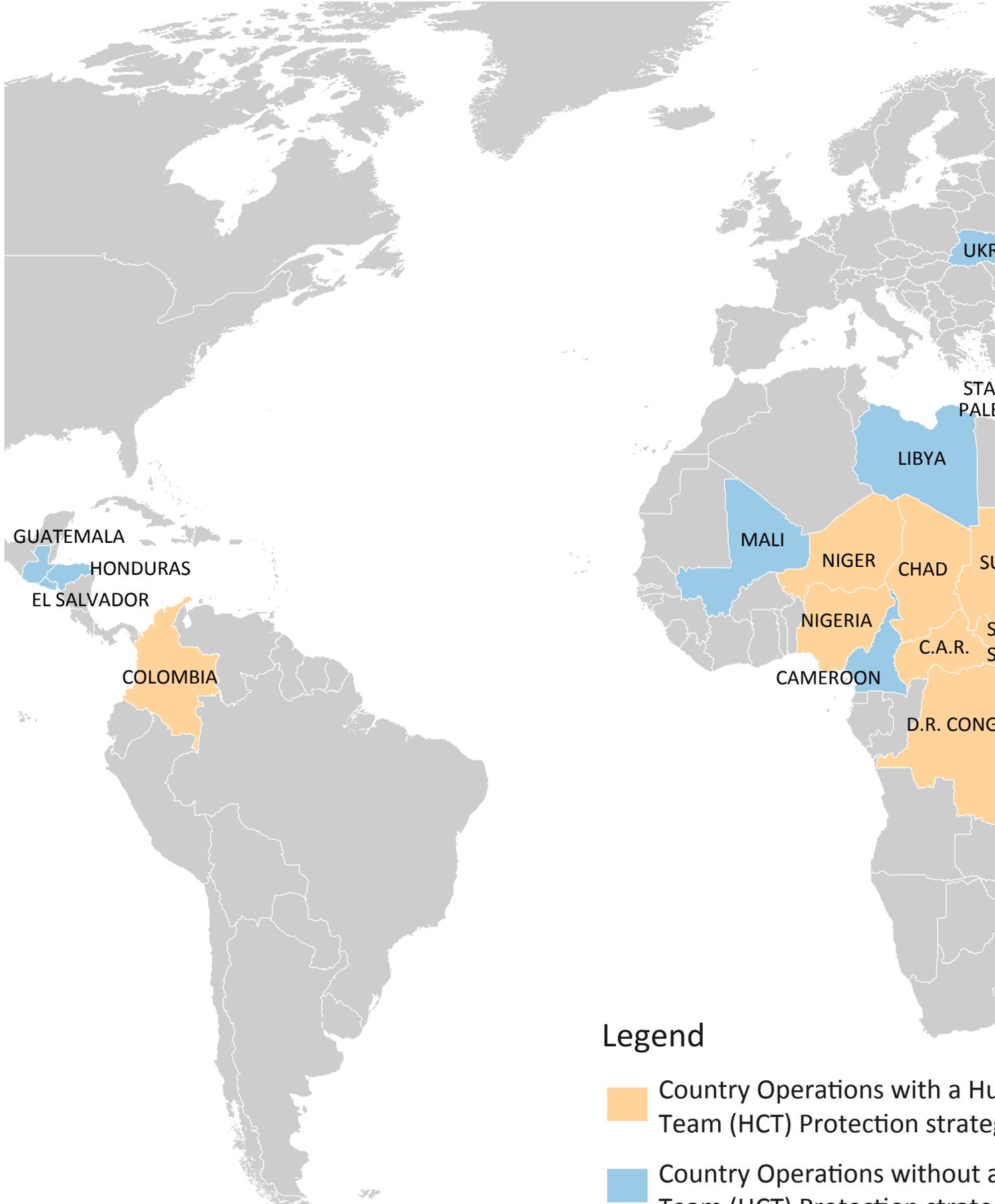
Protection Mainstreaming Toolkit Launch, November 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2kFIRgJ>



GPC Somalia Country Briefing, November 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2lvEuhT>

GPC Operations Cell Ethiopia Mission, December 2017, GPC Operations Cell Staff

GPC PIM Training Mission, December 2017, Task team on Protection Analysis

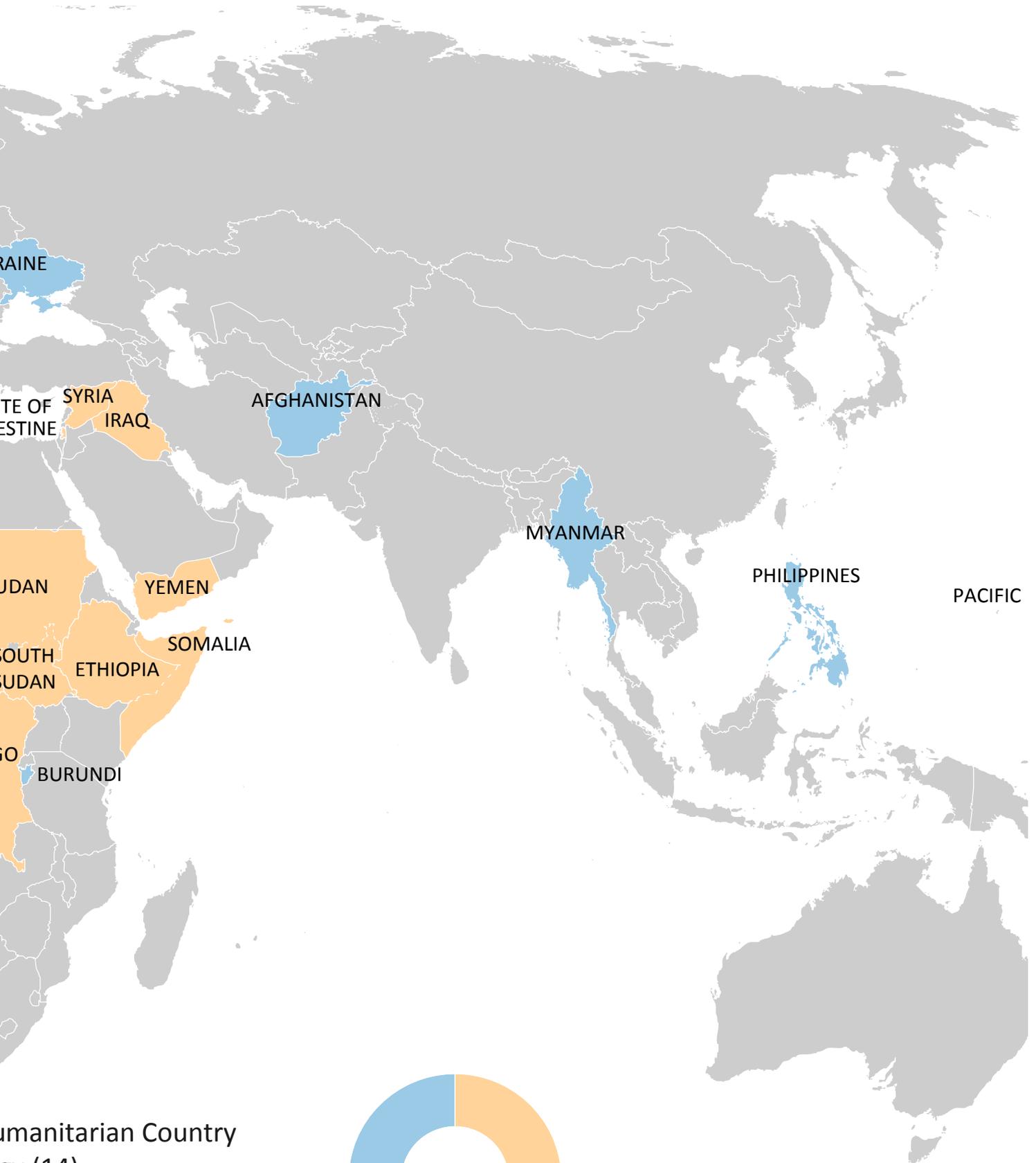


Legend

- Country Operations with a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Protection strategy
- Country Operations without a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Protection strategy

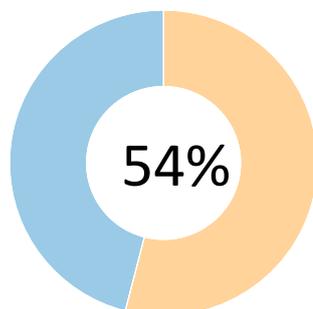
Humanitarian Country Action strategy

June 2018



Humanitarian Country
Action strategy (14)

Not a Humanitarian Country
Action strategy (12)



GPC Community of Practice

279
VISITORS

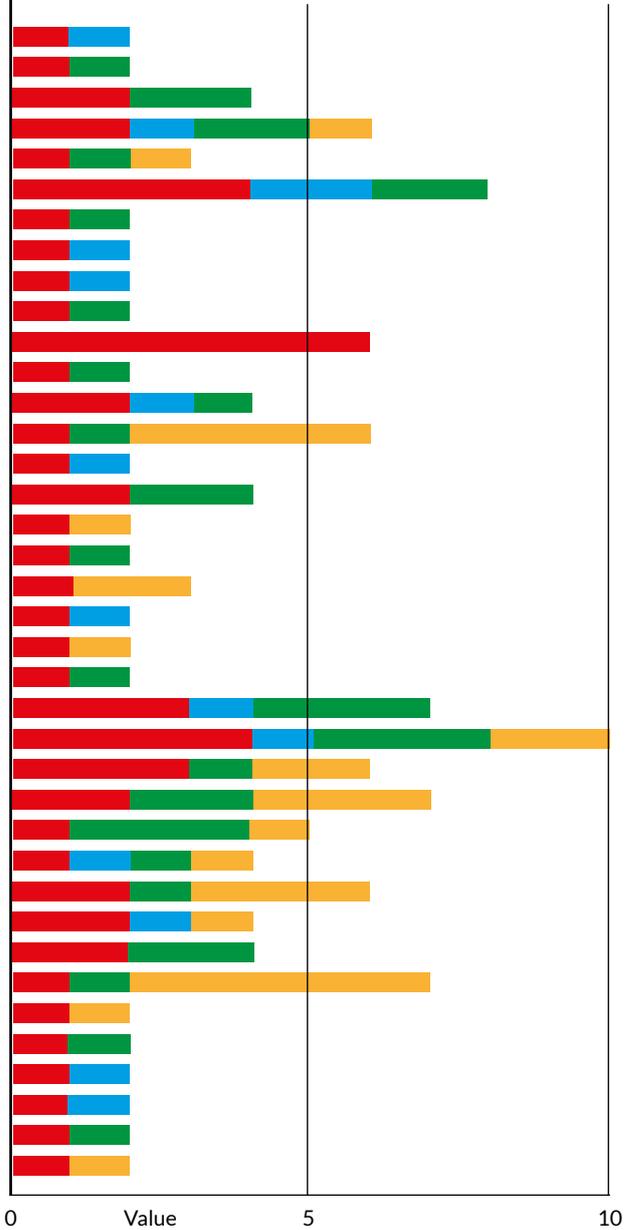
78
ACTIVE USERS

64
CONVERSATIONS

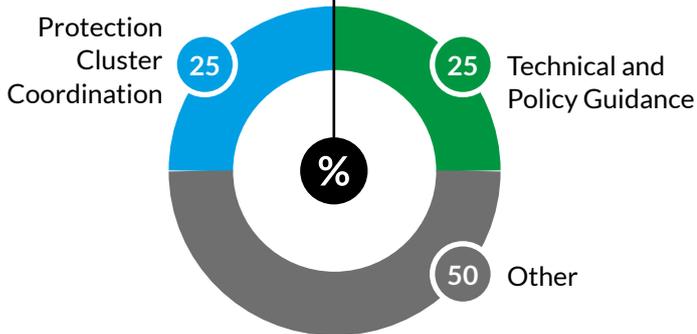
149
VOTES

192
COMMENTS

GPC DAILY ACTIVITY



CONVERSATIONS PER CATEGORY





Global Protection Cluster