

AFGHANISTAN



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REPORT SUMMARY

The current operational context shows both significant opportunities as well as risks and challenges for exploring durable solutions for IDPs. IDPs have decreased since August 2021 and access has been expanded throughout the country, while meaningful access, particularly related to restrictions on freedom of movement of women and girls, is still hindered. The resumption of school for girls above grade six was postponed by the De facto Authorities which constitutes a major concern for the humanitarian community in Afghanistan as well as the civil society.

In the first quarter of 2022 as in the previous year, food insecurity, acute malnutrition, reduced access to health care and the scarcity of basic products continued to be the major issues affecting the concerned population. Limited income generation opportunities and lack of services are negatively impacting the well-being of boys, girls, men, and women. The civilian population dependent on precarious employment in the sector informal, those in underserved areas and those who are residing in informal settlements, including IDPs have been identified as the most at-risk populations and many protection concerns are reported among them. The Household Survey revealed that the presence¹ of mines and other explosives showed an increase across the country in quarter one, having effects on the livelihood and the well-being of the community population including, children’s safety, school attendance, and the population’s ability to access to services. Due to various challenges including the aforementioned issues, an inclined pattern has been observed that vulnerable populations are adopting negative coping strategies such as borrowing money, child labor, sale/exchange of children for debt relief, street begging, forced marriage, child marriage, and etc.

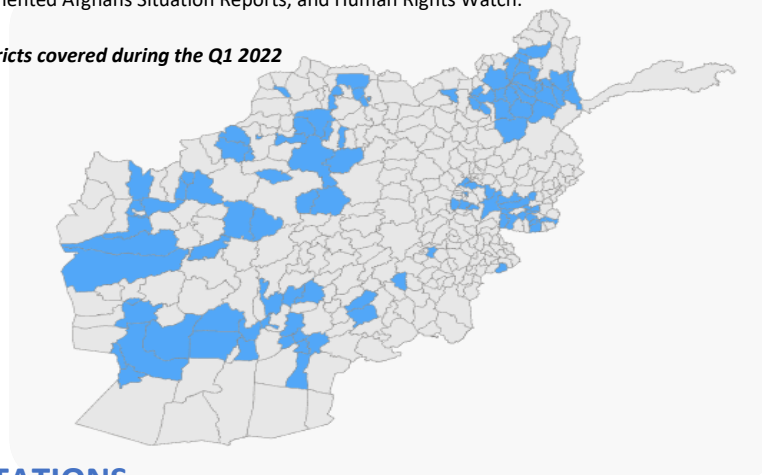
Preventing the negative coping mechanisms necessitates the engagement of the De facto Authorities, Donors, humanitarian agencies, civil society organizations, and the community, particularly female representatives. Finally, the promotion and support of women’s and girls’

rights and the equal participation of female staff in the humanitarian responses require a serious and collaborative effort from all fronts including diplomatic channels.

METHODOLOGY

The report was prepared in collaboration with six partners undertaking protection monitoring: DRC, INTERSOS, IOM, IRC, NRC, and UNHCR, using the data collected in the first quarter from 8,422 Household-level Surveys (HH), 898 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 1,123 Key Informants Interviews (KII). In Q1, 46.5% of respondents were the Host Community, 27.9% IDPs, 19.8% undocumented returnees, 5.3% IDP returnees, and 0.4%. 59% of the respondents were male while 41% were female. The analysis is guided by the Global Protection Cluster [Protection Analysis Framework](#) (PAF). Other sources of data that are referenced include OCHA Displacement Trends, UNHCR 2021 Multi Sectorial Rapid Assessments, UNHCR CFM (Complaints and Feedback Mechanism)– Analysis, IOM Return of Undocumented Afghans Situation Reports, and Human Rights Watch.

Districts covered during the Q1 2022



KEY PROTECTION FIGURES

Displacement trends:

Following the recorded displacement of over 777,000 people in 2021, some 5.8 million people displaced by conflict and natural disasters since 2012 still need support in 2022 to find durable solutions where possible.

Main driver of the humanitarian need:

Increase in acute food insecurity, with almost **23 million people facing acute hunger**, with 8.7 million people at emergency levels (IPC4). All **34 provinces** are facing crisis or emergency levels of acute food insecurity

Protection PIN/AoR PIN

Overall Protection Cluster PIN: **16.2 M** while **4.5M** of people are targeted for protection services.
 CPIE PIN: **5 M** GBV PIN: **9 M**
 HLP PIN : **6 M** MA PIN : **4.4 M**

LIMITATIONS

In the first quarter of 2022, the humanitarian partners including those involved with protection delivery, diversify or update the modalities of implementing the humanitarian responses including protection monitoring data collection, and cases management due to the continued restriction and interference imposed by the De facto authority notably on female staff participation, use of mahram and access to female beneficiaries. This range of humanitarian access challenges and operational constraints that hinder meaningful access to affected persons, staff, project sites, and contractor selection, impeded the capacity of protection partners to collect high-quality data and deliver humanitarian assistance. Some protection interventions continued to be put on hold, shifted, or repackaged in other sectors while delivering live-saving responses. Data on human rights violations and (but not limited to) GBV incidents is a particular concern capable of putting both service providers and clients at risk.

¹ Identification of mine and other explosive devices

1. CONTEXT OVERVIEW

The humanitarian crisis facing Afghanistan continues on multiple fronts with protection threats deepening for many parts of the population, driven by political dynamics as well as the dire economic situation after August 15. An estimated 24.4 million people² – 59 percent of Afghanistan’s population estimated at 42 million, are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022, up from 18.4 million people at the start of 2021.

Massive economic contraction along with the crisis in the banking and financial system, severe drought, and rising food prices, has meant people are resorting increasingly to harmful coping strategies including child labor, early/forced marriage of girls and women, exploitation, and sale of children, family separation, and changing food consumption habits. Assessments indicate that households who are unable to find work, in order to cover expenses, have had to sell assets, delay seeking medical treatment and accrue debt. These circumstances, overall, have led to an aggravation of protection risks, including psychosocial problems, gender-based violence, and child protection issues.

In March 2022, the de facto authorities (DFA) in Afghanistan postponed the resumption of schooling for girls above grade six, which directly contradicted the multiple assurances from the DFA that all girls will not be prevented from accessing education. This denial of access to education for girls continues to be a major concern of the humanitarian community in Afghanistan as well as the civil society. In addition, the various restrictions imposed on women and girls, including restriction on their freedom of movement, hinders women and girls from accessing assistance and services as well as hinders the mobility of female humanitarian actors, leading to limited outreach to women and girls in the field.

Protection monitoring also shows that protection needs vary based on population groups (IDPs, IDP returnees, etc.), whether households are headed by women or men, and on geographical locations, which means that types of population groups, gender of HHs, and geographical locations have also to be considered when identifying protection issues. In this regard, a specific protection risk that emerges for IDPs is the threat of eviction owing to an inability to pay rent or residing in informal settlements. The risk of eviction continues for many vulnerable Afghans. Residents of informal settlements, displaced people, and low-income renters face particularly severe risks of eviction.

Return figures of undocumented returnees from neighboring countries for the first quarter of 2022 have increased compared to the end of last year, with deportations from the Islamic Republic of Iran increasing month on month, with the proportion of returns increasing from 53% in December to 67% in February.

Humanitarian access is becoming increasingly complex, with incidents of interference in humanitarian activities continuing to hamper access including in beneficiary, staff, project site, and contractor selection. This is coupled with demands from de facto authorities that female

staff are accompanied by a mahram or align with other measures and is often linked with threats of arrest or other forms of retaliation if they fail to do so.

Finally, the casualties of explosive ordnance (EO) continue to impact all age and gender groups in differing ways and particularly children. Physical impediments and disability caused by EO accidents significantly limit the survivors as well as family members’ opportunities to engage in socio-economic development and community life and puts an additional burden on an already overstretched health system.

2. PRIORITY PROTECTION RISKS

2.1. CURRENT THREATS TO THE POPULATION

While a significant decrease in fighting and conflict is observed overall in Afghanistan which contributed to overall improvement of freedom of movement, de facto authorities continue to severely restrict freedom of movement for women and girls after the 15th of August 2021. A group of UN Human Rights Experts, headed by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Reem Alsalem, has said that the Taliban leaders in Afghanistan are institutionalizing large-scale and systematic gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls. They described what is currently unfolding as an attempt to “steadily erase women and girls from public life, including in institutions and mechanisms that had been previously set up to assist and protect those women and girls who are most at risk” One distinct example is hindered access to education by girls.

Safety, Arbitrary arrest, and Freedom of Movement

Human Rights Watch (HRW) in its World Report for 2022, covering 2021 incidents, also reports that the advent of the Taliban accelerated the country’s human rights crisis and humanitarian catastrophe, noting a steady stream of policies and regulations that have rolled back the rights of women and girls, imposed wide-ranging restrictions on the Afghan media – prompting the flight of many journalists abroad and the closure of around 70 percent of Afghan media outlets – and the emergence of an environment in which both the Taliban and the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) carry out targeted killings of civilians, government employees, journalists, and religious leaders.

The current climate in Afghanistan is marked by fear and worry over safety, particularly for those with specific profiles at risk. During the first quarter of the year a several number of reports of night raids, arrests, and detention _especially targeting women activists - were received. On this note, two women rights activists and protesters were arrested by the Taliban and released following strong advocacy at different levels. Additionally, a university lecturer and political analyst, who was critical of the DfA, was also arrested in Kabul and detained for several days. The level of fear for safety is evidenced by findings from UNHCR, which received 11,281 queries through its communication channels (phones and email) from January to March 2022 from Afghans, the majority expressing safety/security concerns. The trend continued to

² Humanitarian Needs and Plan responses 2022

show a high number of queries from former government officials, social activists, and journalists requesting support for evacuation due to alleged threats and fear due to their profiles, in addition to queries from individuals who have fled to neighboring countries who fear deportation back to Afghanistan. Requests for assistance have also been received from persons in Afghanistan who are destitute, lacking shelter and financial resources, and in need of immediate humanitarian assistance who consequently may be forced into harmful coping mechanisms and thereby exposed to a variety of protection risks. In the first quarter of 2022, queries have been received from individuals indicating that they are opting to leave the country due to the lack of livelihoods and basic services, as well as the ban on girls' education.

Discriminatory and Punitive Gender Norms



Photo 1 - March 2022

Despite continued promises of reopening secondary education for girls in the new year, the Taliban did not fulfill this commitment to girls above 6th grade and denied access to schools when the school year re-started on March 23rd. While officials of the Education Ministry were unable to provide an immediate explanation for the reversal of the decision, subsequently on the same day the Taliban announced that secondary schools for girls will remain closed until further notice. The development sparked strong reactions from the international community in relation to the fate of girls' education in Afghanistan but also to the overall rights of women and girls in the country.

These findings are buttressed by protection monitoring data which highlights the continued worrying trends in the worsening situation for women and girls across Afghanistan. Freedom of movement by women is severely affected by the requirement of mahram which was officially announced by the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (DoPVPV) which was instituted after the dismantling of the Ministry of Women Affairs on 26th December through a directive that restricts women from traveling farther than 72km (45 miles) without accompaniment by a close male relative. This restriction was reportedly further expanded to

include traveling abroad, and several solo women travelers within the county were reportedly stopped from boarding flights. Furthermore, the requirement of mahram puts additional barriers to the full participation of female staff in humanitarian operations. Having fewer or no female staff in humanitarian activities places a serious threat to the outreach to women and girls and capturing their concerns, which further results in a lack of effective delivery of gender-sensitive and responsive assistance.

Socio-economic challenges, Poverty, and Coping Mechanisms

After over 40 years of continued crisis, Afghanistan remains one of the world's most acute and complex humanitarian emergencies, driven by conflict and disasters and now, by the economic crisis. Recurring shocks and disruptions have depleted the resilience of displaced, host, and disaster-affected populations. Even under normal circumstances, it is difficult for households to meet their basic needs. An estimated 24.4 million people – 59 percent of the population are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022, a staggering 25 percent increase compared to the humanitarian estimation in 2021.

Both the formal and informal economies have suffered dramatically due to disruption to markets, financial and trade mechanisms since the second half of 2021, the freezing of central bank reserves and loans, and the sudden drop in direct international development assistance, which formerly accounted for 75 percent of public expenditures.

The deterioration in the situation has been particularly challenging for people living in poverty, recently displaced, those that rely on insecure employment in the informal sector, those in underserved locations, and those residing in informal settlements including IDPs throwing people into a critical need and resorting increasingly to harmful coping strategies as direct options in their efforts to survive. These harmful coping mechanisms create protection risks and drive the persistence of protection concerns.

In the first quarter of 2022 as during the previous year, the same coping strategies including borrowing money, sale of assets, child labor, selling child/ exchanging child for debt relief, begging on the street, forced marriage, and child marriage, continue to be the most utilized coping strategies.

Children continue to bear the brunt of the conflict in Afghanistan, with child protection concerns frequently reported. In protection monitoring household surveys, 3% of households are reported as child-headed households, 3% as children at-risk headed households, and 1% of households are headed by Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC). 11% of household respondents reported having children at risk within their households, whilst 1% reported having UASC and 1% reported having children engaged in Armed Conflict.

Child Labor: During assessments, 31% of respondents indicated that children are involved in child labour and the worst forms of child labor in accordance with the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (1999), No. 182. Children face exploitation especially along Afghanistan's borders in the form of trafficking contraband or illegal goods, being sent to work in another part of the country, or in neighboring countries away from the care of their families. Findings from protection monitoring assessments conducted from (Jan – March 2022, 8% of respondents indicated that children are engaged in hazardous work, and 23% in child labor

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within or outside the country. Meanwhile, in the country, children are involved in agriculture (27%), construction work (23%), work at the markets/bazaar (23%), factory work (16%), and mechanic shops (11%).

Harmful Coping mechanisms: Based on protection monitoring findings, harmful coping mechanisms such as child selling in exchange for debt relief and organ harvesting, including from children, increased in scale within the last year. 7% of respondents indicated that children are experiencing either forced marriage (4%) or child marriage (3%) while 3% of respondents indicated that family's resort to the practice of child selling or organ harvesting. The reasons/drivers are mainly economic- due to poverty and loss of income, families need to meet the basic needs in the context, and lack of information and awareness on the consequences of organ harvesting.



Photo 2 - Coping mechanism, Jan. 2022

Presence of Mine and Explosive Hazards

There are still 4,104 hazardous areas in the country, affecting at least 1,522 communities and posing a threat to vulnerable populations such as internally displaced persons, returnees, refugees, and conflict-affected non-displaced civilians. The presence of explosive ordnance (EO) in Afghanistan, particularly improvised mines from more recent armed clashes and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), continues to be a top humanitarian priority. Explosive ordnance continues to claim lives and maim the local population, but their wider impact is far-reaching: the presence - or perceived presence - of EO causes psychological distress, blocks access to natural resources and basic services, impedes safe humanitarian access, and hinders infrastructure development, amongst others. Following the cessation of hostilities in most

parts of the country, there is an increased risk as the local population ventures into previous battle areas inaccessible until recently, as well as that returnee and other people on the move return to areas without knowledge of the presence of the explosive hazards in the location or how to act safely around them.

While most EO casualties are men and boys, EO impacts all age and gender groups in differing ways. Women often become caregivers for those in their family or community who have been injured, and the death/injury of male relatives places a significant burden on women as the head of household and breadwinner to large families. Physical impediments and disability caused by EO accidents significantly limits the survivors' as well as family members' opportunities to engage in socio-economic development and community life and puts an additional burden on an already overstretched health system.

A total of 76 casualties were recorded from January to March 2022 in the national mine action database, though systematic victim data collection remains disrupted due to the fluid and evolving situation after the Taliban's takeover. While explosive hazards kill and maim indiscriminately, children, particularly boys are at high risk of death or injuries from EO accidents in Afghanistan - 31 children (including 26 boys and five girls) were reported to have died and nine (including five boys and four girls) injured from three EO explosions during the reporting period. Data collected in 2021 shows that improvised mines are the leading cause of civilian casualty accounting for 72% of the total civilian casualties followed by ERW which accounts for 26%. Children are particularly vulnerable to falling victims to ERW with the majority (79 %) of ERW casualties being children. Out-of-school children are also considered specifically at risk, given they often play a role in supporting their families by carrying out livelihood activities, such as collecting scrap metal, firewood, water, and others. The deployment of Quick Response Teams (QRTs) plays an important role in reducing the impact of ERW and enabling the delivery of humanitarian assistance, as it allows the mine action sector to provide emergency response to concerns reported by communities and humanitarian agencies.

Conflicts between armed groups in the past 20 years have left lots of areas newly contaminated with explosive ordnance, in particular improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including improvised mines (IM) and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Given the new access opportunities, UNMAS is coordinating a national explosive contamination survey to capture the extent of the country's explosive ordnance contamination. This survey provides constant updates to the mine action database with the most up-to-date contamination information to support mine action direct resources to areas of the highest need and concurrently releases safe land. The initiative is currently being implemented in four provinces-Kandahar, Kunduz, Helmand, and Uruzgan-where intense fighting was witnessed in the past. The survey teams primarily utilize a non-technical survey to locate conflict areas and identify and record new contamination. They also include explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) capability to remove immediate explosive threats including abandoned improvised mines (AIM). Each survey team includes female personnel for various functions, including but not limited to survey, community liaison, victim data collection, and EOORE.

Given that improvised mines cause the majority of civilian mine action casualties, mine action partners continue to prioritize the clearance of these hazards. However, the lack of specialized equipment and experienced personnel hinders the implementation of such projects. To

overcome these challenges, the mine action sector continues to invest in building the capacity of the sector in the clearance of abandoned improvised mines.

Top ten provinces of high concern from mine action perspective: Kandahar, Hilmand, Zabul, Nangarhar, Ghor, Ghazni, Paktya, Balkh, Uruzgan, and Sari-i-Pul - as well as areas where districts were not accessible in the past, such as Logar.

Housing, Land & Property Concerns



Photo 3: Earthquakes Northwest, Province of Badghis, Jan. 2022 - UNHCR

16% of the respondents indicated their communities experience land-related issues during the reporting period mostly in Hilmand, Zabul, Nangarhar, Kabul, and Ghor provinces. The main HLP issues reported by household survey respondents arise from rental disputes, inheritance disputes, and issues with access to and use of land and property come after this. According to the Key Informant Interviews, rental disputes are partly due to the household’s inability to pay their rent on time, resulting in harassment and eviction from property owners. Some also mentioned abusive practices used by landlords -, such as – a sudden increase of rent or rent asked before the end of the month. Most households do not have rental agreements with landlords, hence increasing their vulnerabilities to eviction and abuse³. Households affected by displacement also mentioned the issue of land use and occupation (government and private). Displaced persons and returnees commonly rent or live in makeshift settlements immediately after displacement and into prolonged periods of displacement and often without written agreements, placing them at increased risk of forced eviction and other abuses. An increasing trend of eviction and eviction threats from informal settlements, particularly the ones in Provincial capitals such as Kabul and Herat are recently observed.

³ By way of example, NRC conducted an assessment in Kabul province in November 2021 and the results indicated that over half the respondents lived in rental houses and 85% of those did not have a rental agreement with the landlord.

Inadequate shelter and access to services in these areas can spur conflict with host communities, drive households into debt, and limit opportunities for durable solutions. Issues around inheritance rights also came out strongly from the KI interviews. This especially affects women as communities and, families discriminate against women.

It was clear from the household and KI interviews that many households live in very precarious situations with inherent instability and their HLP rights are not protected. There is a need to continue to support households, especially vulnerable ones– such as female-headed households or protracted displaced families – by providing HLP assistance as well as cash for rent for households that are at risk of eviction. In addition, consolidated advocacy needs to continue with the authorities in terms of the prevention of forced eviction.

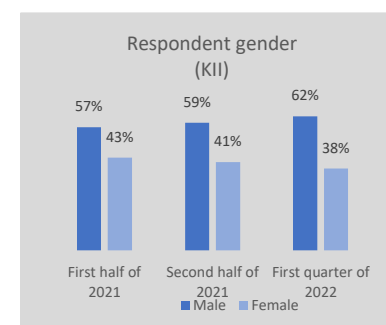
2.2. EFFECTS ON POPULATION

a. Safety and the general situation

During the first quarter of 2022, 90% of respondents in HH Interviews stated that they feel safe, a 12% increase from the overall trend in 2021. While comparing the difference between female and male respondents on their perception of safety during the first quarter of 2022, 11% of female-headed households mentioned that they feel unsafe in the 1st quarter of 2022 compared to 24% in 2021. This decrease was also evident amongst male-headed households, 7% of whom reported in the 1st quarter of 2022 that they feel unsafe compared to 17% in 2021.

Qualitative findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGD) confirm the above finding that a high proportion of male respondents indicate that they felt safe in the community, slightly higher than female respondents, who expressed a sense of safety within their communities. These findings were mirrored by qualitative findings from Key Informant Interviews (KII).

These findings indicate that respondents generally perceive that the security situation is better than before and that there is a greater feeling of safety, which is possibly linked to the fact that widespread conflict ended following the events of 15 August 2021. However, the feeling of insecurity amongst female respondents remains lower compared to male respondents.

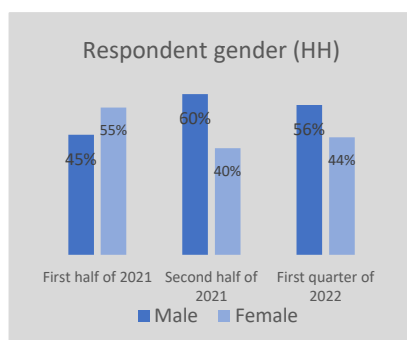


Nonetheless, as noted above, persons of certain profiles continue to express concerns for safety through communications channels, and their safety with heightened protection risks is also impacted by the dire economic crisis that is affecting all population groups in the country.

In this regard, rapid assessments conducted by UNHCR covering various population groups between October – December 2021 showed, major challenges with 67% of households indicating an inability to work and cover needs and thereby having to resort to various harmful coping strategies, including selling assets (85%), additional members of the household having to work (75%), requiring children to work (64%) and accruing debt to cover basic needs (93%).⁴ The findings from the rapid assessment, when comparing male and female-headed households amongst IDP and IDP returnee families, are mostly similar although the situation is marginally worse for female-headed households and more pronounced for IDP returnee households that are headed by females. On average, 72 percent of male-headed IDP households indicated not being able to work and cover daily expenses while amongst female-headed households the number leaped to 81 percent. Similarly, amongst IDP returnee households, the rates are 68% for MHHs and 76% for FHHs, respectively.

Among respondents who indicated that the security situation had worsened, contributing factors indicated at the HH level included increased criminality (52%), competition for resources (34%), and increased protests/civil demonstrations (11%). This shows that the contributing factors cited for a worsened security situation have changed from the first and second halves of 2021, which were increased criminality (32% - 20% lower in 2021 than now expressed), increased conflict between government and AGEs (28%), increased targeted attacks (19%), fighting for resources (10%) and increased protests/civil demonstrations (9%). The findings are consistent with the facts of a decrease in conflict and a switch to a degradation in the general security environment owing to the devastating economic crisis, leading to an increase in criminality and competition over resources. In this regard, the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) notes that more than half of the Afghan population (24.4 million people) are in humanitarian need.⁵

b. Freedom of movement



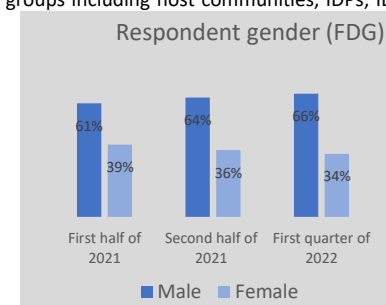
In HH level assessments, 91% of respondents indicated that they could move freely, which shows a 6% increase from 2021. However, improvement in freedom of movement is less obvious among female respondents than males. 10% of female-headed households mentioned that they cannot move freely in the 1st quarter of 2022 in comparison to 13% in 2021. The reasons provided for females not being able to move freely range from

discrimination (21%), fear of personal safety (19%), and socio-cultural barriers (18%).

Similar to the topic of safety, qualitative findings from FGD show that a high proportion of male respondents indicate that they are free to move, slightly higher than female respondents. This perception was overall lower in the first half of 2021, and still lower in the second half of 2021. These findings were mirrored by qualitative findings from KII and in general terms, there is a greater sense amongst populations of being freer to move and this, again, is potentially linked to the fact that widespread conflict has ended. However, as articulated under 2, restriction of freedom of movement for women and girls is institutionalized with the instruction of requirement of mahram, which may not be clearly captured through protection monitoring.

c. Psychosocial Effects

The protracted conflict has led to the loss of livelihoods and opportunities coupled with extreme coping mechanisms for all population groups including host communities, IDPs, IDP returnees, and returnees from neighboring countries. These threats have physical and psychosocial effects that impact the population. 34% of the respondents reported that they experienced psychological distress. Furthermore, 21% of the households interviewed acknowledged /reported that there were changes in the behaviors of the family members, they were mostly distressed, aggressive, withdrawn, and had eating disorders while 79% reported not noticing any changes in the behaviors of family members.



Whereas the study indicated that children did experience a lot of negative changes in their behavior. It was reported that 34% had a family member that experienced distress in the last 6 months. The reasons for experiencing psychological distress were conflict 22%, community violence 8%, children out of school 4%, denial of services 10%, lack of employment 23%, forced recruitment 1%, abuse 2%, discrimination 4%, early marriage 3%, child labour 3% and Covid 5%. The type of behavior that was observed in children includes 21% withdrawn, 26% aggressive/violent, 33% had eating disorders, 14% self-harm, 3% had suicidal tendencies, and 3% others. This reflects an adverse impact of the socio-economic situations, and political impact of the environment in which the children are enduring or living and calls for more psychosocial interventions to mitigate the short and long-term impacts of psychological distress on children across the regions.

The respondents provided various reasons in regard to contributing factors leading to their psychological distress including 23% lack of employment, 22% conflict, 10% denial of services, 8% community violence, 7% family violence, 7% COVID19 and extended lockdown, 4% out of school, 4% discriminations, 3% Child marriage, 5% child labour and abuse and other 7%.

⁴ UNHCR 2021 Multi Sectorial Rapid Assessments – Analysis: [Document - UNHCR 2021 Multi Sectorial Rapid Assessments - Analysis](#).

⁵ [Afghanistan: Humanitarian Response Plan 2018-2021 \(2021 Update\)](#).

d. Denial and/or inability to access existing services

Key informant interviews indicated that respondents had challenges to have access to services such as livelihood support (20%), Health (17%), Shelter (6%), Psychosocial support (8%) Rehabilitation services for persons with disability (5%), Rehabilitation services for children (5%) support for persons with specific needs (10%), documentation (5%) WASH (3%), education (9%), legal aid (5%) and education at (8%). The Household survey data indicates Samangan and Sar-e-pul as the highest rate of respondents who reported denial of access to services (52%), followed by Wardak (48%), Badghis (42%), Hirat, Takhar and Badakhshan (38% each), Balakh (32%), (32Ghor (28%), Nimroz (27%), Takhar and Kandahar (12%). 27% of respondents reported that community members were unable to access existing services compared to 71% who reported they are able to get access to services during household surveys. Existing services were denied in the community due to discrimination/exclusion (16%), documentation was required to have access to services (20%) the assistance was not free (20%) and the assistance was not what the community needed (29%).

The different groups that were unable to have access to the existing services were child-headed households, (16%), children at risk headed households (10%), Elderly person headed households (16%), female-headed households (17%), persons with disability (14%), persons with life-threatening health issues (4%), substance abusers (9%) and women at risk headed household at (9%).

“The people who have more power and have more money they will win the dispute”

UR Male HH, Faryab, January

“The new government do not have ability to solve the problems they are illiterate they do not have familiarity with documentation”

UR Male HH, Badakhshan February

Although 75% of the population access basic services based on Key Informant Interviews, only 2% of respondents indicated that there is access to child protection for prevention and response to abuse, violence, and neglect

e. Mine Action

The presence of mines and other explosives shows an increase across the provinces surveyed, The Household Survey revealed that a majority 91% (compared to 89% in Q4 of 2021) of households lack awareness about mines and other explosives and 39% indicated that they lack awareness on where to report explosives. The presence of mines and explosives affected livelihood and access, and the well-being of the community population including that the community cannot get access to services reported (25%), children cannot access school safely (21%) animal grazing (20%), children cannot play safely (15%) and collecting water (13%). While the data from the Key informant interview indicated that 88% of respondents have no information about mines or other explosives compared to 9% who have information about mines in their community.

In Zabul and Kunduz indicated that all respondents have not heard about mines or other explosives, followed by Bakhshian (95%), Farah, Badghis, and Kandahar (94% each), Wardak (84%), and Hirat (78%).

f. Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

Since the fall of the former government, the de facto authorities have slowly re-established a formal justice system, but the legal framework and procedures remained unclear in the first quarter of 2022. The use of punishments such as public shaming, arbitrary arrests, torture, and public executions have been reported across several provinces with de facto authorities which constitute violations of international law and Afghanistan’s treaty obligations.

Household survey data shows that informal dispute resolution mechanisms such as community elders (44%), Mullahs (41%), and family and relatives (34%) are preferred by the community. Women have overall less access to both traditional and formal mechanisms than men, resulting in 40% of women reporting that they prefer to resolve disputes through their family and relatives. Quantitative and qualitative data indicate that the lack of female representation, discrimination, and lack of trust in those mechanisms, as well as restriction of freedom of movement, are barriers to safe and meaningful access.

The top three reasons for challenges in accessing those mechanisms for men and women are lack of trust (60%), discrimination (51%), and fees (33%). IDPs and undocumented returnees are twice more likely to report the need to pay fees as a barrier to access justice than members of the host community or IDPs returnees. Qualitative data indicate that De facto Authorities’ lack of familiarity with the previous government’s formal justice system and unwillingness to operationalize their own formal system contribute to challenges in accessing fair and timely dispute resolution mechanisms.

g. Social Cohesion

Similar to the previous quarter, generally positive relationships were reported within the community and between various groups, noting, however, tensions over stretched resources and rare economic opportunities were mentioned in HHS and affect IDPs, IDPs returnees, and undocumented returnees the most. The proportion of IDPs and undocumented returnees was higher among the 9% of HHS respondents who reported not feeling safe. While male and female respondents reported similar trends in community violence within their community or with other communities, IDPs and undocumented returnees were generally more likely to report such violence, especially in rural areas in Badakhshan, and Nimroz provinces. In northern provinces of the country such as Badakhshan, the increase in tensions among the community might be linked to the increase in Afghan resistance groups. Indeed, recent movements of Pashtun Taliban fighters to provinces in the north of Afghanistan have sparked tensions among the ethnic Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik communities. Nimroz and Herat provinces being the main routes for irregular migration, they have become destinations for various ethnic/religious and cultural groups who are transiting, have been deported, and/or are waiting to remigrate. According to FGD findings, the main factor leading to a cohesive relationship among the community members is their ethnic/religious bonds. In contrast, political alignment and debt-related tensions were separating the communities.

3. EXISTING CAPACITIES TO ADDRESS PROTECTION RISKS

In the context described above, there is an urgent need to reinforce capacities to ensure access to women and girls, enhance their participation, and rebuild support and outreach mechanisms, such as community-based protection mechanisms and social protection structures. In this regard, the UN engagement with the de-facto authorities as well as with the communities and strong advocacy for women’s inclusion in all aspects is required. Additionally, there is a need for consistent consultation and advocacy under the coordination of existing inter-agency mechanisms including the Humanitarian Access Group, to ensure access to women and girls, as well as for enhanced access to female humanitarian staff in the field, at different levels with the de-facto authorities to ensure the safety of women and girls and their freedom of movement. The Women’s Advisory Group to the HCT should be facilitated to play a stronger role in consultation at a high level with the de facto authorities.

Humanitarian actors should further give consideration to engaging with religious scholars and other relevant key stakeholders on pertinent issues related to women and girls’s rights, including access to education. Furthermore, in addition to enhancing active participation and engagement of women and girls, engagement with men and boys in the communities, including youth, as agents of change, should be accelerated through community outreach activities to enhance the rights of women and girls.

Humanitarian partners including civil society and national organizations are active in most locations with the highest needs. While some challenges indicate access issues by all partners to adequate funding to support interventions strategies according to the HRP as well as adequate technical capacity and systems to effectively respond to the complex humanitarian case management, there is a need to step up the existing capacity including outreach mechanisms, social and community-based protection Structures, and the referral pathways to enhance service provision including effecting coordination at the National and sub-national levels.

4. RESPONSES

Operational Constraints

- Humanitarian access remains complex, with incidents of interference that hinder access to affected persons, staff, project sites, and contractor selection, as well as demands that female staff is accompanied by a mahram or align with other measures, often linked with threats of arrest or other forms of retaliation, which undermines meaningful access to affected persons, particularly to people with specific needs and protection risks.
- Operational challenges for organizations have also been a reality, as some interventions had to be put on hold, shifted, or repackaged while the enormity of

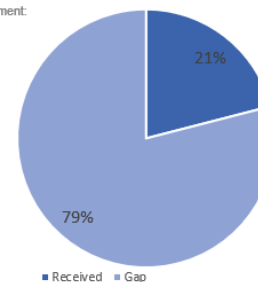
need, particularly in the absence of even basic government services, has simply ballooned. Coupled with rising needs is the loss of enormous capacity across civil society. Human rights and women’s rights leaders, protection experts, GBV specialists, community organizers, campaigners, and beyond have all been faced with particular uncertainty and risk since the political power shift and many have been forced to leave the country in search of safety.

- The current economic crisis is expected to continue driving up food and other basic needs costs, which will likely further increase food insecurity, debt, unemployment, and reliance on negative coping strategies.
- Many protection activities, including community-based protection monitoring, and identification of PSN and those who need GBV and MHPSS services were impacted by the restrictions on work placed on female staff. The limitations in working remotely do not ensure sufficient space and privacy to guarantee the full protection of female clients.
- Serious concerns exist about keeping data safe and its protection generally in the country. Data on GBV incidents is a particular concern capable of putting both service providers and clients at risk. For this reason, recording and keeping GBV-related data remains postponed until its collection can be ensured in a safe and feasible manner in accordance with GBViE Minimum Standards and global standards for data protection.

Population Reached and Funding Data

From January to Mars 2022, Protection Cluster partners reached around **1.6M individuals** out of the total target of **4.5M (35 % achieved)**. In the first quarter of 2022, protection partners received around **\$29 million (21%)** out of the total funding required for 2022 HRP of \$137.4 million.

FUNDING
Overall Requirement:
USD 137.4 M



5. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

For Donors & Members States:

Use all available leverage points and diplomatic channels to **protect and promote women's and girls' rights**. This must also include joined-up, non-negotiable support for the equal participation of female staff as part of the humanitarian response.

- Strengthen **support to mine action capacity and activities to reduce civilian casualties and enable humanitarian assistance**, particularly by funding clearance, Quick Response Teams, and EORE projects aligned with the HRP 2022.
- Support **mainstreaming of GBV risk mitigation across sectors** by ensuring dedicated gender and GBV experts are embedded in non-protection sectors to support strengthening and coordination of best practices.
- Strengthen **engagement and advocacy with neighboring governments and key member states** in the region and globally to support safe border crossings and meaningful access to asylum within and beyond the region.
- Step up **multi-year, flexible funding streams, capacity-building platforms, and area-based modalities**, all aimed at supporting national civil society stakeholders' long-term viability and effectiveness, including protection partners, women's rights organizations, and human rights defenders.
- Guarantee that the **civil population and all NGOs have access to the Humanitarian Exchange Facility** and Humanitarian Financial Corridors, ensuring low transfer costs and securing insurance to reduce the liability of NGOs for dealing with cash in Afghanistan.

De Facto authorities:

- Ensure that the **fundamental rights of women and girls are fully respected** including ensuring **access to education by all girls and boys at all grades** of the national education programs.
- **Respect the guiding principles of humanitarian operation** including its independence and ensuring the safety of humanitarian actors and facilitate unconditional access and implementation of humanitarian services, including access of female and male, international and national staff to all communities based on identified needs and vulnerability.
- Allow **access to a national mine action survey to capture the extent of contamination** and provide information on any known contamination, and facilitate access to women, girls, boys, and men to mine, IED, and other explosive device risk education through a few risks' education teams.
- In order to prevent forced eviction from informal settlements, long-term solutions must be established before residents in informal settlements including IDPs are relocated to their areas of origin or find any other durable solutions. It may take years to achieve it, therefore it requires proper planning in consultation with the people affected, and solutions should be based on their voluntary and informed choice.

For HC/HCT & Humanitarian partners:

Strengthen **multi-sectoral initiatives to mitigate economic impacts on the population** including persons with disability, children, and women, and prioritize actions that strengthen the resilience of IDPs, returnees, and host communities for protection outcomes.

On protection and GBV

- Engage in **advocacy and in continuous dialogue** with the de facto authorities to:
 - Promote the full participation of women and girls in public life.
 - Resituate the formal justice system and respect for international human rights law.
 - Enable the independent and fulsome implementation of protection programs and services, including specialized GBV services, and legal responses.
 - Protect humanitarian access to informal settlements when carrying out assessments and providing humanitarian services that have been generated by forced evictions.
 - Ensure active engagement, joint planning, and coordination with de facto authorities to support and plan for principled returns of displaced persons and other solutions for internally displaced persons.
- Make meaningful **investments in local partners' operations** and capacity, with the aim of longer-term rebuilding and support to protection organizations, leaders and networks, and women's rights organizations.

On child protection

- Ensure **Child Safeguarding Policy pieces of training are systematically provided for all humanitarian workers and communities** for an individual and collective responsibility in ensuring all children are protected from deliberate or unintentional acts including negative coping mechanisms that lead to the risk of, or actual, harm to children

On mine action

- Provide **unconditional access for humanitarian mine action** personnel, including Quick Response Teams and women staff, to previously restricted areas for demining, risk education, ERW removal, and other mine action activities to ensure that civilians returning to their areas of origin and humanitarians deploying to those areas can do so in a safe manner.