



GPC GLOBAL PROTECTION FORUM 2020 CONCEPT NOTE FOR VIRTUAL EVENTS

Strengthening Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: the role of Protection Clusters and Operational Actors

7 October 2020 – 14:00 to 15:30 (Geneva time)

Link & connection information - to follow

Rational/purpose

The protection of people caught up in armed conflict is a critical challenge. As highlighted by the UN Secretary-General in his latest [report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict](#), there was little progress on the protection of civilians and on compliance with international law in 2019. More than 20,000 civilians were killed or injured in just ten conflicts: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen. For the ninth year running, 90 per cent of people killed by explosive weapons in populated areas were civilians. Tens of thousands of children were forced to take part in hostilities in 2019. Millions of people were displaced as a result of armed conflict. The International Committee of the Red Cross was handling some 140,000 requests from families of missing people. Women and girls in places affected by conflict were subjected to appalling levels of sexual and gender-based violence. They also suffered targeted attacks, intimidation, abduction, forced marriage, and restrictions of movement, based on their sex. Throughout the year, humanitarian access was hampered by violence, insecurity, and bureaucratic impediments – often in violation of international humanitarian law. Violence against humanitarian workers and assets was widely reported. Against this backdrop, the impact of COVID-19 makes the protection of civilians more challenging than ever, with a reported increase of active conflict and/or political instability.

This event will seek to critically reflect on the role and contribution of field-based Protection Clusters to preventing or responding to protection of civilians (PoC) concerns, including through developing PoC strategies, monitoring, gathering and regular/timely sharing of information, analysis, advocacy and negotiation with relevant stakeholders, including parties to the conflict and weapons bearers, and the direct provision of assistance and specific protection programmes to reduce or respond to the consequences of armed violence. These are fundamental components of the [IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), 2016 and part of the core cluster functions at country level.

The objectives of the event are threefold:

- Reflect on current day practical and operational challenges and constraints for Protection Clusters to address issues pertaining to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as well as good practices, lessons learned and ways to strengthen their efforts;
- Identify opportunities and challenges, enablers and obstacles to connect the work of Protection Clusters to field and global efforts on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and how to better leverage these frameworks (such as the UN SG's Call for a global ceasefire, the SG's annual PoC reports, the Security Council Expert Group on PoC);
- Highlight key standards, tools and guidance that can support Protection Clusters in addressing protection of civilians issues (including UNHCR's Protection in Armed Conflict toolkit, OCHA's [Aide Memoire on the PoC](#), and the [Professional Standards for Protection Work](#)).



Expected Outcome

The expected outcomes of the session are:

- Discussion regarding the role and responsibilities of field Protection Clusters, operational partners and relevant actors pertaining to the protection of civilians in specific contexts, including their achievements, challenges, current trends and operational dilemmas.
- Exchange of good practice and lessons learned by Protection Clusters and operational partners relating to the protection of civilians.
- Awareness raised regarding the global PoC agenda and other initiatives related to the conduct of hostilities, and identification of entry points for the GPC and field Protection Clusters to contribute to, amplify and draw on the normative framework and initiatives.
- Awareness raised on available guidance and standards on PoC to support field colleagues, e.g. UNHCR Toolkit, OCHA Aide Memoire, Professional Standards for Protection Work and identification of knowledge gaps, areas of support and recommendations for future action to improve the Protection Cluster's efforts in this area.

Format/Content of the Event

Language: English
Time zone: Geneva (CET)
Platform: Zoom

Event organizers: InterAction, OCHA, UNHCR, ICRC

The event will include a moderated inter-active discussion with participants and a Panel consisting of HQ-based colleagues, field representatives and Government counterpart.

Speakers/Moderator

Moderator: Victoria Metcalfe-Hough, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute
Opening remarks: Aurelien Buffler, Chief of Policy Advice and Planning Section, OCHA
Panel members / Speakers: Marie-Emilie Dozin, Protection Cluster Mali; Paul White, Protection Cluster Afghanistan; Samuel Cheung, Chief of IDP Section, UNHCR; Jenny McAvoy, Director of Protection, InterAction; Pilar Gimeno Sarciada, Head of PoC Unit, ICRC.
Closing remarks: William Chemaly, Global Protection Cluster Coordinator; Corita Tassi, Thematic Expert - Protection, Gender and Education in Emergency, ECHO

Field Cluster/Operations

See above.

Pre-event questions /survey to be shared with participants

A short survey was sent to field Protection Clusters (and participants) in advance of the event reviewing areas of achievements and gaps in the protection of civilians efforts by field Protection Clusters.



Background Reading

- Report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, [S/2020/666](#) [6 May 2020]
- UNHCR's Protection in Armed Conflict toolkit, OCHA's [Aide Memoire on the PoC](#), and the [Professional Standards for Protection Work](#))
- [IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), 2016