



Global Protection Cluster

On the Frontlines: Insights into the State of Protection in 2021

The Global Protection Cluster's End of Year Event
8 December 2021, 16h00 – 17h30 CET

KEY MESSAGES

- 1. Conflict and violations of human rights remain the single biggest driver of protection challenges today.** In 2022, we project having around 150 million people in need of protection. This is a major increase from 113 million in 2021. It is largely driven by the worsening situations in Ethiopia, Sudan, Myanmar and Afghanistan as well as chronic high level of needs in Yemen, Syria and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Over the world, armed conflict continues to be characterized by high levels of civilian deaths, injury, displacement, psychological trauma and sexual violence. National Protection Clusters are active in 32 crisis affected countries around the world and every single one (100%) describes psychological distress and growing mental health needs amongst the affected populations. 71% of protection cluster operations rate the risk of distress as severe or extreme. Alongside such widespread protection risks, we also know that particular groups shoulder disproportionate burdens - children living through conflict for instance are at risk of being separated from their families, recruited into armed groups and denied an education. With 90% of cluster operations taking place in active conflict settings, the protection of civilians remains critical and deserves greater consideration in humanitarian decision-making and response.
- 2. The COVID-19 pandemic has further spotlighted national and local protection actors as they often remained the sole providers of critical protection services when restrictions halted access for international actors.** These national protection actors, community groups, women's rights organizations and others have been working on the frontlines of humanitarian responses across the world, leading action and finding solutions for the most vulnerable individuals at local and national levels, through daily efforts to strengthen people's rights. Amidst complex crises and staggering violence, these actors were not silenced, even when their own lives were at risk. From civilians trying to shelter from bombs in Yemen, fleeing the destruction of entire villages in Myanmar or targeted by the systematic use of rape and other sexual violence in Ethiopia, growing crisis and multifaceted threats faced by local communities mark the state of protection in 2021.
- 3. Complementary, coordinated and collaborative actions with national and local protection actors in the lead need to be urgently pursued.** Despite the pivotal role of national and local actors where, in some contexts, they implement more than 50% of all humanitarian activities, local actors received only 9% of protection funding (mid-year in 2021). We expect this percentage to have doubled by the end of the year. This remains below the 25% 'floor' set out in the Grand Bargain commitment. Beyond resources, local and national protection actors need to be at the forefront of decision-making as part of humanitarian response efforts – driving the shape of programming and advocacy, strengthening accountability to communities and scaling protection outcomes based on their direct relationships with communities in crisis.

We call on donors, agencies and member states to ensure that 25% of funding to the protection sector goes to local actors and provide them with institutional support to better access humanitarian planning, coordination, and resource mobilization mechanisms. As a protection actor, the Global Protection Cluster and national protection clusters are committed to working with local and national actors to further enable their direct and meaningful participation in the cluster system, supporting grassroots and local actors with increased funding and co-creating protection strategies, programmes and collaborative advocacy that accelerate change for those facing severe protection risks.

- 4. The international community continues to fail people in the most dangerous places on earth, where violence and abuse run rampant. This reflects chronic limited political will to protect those living through crises and gaps in available resources despite clear progress made this year.** Based on initial data collected, we are seeing some important strides that have been made in terms of increased funding for protection related interventions globally ; with almost 1 billion dollars mobilized in 2021. This is welcome - we know the impacts protection interventions have and we're encouraged donors are increasingly seeing it too. However, at the same time, we are facing rapidly escalating protection risks alongside protracted and increasingly neglected crises. Funding levels are simply not keeping pace with realities on the ground and the gap between protection needs and the funding available remains substantial. In 2021, protection actors across 32 crises identified 113 million people in need of protection services to keep them safe from immediate threats in conflict and disaster-affected areas, to address urgent legal issues affecting their rights, and to prevent or respond to violence, abuse and exploitation. With the resources available, the Global Protection Cluster rolled out a minimum package of protection services across all operations reaching an estimated number of 23 million people in 2021.
- 5. Protection is not just a matter of money; it is also about standing up for humanitarian principles and people's rights.** This means seeing all people in crises as people with the same rights as anyone else in the world to safety, legal protection and dignity. And when this is not the case, we must consistently stand up and speak out for protection, identifying the specific and varied risks that different groups face and mobilizing the political will and collaborative response efforts that are so urgently needed. This is about providing psychosocial support to survivors of sexual violence, while also advancing accountability efforts for its use as a weapon of war. The GPC Annual Review of the Centrality of Protection serves to remind humanitarians – from the top officials in the UN to the thousands of workers on the ground – that protection is our fundamental responsibility. It doesn't only need more money. It needs to be at the centre of every plan, every response effort, every discussion we have with people affected by earthquakes, fires, floods and war. It is a wake-up call to all of us: people have rights, and they must come first.
- 6. A holistic approach to protection financing requires looking at complementary funding sources, especially from other sectors, and development and peace actors.** On the eve of the launch of the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO), we call on donors and member states to ensure the protection sector and its areas of responsibility receive an equitable proportion of humanitarian funding in 2022 to address the growing protection challenges in humanitarian crises. The mainstreaming and integration of protection within the programmes of other sectors also represents a significant contribution albeit very hard to measure.

KEY FIGURES

- The Global Protection Cluster works across 32 operations. Out of 113 million people in need of protection services, protection actors have supported 23 million people in 2021.
- The protection sector continues to be underfunded both in relation to its requirements in humanitarian appeals and other sectors. However, based on figures from this year, we are seeing some important progress: in 2021, the protection sector received almost 1 billion dollars (970 million) – which represents a 47% increase compared to 2020 (659 million). Of the 970 million received; 456 million went to overall protection, 183 million to child protection, 201 million to Gender Based Violence, 117 million to Mine Action and 13 million to Housing Land and Property.
- While the resources trend is positive, the gap remains significant with more than half of what is needed unavailable, especially with financing going to local actors. Only 32% of required protection funding was received in 2020, while 41% has been received in 2021 (970 million received out of 2.3 billion required). According to our data in June 2021, 9% of the funding went to local actors, we expect this percentage to have doubled by the end of the year.
- In 2022, we project having around 150 million people in need of protection. This is a major increase from 113 million in 2021. It is largely driven by the worsening situations in Ethiopia, Sudan, Myanmar and Afghanistan as well as chronic high level of needs in Yemen, Syria and the Democratic Republic of Congo. 2.4 billion dollars is required to target 75 million people through the full gamut of protection activities, including protection monitoring, legal assistance, case management, mental health and psychosocial support, etc...

REFERENCES

Global Protection Cluster Annual Report on the Centrality of Protection

The report includes tangible findings into how the protection of crisis-affected civilians is being implemented across the humanitarian system and where the gaps are in terms of meeting the protection needs of people amidst growing crisis globally. Protection continues to be perpetually underfunded, and lack of resources is often cited as one of the main obstacles hampering the implementation of the centrality of protection. The review consequently reflects on the status of protection financing, emerging trends and cost-effective approaches. The report is available [here](#)

On the Frontlines: Insights into the State of Protection in 2021

The event will showcase the impact of protection work in complex crisis contexts around the world through a panel discussion with three national protection changemakers who will speak to the dynamic protection work they are respectively leading in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Yemen. They will also share their ‘calls to action’ for the global community as to what is needed to further accelerate impact and strengthen the rights of crisis affected communities. More details are available [here](#)

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC)

The Global Protection Cluster is a network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations and United Nations (UN) agencies, engaged in protection work in humanitarian crises including armed conflict, climate change related and disaster. The GPC is mandated by the IASC, led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), governed by a Strategic Advisory Group, co-chaired by the GPC Coordinator and an operational NGO, and serviced by a multi-partner Operations Cell. The GPC unites members, partners and communities working on the full gamut of protection activities, including in four specialized Areas of Responsibility (AoRs): Child Protection (CP), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Housing, Land and Property (HLP) and Mine Action (MA). The GPC work is supported by thematic Task Teams with time-bound mandates and activities. Additional information available [here](#)