protectioncluster
A F G H A N I S T A N

Protection Analysis Update

2021 - QUARTER 2

Contents

1. REPORT SUMMARY

The data collected during Q2 depicts that the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated, resulting in an increase of civilian casualties and protection risks, deprivation of freedom of movement and forced displacement which disproportionately impacts refugees, women, and girls. Data also highlights that health, livelihood, education, and WASH are the main services denied or inaccessible due to the cost, unavailability of services, lack of documentation and access to information about services. Discrimination, harassment or exploitation, assistance not matching the needs of the community and movement restrictions are also reasons given for denial o0f services. Mines and other explosives were mentioned as threats having effects on the livelihood and household chores and undermining children's safety, school attendance and the population's ability to access services. The lack of civil documentation was also raised as an access barrier restricting the populations access to basic services, assistance and education and restricting their freedom of movement. Furthermore, the data portrays women and girls as feeling unsafe due to cultural norms, GBV, armed conflict and restrictions within the family and experiencing psychological distress due to the prevalence of family violence and early marriage so affected by the crisis extremely. Finally, data indicates that despite the increasing protection needs, humanitarian access to affected populations is likely to be restricted, particularly to women, girls and people living with disabilities, which may force vulnerable households to adopt negative coping strategies such as selling or marriage of children earlier than intended, sending children to work away from home, and child recruitment by parties to the conflict. Preventing these coping mechanisms necessitates engagement of community and religious leaders along with civil society representatives, particularly female leaders.

Key Protection Figures

Civilian casualties over the past 6 months
1,659 people killed (468 children); 3,524 people injured (1248 children injured)
Total civilian casualties: 5,183 people (1,682 children)

Displacement trends

From 1 January to 30 June 2021, a total of 287,000 people has been displaced due to fighting. The areas to witness the highest levels of displacement are:

Southern Region: **Kandahar, Hilmand**
Western Region: **Ghor, Badghis**
Eastern Region: **Nangarhar, Laghman**
North Eastern Region: **Kunduz, Baghlan, Badakhshan**
Central Region & Central Highland: **Maidan Wardak, Daykundi**
South-Eastern Region: **Khost, Paktya**
Northern Region: **Faryab, Samangan**

Protection PIN/AoR PIN

Overall Protection Cluster PIN: 12.8M
CPiE PIN: 4.8M
GBV PIN: 7.4M
HLP PIN: 5M
MA PIN: 3.5M

Methodology

The report was prepared in collaboration with six partners undertaking protection monitoring: DRC, INTERSOS, IOM, IRC, NRC and UNHCR. Each organization tackled different priority protection risks identified by the partners. The report uses the data collected from 18,160 Household-level interviews (HH), 1,781 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 1,446 Key Informants interviews (KII) - (for Q2 only: HH: 12,010; FGDs: 1,377; KII: 1,146).

The first part of the report provides a more focused analysis of safety and freedom of movements as per the Global Protection Cluster-developed Protection Analysis Framework (PAF), while the rest of the report will provide a summary overview of some key protection issues based on results from Protection Monitoring data.

During data collection in Q2, 62% of the respondents were IDPs, followed by host community members (24%), undocumented returnees (10%), IDP returnees (1.7%), refugee returnees (1.3%) and refugees and asylum seekers (0.5 %).

Limitations

Due to the increasingly volatile security situation during Q1, many partners opted to change their data collection modality, and conducted remote interviews by phone instead of in-person interviews. This is an obstacle to collect high quality data and complicates undertaking further follow-ups.

UNAMA has had increasing difficulty in maintaining its verification standards for civilian casualties, due to human networks (sources and witnesses) fleeing/being displaced from fighting, and lack of cell-phone coverage due to parties' intentional or inadvertent destruction of cell-phone towers.

The Protection Monitoring forms does not encompass all protection-related topics to be investigated, in order to make it usable in the field and not overly long and create assessment fatigue within communities. It means that the Protection Cluster may not receive feedback on some subjects and has to rely on other sources including from the media.

For the first half of the year, the Protection Monitoring form didn't have the disaggregation by age and gender. This was however included when PM partners held a workshop in June 2021 to update the current form, and gender disaggregation will be available as of July 2021.

Photos credits: NRC and UNHCR
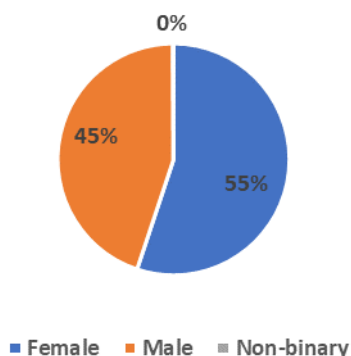

Gender of the respondents

Figure 1: Gender of respondents

2. CONTEXT OVERVIEW

The protection environment in Afghanistan deteriorated in many locations and at many levels over the reporting period. The security situation across the country continued to worsen with continuous fighting and airstrikes forcing people to flee their homes in search of safety and security. Peace talks are having little noticeable impact even though diplomats engaged with parties in Moscow, Istanbul, Doha, USA, Kabul, and other places. Conflict persists, and the Afghan National Security Forces appear to be losing ground to the Taliban forces leading to some protection actors to sense a likely lack of support. Deepening food insecurity that may be exacerbated by the on-going drought is expected to create further displacement. The Taliban restricted the rights of women in areas under its control and escalated targeted killings and attacks on democracy advocates, civil society actors, government workers, and the media. Added to this a crippling third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic that appears to be linked to celebrations during Eid al-Fitr in mid-May 2021 is causing a record number of deaths and considerable suffering as it overwhelms Afghanistan's fragile health system, adding to an ongoing humanitarian crisis.

As the United States and allies withdraw their remaining troops, fighting between the Taliban and Afghan government forces has intensified. The Taliban took control of major border crossings and many districts, sometimes with little or no resistance which precipitated the unravelling of government services in some areas. An increasing perception the Taliban is poised to take over is leading to that outcome and appears to be triggering a flow of defections from the government, army, and militia.

Protection colleagues from some districts indicate that people displaced or affected due to conflicts or drought cannot access the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation Offices to submit petitions for potential assistance nor are joint assessment teams easily able to visit their areas. Some displaced people are living in schools, empty buildings, or other temporary spaces and as a result tensions rise with education or other authorities. In some areas people cannot travel outside Afghanistan due to conflict or restrictions imposed by local government while others move in small groups to cities seeking assistance. A growth in informal settlements has led to some calls by local officials and/or tribal leaders and elders for the establishment of IDP camps, to prevent the civilian population from living out in the open. A lack of clear policy guidance for local authorities is raising pressure in some areas.

The Protection environment is more complex when military forces are not able to calm vulnerable Afghans confronting the Taliban, Islamic State or regional power brokers who are again recruiting and arming militias. Instability in government appears to result in people or groups taking action themselves by forming local militias and engage in armed combat. Access is more restricted for humanitarians and this in turn lowers their footprint and interrupts the capacity to complete assessments and deliver humanitarian assistance. Various embassies, including regional powers Indian and China, evacuated some citizens, diplomats, or security personnel or called upon their citizens in Afghanistan to leave the country.

The political landscape is such that that the institutional, legal, and normative landscape is currently in a state of fluidity. If Afghanistan moves towards a more decentralized theocratic model of government, the normative framework will change considerably. Unless a new constitution is formulated and agreed at peace talks the country may collapse into a civil war with a distinctly transnational dimension; it is expected to see a large number

of Afghans flee and seek refuge in neighbouring countries, or attempt to reach Europe; women's participation in government and communities may be restricted; and different legal frameworks are likely to become more influential. Local education officials under new local commanders will likely lose power as Islamists insist on a heavy dose of religion into the curriculum, slash areas of instruction and keep the girls out of education.

Attacks on health facilities and schools remain an ongoing concern as is the lack of accountability for this and other crimes as impunity persists without a clear identification of most perpetrators. Afghans living with disabilities are high in number and uniquely vulnerable after four decades of war. Challenges for those with moderate and severe disability is expected to increase if conflict continues including around physical mobility, health support, community participation, employment, and education. Afghan women and girls with disabilities are anticipated to face greater challenges in social isolation, access to public spaces and community or even family social events. Severe restrictions on women's rights and free expression and shrinking space for civil society are concerns. The representation of women in the peace negotiations team is limited; while Afghan women and girls continued to face violence, harassment and intimidation and violence against children persists.

Borders may be sealed by neighbouring governments. The Passport Department is reported to be under pressure especially from Afghan youth wanting to flee the country for fear of a Taliban take over. Some key government administrative staff are not attending their offices due to COVID-19 and security concerns are further complicating the capacity of citizens to obtain appropriate documentation. This may lead to an increase in persons using traffickers to leave Afghanistan. In the meantime, return of undocumented Afghans from Iran and Pakistan in this period totalled 358,335 persons. Record rates of return from Iran continue despite the increase in armed conflict and outward movement and drivers of conflict like drought and lack of livelihood opportunity. The majority of returns from Iran are deportations (53%), and overall represent an increase in the same period in 2020 of more than 160%. Returns from Pakistan reduced this quarter due to the closure of the Spin Boldak border. The further militarisation of neighbouring borders on account of the armed conflict is resulting in increased numbers of fatalities and injuries due to use of lethal force by border guards. The capture of the Herat border point (Islam Qala) by NSAG in early July has also reduced humanitarian access to undocumented returnees at a key border point.

3. PRIORITY PROTECTION RISKS

For the mid-year report, Protection partners conducting Protection Monitoring have chosen to focus on safety/freedom of movement, as well as on access to services. These are analysed according to the Protection Analytical Framework, given the current high need of affected communities to remain able to move safely and access services against a deteriorating security environment, higher access constraints, and growing protection concerns.

Other findings from Protection Monitoring data collection are also presented in this section.

3.1 Safety, freedom of movement

3.1.1   Current context negatively impacting safety and freedom of movement

There is increased concern that the prevalence of insecurity generated by the current situation will have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, heightening their risks of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, while owing to restrictions that may be placed on them, they will additionally have limited opportunities to report incidents and receive services.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA), in its mid-year report for 2021[1] has documented 5,183 civilian casualties (1,659 killed and 3,524 injured), which is a 47% increase compared to the first half of 2020. Compared with the first six months of 2020, the number of civilian girls and women killed and injured nearly doubled. According to UNAMA, the Taliban was responsible for 39% of all civilian casualties (a 36% increase from the same period in 2020) with other anti-government elements contributing to 25%. The Afghan national security forces were responsible for 23% (a 45% increase from 2020) with other pro-government forces responsible for 2% (the remaining 11% is attributed to 'cross-fire').

UNAMA's findings reveal that the leading cause of causalities was anti-government elements' use of non-suicide improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which caused 38% of casualties nearly tripling the number from the same period of the previous year. Ground engagements accounted for 33% of all civilian casualties, while airstrikes contributed to 8% (a 33% increase from the same period in 2020). Targeted killings also accounted for civilian casualties although they were at levels similar to 2020 at 14%. These targeted killings, including attempts, were directed at media workers, civil society activists, members of the judiciary and health workers, including those who are women.

Both the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)[2] and UNAMA[3] noted an escalation in violence since May 2021 and has further documented the destruction and pillaging of civilian property and public facilities, including direct as well as incidental damage to hospitals and schools verified by UNAMA. In addition, the AIHRC has received reports that in some locations the Taliban has sent letters to mosques, directed at families, and urging those with two or more children to give up one to the ranks of the Taliban in pursuit of their cause for an Islamic Emirate[4].

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[1] unama_poc_midyear_report_2021_26_july.pdf (unmissions.org)
[2] Afghanistan_Independent Human Rights Commission (aihrc.org.af)
[3] unama_poc_midyear_report_2021_26_july.pdf (unmissions.org)
[4] The Taliban has denied the letter was issued by them, however, there are unconfirmed reports of increased number of girls abduction and Taliban asking the age and marital status of women between 16-45 of age in households.

These incidents have impacted on the safety and security of all population groups in Afghanistan and have affected freedom of movement. The AIRHC documented incidents of forced displacement of persons by the Taliban making specific reference to an incident where some 400 families were forced to leave their homes in Kunduz Province. Members of the Protection Cluster flagged incidents impacting on the freedom of people to choose whether or not to move following some reports of local authorities insisting that families that had displaced owing to Taliban advances should return to their homes and that any humanitarian assistance be provided in their places of origin and not in their displacement locations.

This unfolding situation is severely impacting on the physical safety and freedom of movement of citizens. According to several sources the Taliban has imposed restrictions on local populations in areas that are and have fallen under their control, particularly on women and girls, thus also undermining their fundamental rights and freedoms. According to the AIRHC, these restrictions include banning television, forcing male teachers and students to wear turbans, and ordering men and boys to grow beards and attend congregational prayers. The significant impact on women and girls has already been reported on by Amnesty International[5] when it noted that "[women and girls continued to face gender-based discrimination and violence throughout Afghanistan, especially in areas under Taliban control, where their rights were violated with impunity and violent 'punishments' were meted out for perceived transgressions of the armed group's interpretation of Islamic law." The Voice of America (VOA)[6] has reported that the Taliban has distributed leaflets ordering locals to follow strict rules that are similar to those they imposed on Afghans when they last governed the country from 1996 to 2001. This is confirmed by the AIHRC, which has verified that in recent months, including in areas newly under their control, the Taliban has imposed restrictions on the freedom of movement of women, prohibiting them from leaving their homes without a hijab and a close male family member (mahram), decreeing that services should not be provided to women without a mahram (including medical assistance) and closing girls' schools, as well as mixed schools.

3.1.2 Perceptions of safety and freedom of movement

In respect of safety, 76% of the population responded that they felt safe whereas 23% responded that they did not. 60% of respondents indicated that there was no change in the situation, while 29% of respondents mentioned that the security situation had worsened, while 11% mentioned that the security situation had improved, from January to June 2021. These metrics are likely to increase further due to the escalation of conflict since May 2021, which has also accelerated the pace and scale of displacement.

Respondents mentioned increased criminality (35%), increased conflict between government and anti-government Elements (AGEs - 25%), increased targeted attacks (20%), fighting for resources (11%), increased protests/civil demonstrations (8%) as reasons for the worsening security situation. These findings are consistent with and underscore the findings of UNAMA and AIHRC, for instance.

With respect to population groups, refugees had the highest rate of people feeling unsafe (49%), followed by host communities (47%), refugee returnees (34%), IDP returnees (32%), undocumented returnee (27%) and IDPs (19%). Regarding gender, the percentage of females who cited not feeling safe was higher (26%) than males (21 %). The main safety issues cited included theft (23%), extortion (11%), criminality and armed conflict (8%).

As regards freedom of movement, 85% of respondents mentioned that they can move freely while 14% mentioned that they cannot move freely. The percentage of people who cite being unable to move freely was higher among

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[5] https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/ (Afghanistan Report 2020)
[6] https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/taliban-impose-new-restrictions-women-media-afghanistans-north

males (18%) than female (12%). This can be explained by the fact that men, being the traditional breadwinners of families, must leave their homes more often than women, to meet daily expenses. It is believed that they tend to be more aware of their surroundings than women, and they also face a higher risk of forced recruitment, due to their gender.

3.1.3 Reported reasons for not moving freely

In general, these findings support reports that highways are open and that persons can move without hindrance, including in areas that are under Taliban control. Respondents highlighted as contributing to the range and multitude of issues that prevent them from feeling safe when moving, fear of personal safety (26%), followed by lack of trust in the community (14%), socio-cultural barriers (13%), discrimination (10%), safety concerns related to debt (9%), lack of documentation (8%), personal hostility (6%), check points (5%) and demands for bribes by authorities (4%). While the threat of immediate violence owing to conflict is apparent, these factors are equally important to keep sight of as they represent the specific dynamics at play and which are likely to become exacerbated as displacement increases and potentially, in addition, when persons return from displacement as well.
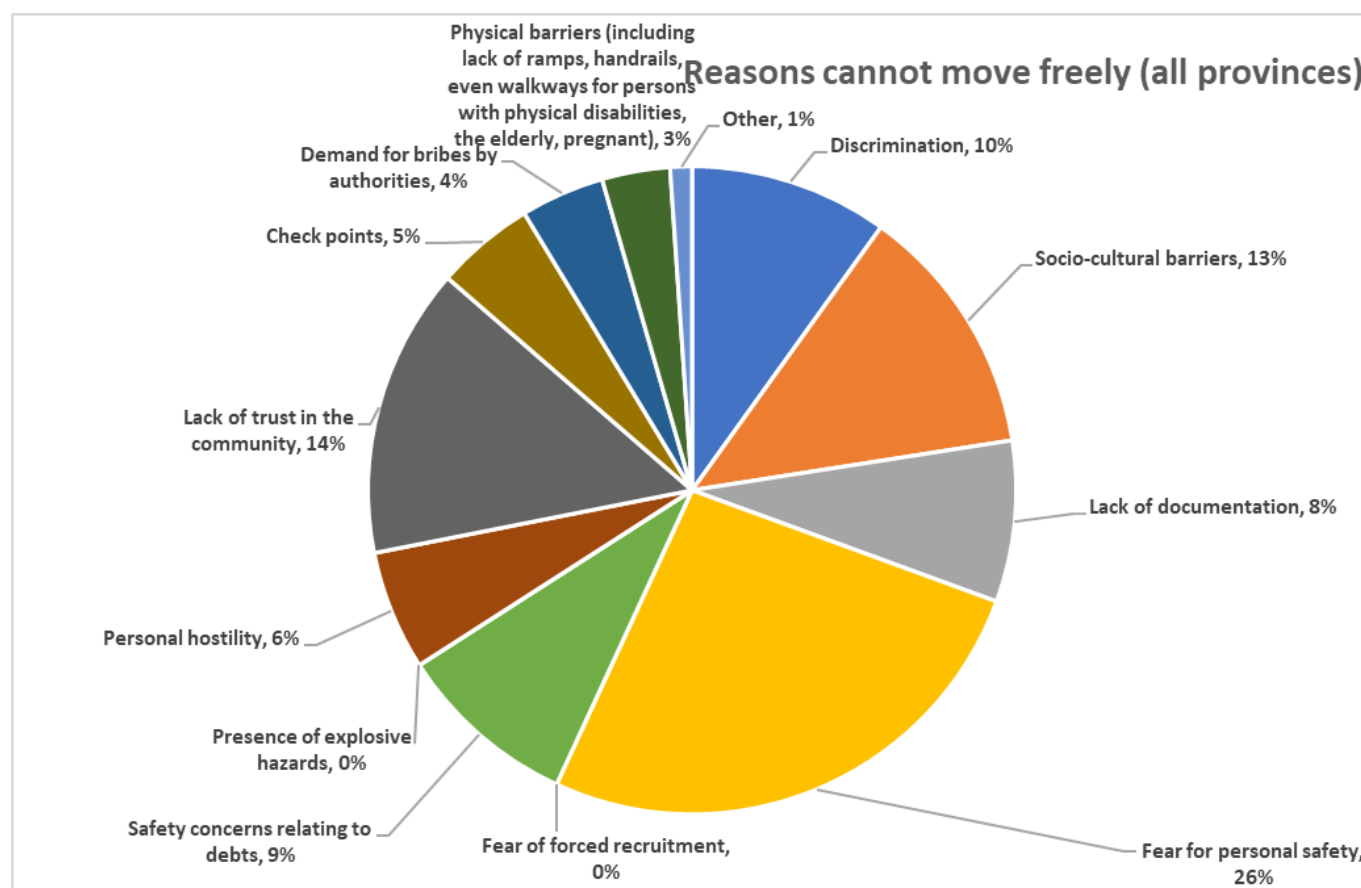

Figure 2: Reasons for not moving freely

As a result of conflicts, ongoing fighting, and the deterioration of the security situation across the country, and as the Taliban gains ground, humanitarian access to affected populations, particularly women, girls and persons with

disabilities faces the real possibility of becoming restricted. Human Rights Watch, Rights[7] notes that barriers are faced by Afghan women and girls with disabilities (as well as disabled people in general). They are discriminated because of their gender and disability and socially isolated by their families and communities as they are considered as a shame for the families and even denied participation in social events in the family or communities. According to the findings of a study conducted by AIHRC,[8] 38.1% of those who participated in the study reported that they had experienced violence at home and in the community because of their disability, and that they have been insulted, mocked, and harassed.

Dependency on humanitarian assistance and protection needs are likely to increase in this context. In addition to accessing and addressing the protection needs of women and girls, access to assistance by marginalised groups, such as disabled people and ethnic minorities like Hazaras, will also likely become difficult due to limitations in freedom of movement and cultural barriers. According to monitoring conducted from January to June 2021, the effect of the general situation is further enhanced by a break-down in law and order. The implementation of laws and policies will be impacted due to a weaker presence and reduced geographical coverage by government. The rise in criminality is documented[9]. One of the biggest safety concerns relates to theft and these risks are likely to increase in city centers, which attract IDPs, and on major highways, further impacting on freedom of movement. In this vacuum, the informal justice system, which traditionally does not work in favour of women and girls, will likely get stronger.

In addition, displaced populations are losing community support during displacement and are forced to adopt negative coping mechanisms such as going into debt and other harmful practices in order to survive. Furthermore, in the context of displacement, mistrust arises between host communities and displaced populations, resulting in feelings of insecurity and tension, and a greater prospect of discrimination. Data from the latest 2020 Whole of Afghanistan assessment (July-September 2020) indicates that 16% of non-recent IDPs, 21% of recent IDPs, 46% of refugees, 19% of returnees and 17% of vulnerable populations have taken on catastrophic levels of debt, mainly to cover immediate food and healthcare needs.

Amidst the overall deterioration of the situation there is major concern for the fundamental rights and freedoms of women and girls[10], who will face the greatest impact. Women are at high risk of being deprived of their right to work and will lose vital income generating opportunities, affecting access to food, water, and protection. This in turn may result in greater adoption of negative coping mechanisms, particularly child labour and child/forced marriage, thereby having disastrous effects on children. Furthermore, risks associated with Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Gender Based Violence (GBV) will increase as women and girls lose access to health, education, and employment. AIHRC in its report "Violence Against Women in Afghanistan (The first 10 months of 2020)[11] recorded a total of 3,477 cases of violence against women, including 1,241 cases of physical violence against women.

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[7] https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/04/28/disability-not-weakness/discrimination-and-barriers-facing-women-and-girls

[8] https://www.aihrc.org.af/home/research_report/9108 (2020)

[9] The EASO county of origin Information Report (June 2021) notes that "the increase in criminality in Kabul city, even in its relatively safe central areas, reportedly turned the Afghan capital into one of the most dangerous places for businessmen, foreigners, local officials and ordinary people." 2020_Template_EASO_COI_report (reliefweb.int)

[10] Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (aihrc.org.af)

[11] Report on Violence against Women in Afghanistan.pdf (aihrc.org.af)

3.1.4 Existing capacity within affected communities to help mitigate against the impact of reduced safety and freedom of movement

Community-Based Protection Structures and male and female Shuras exist in communities. However, given the reported prevalence of various human rights issues in communities, it is reasonable to consider that members of traditional community structures could benefit from training on humanitarian principles, human rights, GBV and child protection.

Community Based Development Counsels (under the Citizen's Charter) exist in each community, and linkages with them could be key to support marginalized populations and enhance their safety and freedom of movement.

Equally, working through community leaders, particularly female leaders, may provide conduits for access and provide potential for the identification of persons facing protection risks, which may then be flagged to trained service providers. In general, community leaders or elders and civil society representatives, religious leaders and other community figures of standing have a close relationship with populations of concern. They play a prominent role in Afghan communities, and are generally respected by all, including by the Taliban. They provide an opportunity for indirect engagement and can also provide humanitarian actors with a buffer with the Taliban. However, it will be essential to ensure that a community facilitator is sufficiently capacitated and not overburdened or placed in a compromising position. In this regard a clear and effective messaging strategy would also need to be employed.

While there are capacities to address protection risks, collective efforts must continue to be made by humanitarian and development actors to invest in them, to improve the protection space and reduce vulnerability, notwithstanding the advance of the Taliban.

3.2 Access to services

3.2.1 Denial of access to services

Overall, 30% of respondents reported denial of access to services in the household (HH) survey, compared with 41% during Key Informant Interviews (KII) and 31% of community members in Focus Group Discussions. Importantly, 54% women reported denied access compared to 25% men. Disaggregation based on provinces indicated that Hirat had the highest rate of respondents reported denied access (38%), followed by Balkh (32%), Badakhshan (29%), Ghor (21%), Badghis (16%), and Faryab (11%). There's only slight decrease of 1% in the issue since last report, which highlighted that 31% reported denied access to services. However, migration status remains the same as IDPs highlighted access issues in both quarters.

The top five services to which HH reported being denied are: health (19%), livelihood support (15%), education (8%), WASH (7%), and electricity (6%). However, KII results show a slight difference in services: health (12%), education and WASH (10% each), shelter (9%), livelihood and documentation support and electricity (8% each), and women protection (7%).

31% of households reporting being **denied access to services**

Reasons for the denial of access to services indicated that 35% of respondents reported that they were unable to pay for services, which highlights that services are not free. Households also confirmed that some services are not available (33%). 5% reported that not having required documentation hinders their access to assistance as does discrimination/exclusion and lack of access to information about available services. Furthermore, 7% reported movement restrictions due to lack of transportation while 4% highlighted movement restrictions due to security concerns. Similar results have been observed from KIIs, with 21% unable to pay for services, 16% lack information about available service; movement restrictions due to security concerns (12%), discrimination/exclusion (11%), and lack of documentation needed for services (9%) were other reasons for denial of services.

Reasons for denial of access to services

34%	
27%	
15%	
9%	
8%	
4%	
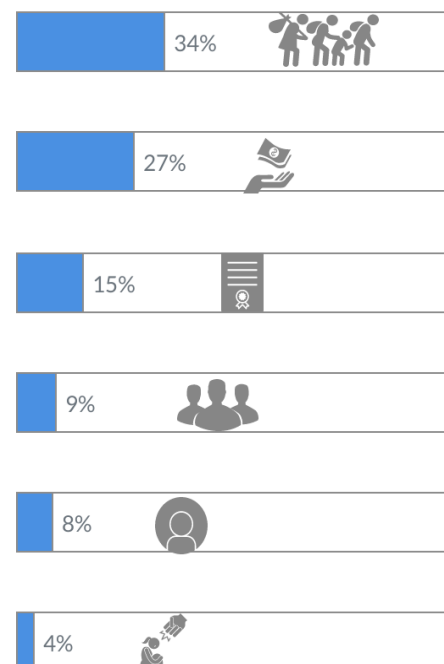
3.2.2 Inability to access existing services

The HH survey, revealed 46% of respondents reported an inability of households to access existing services. Key existing services which they are unable to access were health (19%), livelihood support (15%), education (8%) and WASH (7%). Importantly, 38% of women reported their inability to access existing services compared to 24% of men. Disaggregation based on provinces indicated that Hirat had the highest rate of respondents reported denied access (61%), followed by Badakhshan (49%), Balkh (41%), Badghis (37%), Ghor (18%), Ghazni (17%), Faryab (12%), and Farah (6%).

Moreover, higher percentages of inability to access services were reported in the KII (72%) and FGD (57%), most of which were issues raised by host community & IDPs and women.

On barriers to accessing services, 23% of respondents reported that assistance is not free, 19% reported documentation is required to access services, 16% reported discrimination/exclusion, 15% reported that assistance does not reach the people most in need, and 12% reported harassment or exploitation in exchange for assistance and assistance is not what the community needs, respectively.

The affected groups among the community members, based on the KII data, are mostly female-headed households (13%), elderly-person headed household (11%), single male-headed households (10%), child-headed households and persons with disabilities (9% each), persons with life-threatening health issues and persons with mental disabilities (7% each).

3.2.3 Access to basic services during COVID-19

More than half (58%) of households reported no access to health facility and services, mostly IDPs and women (58% compared to 39% of men). Reasons for challenges in access are due to the inability to pay for services (60%) and unavailability of services (34%). A few households reported discrimination, movement restriction due to lack of transportation and lacking documentation needed for service.

44%
Has access to health facility & services

56%
Has no access to health facility & services

3.3 Social Cohesion & Dispute Resolution mechanisms

Similar to the previous quarter, populations of concern report generally cohesive relationships within communities and between different groups. However, some degradation in social relations is observed particularly in areas impacted by conflict and displacement. Unifying factors according to FGDs include cultural/religious bonds, family ties, common language, and respect. Community councils, jirgas, communal meetings, and authority figures (elders and religious leaders) maintain social order and prevent people from engaging in conflicts.

The drivers of community tensions include socio-cultural differences, discrimination, political differences and competition for jobs and resources. In Nangarhar, IDP, returnee and host community FGDs all report problematic intra-communal relationships due to control over services or resources, and in Takhar, the intensification of the conflict and presence of newcomers from different countries/ethnicities is physically dividing communities ("*The social relationship is not that good; The village is*

> "Social relations are good between us but not with the host community because basic services are kept under their control; therefore, sometimes conflicts happen between the host community, returnees and others."
>
> *Undocumented returnee men's FGD, Nangarhar, June*

separated into two parts, one side government and other side AGE" – undocumented returnee women, Takhar, June). Kandahar continues to be a location where IDPs and host communities report significant tensions around resources including denial of access for some groups with discrimination due to tribal and political affiliations. According to key informants from the host community, the majority believes that IDPs and returnees are successfully integrating into the community. Where integration of IDPs and returnees have not been successful, the main barriers are economic opportunities, access to agricultural land, and cultural differences.

Challenges accessing dispute resolution mechanisms

- Lack of trust, 0.1%
- Cultural barriers, 1%
- Other, 2%
- Lack of female representation, 0.1%
- Unavailable in the area, 17%
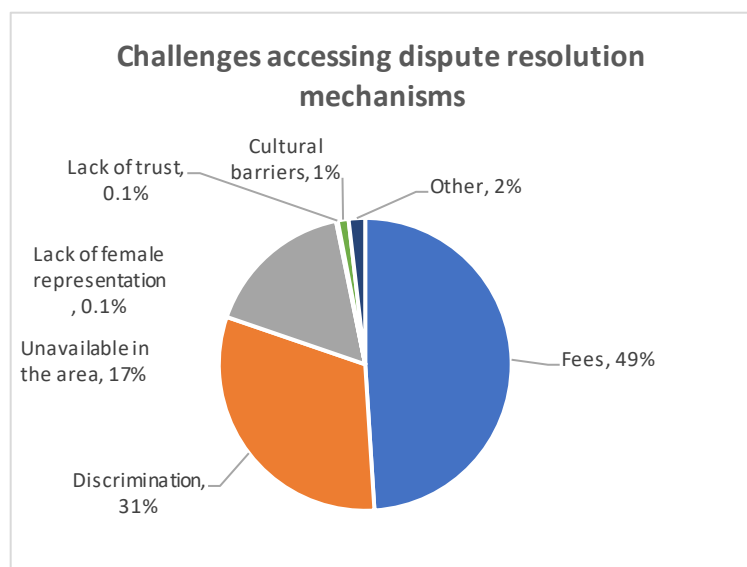- Fees, 49%
- Discrimination, 31%

Figure 3: Challenges in accessing dispute resolution mechanisms

Consistent with the previous quarter's findings, both men and women prefer to solve community issues through traditional communal means – e.g. family and relatives, elders, Shura council, and religious leaders or mullahs – rather than formal government structures (police, law courts, CDCs). In contrast to most provinces, the use of formal channels was more popular in Kabul, Badakhshan, and Helmand. The favouring of traditional mechanisms is indicative of high levels of trust within communities, though may also be a sign of barriers to accessing formal mechanisms.

Resolution of disputes dropped considerably this quarter – from 90% in Q1 to 75% in Q2 – with host community responses lowest (34%). Whilst an increased number of respondents said the quality of decision making on disputes was satisfactory overall (93%), IDP/undocumented returnees and refugees were lower than average at 82%. The most common complaint is discrimination or bias on the part of the decision-makers. HH surveys shows use of alternative mechanisms in Faryab, Kunduz, Takhar and Sar-e-Pul during this period including use of AGE-T, local commanders, arbab and mujahideen. Nearly half (44%) of these respondents were dissatisfied with the outcomes citing discrimination and unfairness in the process, ignoring of evidence, use of violence, and lack of education on the part of the decision makers.

Increasing resort to informal and unqualified structures which discriminate against and pose significant risks to women and minority groups point to a deterioration in the capacity and quality of formal decision-makers. The impact of a lack of access to justice through fair and accessible means is likely to further entrench inequities and deteriorate community relations and cohesion particularly in areas lacking unifying social characteristics.

3.4 Coping mechanisms for vulnerable households enduring shocks

Key Informants reported that households resorted to diverse strategies to cope with their livelihood situation within the last three months. Borrowing money is the most reported strategy (22%) followed by child labour (19 %) and selling assets (17%). The HH survey highlights the same three main coping mechanisms, but borrowing money seems to be more widely used (36%) and selling assets comes second instead of third. Other coping mechanisms include migration, remittances, engaging in hazardous work, begging, recruiting children to armed groups, forced and child marriage and under the category "others" many have reported daily labour.
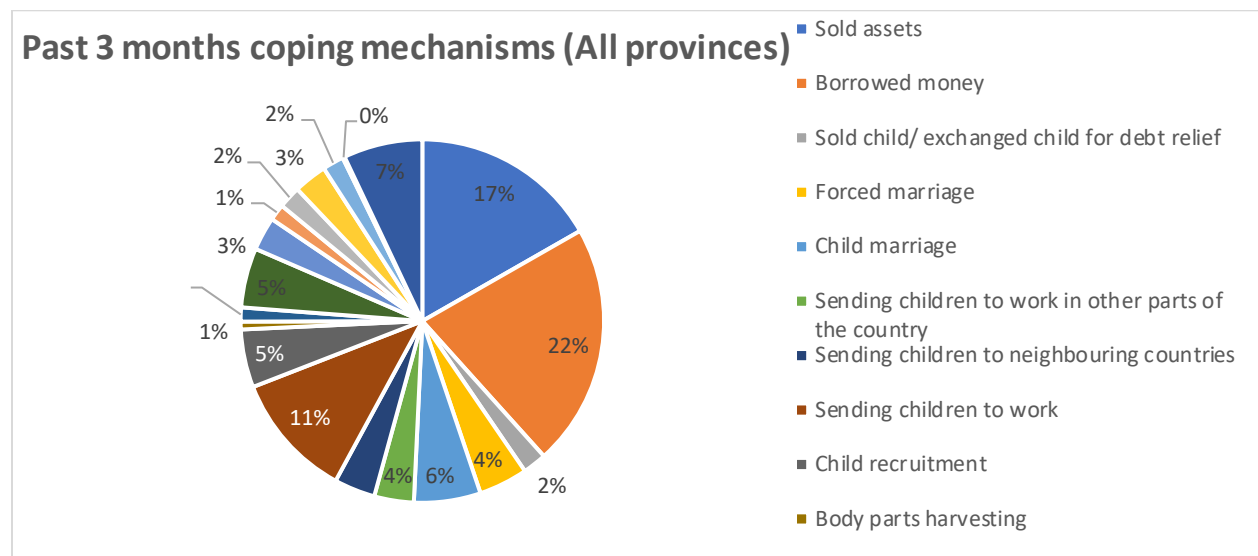

Figure 4: Last 3 months coping mechanisms

When the HH survey data is disaggregated based on the gender of the respondents the three main coping mechanisms remain the same for men and women respondents but not in the same order. Selling assets is the second coping mechanism the most reported by men while child labour is the second most reported by women. This difference is most likely linked to the unequal access to household assets.

While the three main coping mechanisms remain the same since January 2021, the percentage of household reporting using several coping mechanisms within the last 3 months increased during quarter 2. This increase in the use of coping mechanisms highlight that their situation worsened over the last three months. The causes are probably to be found in the third COVID-19 wave, the increase of active conflicts and the drought.

Borrowing money and debt

Borrowing money is reported as the main mechanism used to cope with shocks, limited livelihood opportunities and loss of income. Since the beginning of the year, 77% of the overall household survey respondents mentioned that they borrowed money. During the first quarter 71% mentioned it and it increased to 80% during quarter two. The informal economy has greatly suffered from the multifaceted crisis Afghanistan is facing and many individuals relying on casual work are now not able to find work or enough work to support their family. This is leading to a decline of their purchasing power, while the prices of essential staples are rising. Accumulated and unpaid debt leads to individuals or households being forced to resort to other negative coping strategies.

Selling Assets

Since the beginning of the year, 31% of the overall HH survey respondents mentioned that they had to sell some assets during the three months prior the interview. During the first quarter, 26% mentioned it and it increased to 34% during quarter two. Usually selling assets is not the first coping mechanisms used by households due to its potential long-term impact on the household vulnerability. The fact that the households surveyed increasingly reported resorting to the sale of their assets shows the depth of the crisis they face. Once households sell their main assets, they can become very vulnerable to protection risks. The sale of productive assets highly reduced the ability of households to recover from shocks.

Child Labour

Based on the protection monitoring data, child labour has worsened. Since January 2021, 16% of the household survey respondents mentioned that they had to resort to child labour in the three months prior to the interview.

During the first quarter, 12% mentioned it and it increased to 18% during Q2. The highest percentage of respondents reporting child labour is found in Nangahar, Sarepul, Faryab, Parwan and Nimroz (more than 20% of the respondents reported the use of child labour). These are mostly rural provinces relying on agriculture. In addition, most of these provinces have been affected by conflicts and natural disasters this year. In the provinces at the border (Nimroz, Farayab and Nangahar) the percentage of child labour is distributed between local child labour, cross provincial and cross border child labour. The worst forms of child labour in Afghanistan include the production of bricks and carpets, work in the agriculture and mining sectors, and most visibly children working in the streets as beggars, shoe shiners, porters and vendors or to collect garbage.

The answers to another question in the survey, specific to COVID-19 coping mechanisms, highlights a very high level of child labour (31% of the respondents answered resorting to child labour to cope with COVID-19). This might indicate that the data highlighted above is an underestimate of the reality of child labour in the country.

3.5 Lack of Civil Documentation

According to the protection monitoring, 33% of respondents reportedly lack at least one form of civil documentation. The percentage of people lacking documents was higher amongst females (48%) than male (30%). The findings indicate that Tazkiras (both paper and electronic) were the most prominent document people lacked (38%) followed by passports (15%), marriages certificates (13%), and birth certificates (12%).

Among the different population groups refugee returnees had the highest rate of lacking documents (51%), followed by IDPs (35%), refugees (34%), host community members (30%), IDP returnees (23%), and undocumented returnees (18%). Amongst the top five provinces monitored, Kandahar had the highest rate of respondents lacking documentation (54%) followed by Herat (45%) and Badghis (10%). The most frequently cited reasons for lacking documentation were: 'never obtained' it (43%), 'not intended' (15%), 'lack of knowledge about procedures' (14%) 'lost/destroyed' (10%), 'concern of personal safety' (7%) and 'could not reissue' (7%). The impact of lacking documentation is that 44% reported not being able to access basic services, 18% reported not being able to move freely, 12% reported not being able to access assistance (humanitarian and government) and 11% reported not being able to access education.

The findings from Q2 show a 1% increase in the percentage of respondents lacking at least on type of civil documentation.
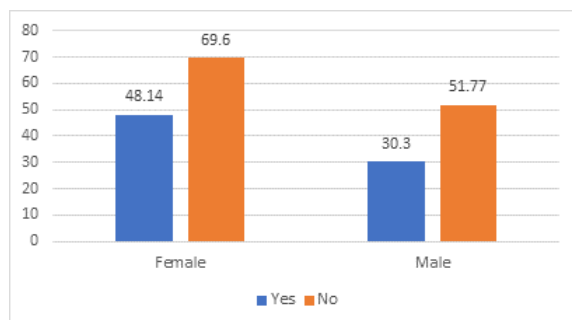

Figure 5: Proportion of respondents lacking civil documentation

3.6 Mine Action

The HH survey revealed that a majority (86%) lack awareness about mines and other explosives. However, KII findings reported the opposite wherein 42% confirmed awareness.

Key effects of mines reported by those who had awareness or information are primarily related to access, in particular safety for children when playing (33%), and children not being able to go to school (22%), while others reported concerns on, people not being able to access services (16%), effects on livelihood such as cannot graze (14%), and household chores such as collecting water (13%).

DRC has conducted Rapid Protection Assessment (RPA) in Kandahar province in February 2021, which revealed that IDPs reported that all of their orchards, streets and main routes have been contaminated with dangerous IEDs (improvised explosive devices) in their area of origin (AoO) i.e. Panjwaye, Arghandab, and Zhari districts of Kandahar province.

During RPA in Ghazni Province in May 2021, IDPs reported Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and mines on the way from Qarabagh district to displaced location (Saqafat Islamia). They reported that these were placed by Armed Opposition Groups (AoGs). They further reported that they are unaware of mine placements, therefore, were very scared en route to displacement locations.

During another RPA in Ghazni province in June, IDPs reported landmines on the main route from Khawaja Omari district to displaced locations, placed by AOGs. IDPs further reported ERWs and mines in Nawabad village (area of displacement). They reported that these were placed by AOGs. They further specified that mines are handmade. Men reported that they are aware of mines and take necessary precautions, but women and children are unaware of mine placements and are at higher risk of injury and/or death.

Furthermore, IDP men showed concern for the safety of their women and children (both boys and girls), elderly and persons living with disability (PLWD) as they may face challenges to return safely to their area of origin.

3.7 Protection issues affecting women and girls

With a discernible narrowing of the space for the rights of women and girls, protection monitoring data highlights worrying trends in the worsening situation for women and girls across Afghanistan. Changing lines of control and the introduction of increasingly restrictive social norms for women are heightening protection risks for women.

In all areas of their lives, women and girls are frequently disproportionately affected by the stressors of conflict, economic hardship and changing social norms. In household surveys, 14.1% of female respondents reported feeling unsafe, whilst 9.3% of male respondents reported the same. When speaking of the reasons why women and girls feel unsafe, FGD respondents noted changes in the security situation, highlighting "the very bad security situation nowadays" (Nimroz province) and that the "security is getting worse" (Takhar province). Out of 469 FGDs where reasons were cited for women and girls feeling unsafe, 64 FGDs identified cultural reasons, 58 FGDs identified GBV, 32 FGDs mentioned armed conflict and 28 FGDs highlighted restrictions within the family. In contexts of displacement, findings from Rapid Protection Assessment[12] conducted in May 2021 in Ghazni province highlight the GBV risks associated with overcrowding and a lack of privacy, with women and girls reporting feeling unsafe in accessing shared WASH facilities.

Limited dedicated service provision for women and girls is further compounded by the existence of access barriers, for both general services and GBV prevention and response. In January to June 1,077 respondents reported being unable to access existing women's protection services and being denied access to services. Of the reasons cited for being denied services, lack of documentation (15%) and harassment or exploitation in exchange for assistance (6%) are two factors that disproportionately affect women and girls. Women and girls are more likely to lack documentation and are at higher risk of facing harassment. In household surveys, 22.8% of female respondents reported lacking documentation versus 9.9% of male respondents lacking documentation. In FGDs, it was reported that 51% of women and girls lack Tazkira or other types of ID, whilst only 3% of men and boys were reported to be lacking these. Reasons cited by FGD participants for women not having the Tazkira are indicative of the harmful culture norms that circumscribe the lives of women, including "they are not allowed to go outside to take the Tazkira".

34% of HH respondents reported experiencing phycological distress. Of these, 8% cite family violence and 3% cite early marriage as causes of distress. Whilst GBV is not stated explicitly, given the risks and sensitivities of disclosure, global evidence shows that the presence of family violence mainly affects women and children and that this can be a proxy indicator for GBV risk in the family. Equally, trends in early marriage indicate girls are disproportionately affected. Family violence and early marriage as contributing factors in phycological distress highlight the detrimental impact of GBV on the mental health of women and girls.

Additionally, the Protection Cluster has received credible information that indicates Taliban forces are kidnapping and forcibly 'marrying' young girls and women to its fighters as it captures areas of Afghanistan. Credible reports indicate the names of wives and widows of local government and police personnel are collected and hundreds of young girls and women are rounded up with the apparent objective of 'marrying' them to militants. This form of abuse may amount sexual slavery. Credible reports come from Takhar and Badakhshan. Although unconfirmed – and in some instances even publicly denied by the Taliban - these allegations are causing panic, fear and triggering self-censorship, severely impacting on the mental health of women and girls.

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[12] Microsoft Word - RPA Qala-e-Amir Khan Nawabad.docx (mcusercontent.com)

The PC also has first-hand accounts of girls' schools closing down and women being required to be chaperoned by a male adult placing an unacceptable burden on the most vulnerable girls and women, and making it very difficult to make ends meet for widows and other female family members without male relatives present in the household.

The rapid escalation of conflict and the deterioration of the security is causing a serious deterioration for women's rights in Afghanistan, and poses significant limitations for women and girls to access life-saving services. Reports coming from Protection Cluster partners in the field indicate that under the newly controlled areas, women and girls cannot access health, protection and education services as the NSAGs have imposed restrictions to their movement, requiring the use of *burqa* and conditioning public appearances to the presence of a *mahram* (male escort). Partners report that punishments are provided to women and girls not abiding by the imposed rules.

3.8 Child Protection

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.

As the security and economic context deteriorates, the use of harmful coping strategies that adversely impact on children are increasingly used. Households reported the use of selling children (2%), marrying children (4%), sending children to work in other parts of the country (2%), sending children to neighbouring countries (2%), sending children to work (7%), and child recruitment (2%). The use of these strategies harms children as well as exposing them to additional threats.

In this reporting quarter there is an overall increase in the percentage of household noticing negative changes in their children's behaviour in the last 6 months, with 13% of respondents reporting this. Of those who noticed negative changes, 30% cited eating disorders, 31% violent and aggressive behaviour, 18% withdrawn behaviour, 17% self-harm and 2% suicidal tendencies, representing a 1% increase in suicidal tendencies of children.

3.9 Housing, Land and Property

At least 22% of KIIs indicated that individuals in the community were having land-related issues. Further, according to the HH dataset, 32% of females and 68% of males reported HLP-related issues (this was mostly reported by IDPs). Also according to the HH dataset, Hirat, Hilmand, and Badghis are the provinces where shelter problems are the most often reported among the 24 provinces assessed in 2021. The three shelter problems that were most often mentioned were semi damaged or old houses/lack of doors, living under makeshift tents, and joint accommodation.

Shelter issues, such as living in semi-damaged or old house without doors, were primarily reported by IDPs, whereas low protective walls were mostly reported by host community members. In addition to the above three issues, the respondents also reported that living in health facilities, living in schools, or living in Informal settlements in civic buildings are also the shelter issues they are facing with.

Families living in tents were recorded in Badghis province, while the primary shelter concerns in Hirat and Hilmand are living in semi-damaged or old house without doors or in houses with low protective walls.

According to the HH survey, among the total respondents, 10% of female and 12% of male had land-related problems, such as conflict with others on land ownership, eviction, inheritance disputes and issues arising from living in a rental property. Notably, 49 out of 321 of the Key Informants respondents (15%) listed inheritance as one of the main land-related issue in their communities.

Discrimination linked to COVID-19, inability to pay rent, and conflict with host communities were the three most commonly stated reason for eviction. Hirat, Nimroz and Kandahar reported at least 65% of all the responses. The HH datasheet indicates that these issues are mostly existing in in woman and child-headed households amongst IDPs or undocumented returnees.

4. RESPONSE

4.1 Operational context including access issues

Figure 6: Geographical distribution of access constraints Q1 vs Q2
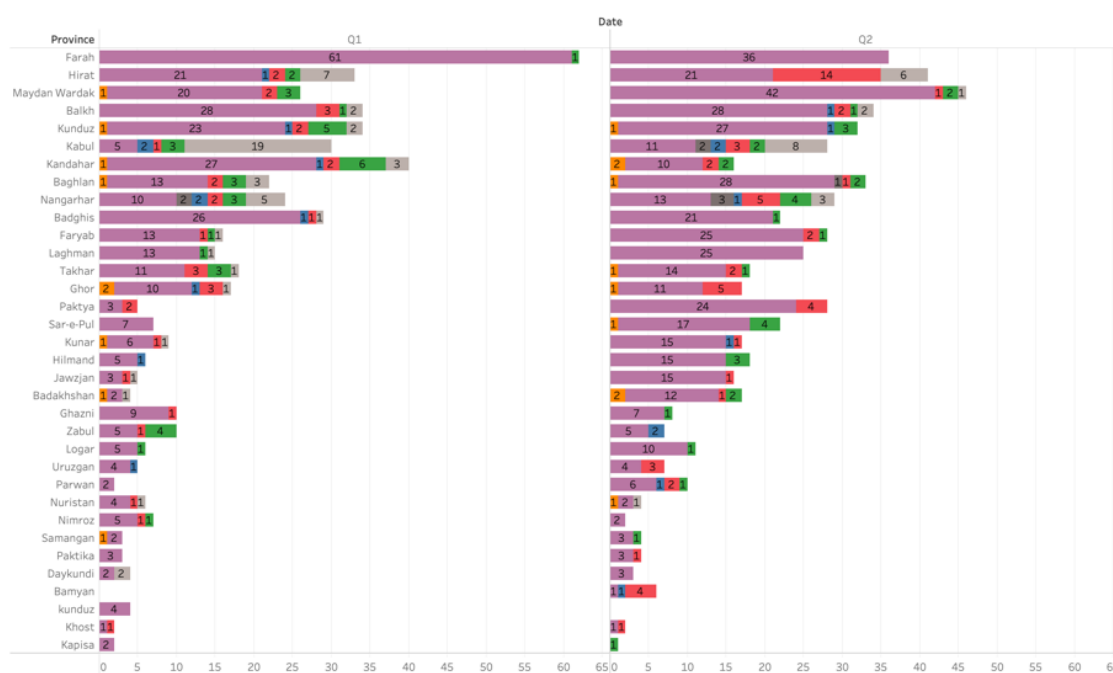
Access

The access environment for humanitarians in Afghanistan remained challenging in Q2 2021, as the country's overall security and political situation have continued to deteriorate systematically throughout the second quarter of 2021, resulting in at least 593 access constraints compared to 508 recorded by the Humanitarian Access Group (HAG) in Q1 2021.

The overall increase in the number of access constraints was predominantly attributed to kinetic activity and military operations. At the same time, interference attempts, levy requests and violence/threats against humanitarians decreased this quarter. It is unlikely that this is the result of a change in behaviour of the parties to the conflict but instead attributed to a limited humanitarian footprint during the Q2, which led to less exposure of humanitarian actors. It is important to note that this decrease in humanitarian presence comes during the time when the humanitarian needs of the Afghan population are increasing, with the impact of conflict further aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic causing delays in the conduct of joint assessments to verify displaced families. Of note, access issues are compounded by lack of infrastructure, particularly in remote, rural areas, delaying further the provision of protection assistance to populations in need.

Moreover, although having a reduced number of humanitarians in the field, the second quarter has logged at least 16 humanitarian casualties being the deadliest quarter on HAG records.

The number of access-related incidents recorded during the second quarter of the year has seen a 255 % increase from 67 recorded during January-March 2021 to 171 recorded between April and June 2021 during increased military activity.

As the overall security and political situation are expected to continue to decorate throughout Q3, it is possible that the number of access incidents affecting humanitarian personnel would remain on the same level or even rise if there is a significant change in tactics, e.g. Taliban decide to initiate offensive operations against densely populated urban areas. Such a shift would significantly expose civilians as well humanitarian personnel to involvement during the clashes.

Operational constraints

Operational constraints also include taking into account bureaucracy, constantly shifting rules and regulations, lengthy negotiations around MoUs and project registration result in a challenging operational environment and delay the implementation of protection projects.

Activities were temporarily suspended of in various areas of the country when there were up-ticks of violence in flashpoint districts. Partners had to temporarily reduce their footprint in some locations, and government officials also put their activities on hold in zones of active fighting. Changes in key government ministries and legislative frameworks have resulted in some delays in the implementation of some activities around land allocation for IDPs and returnees. In the Eastern Region, some protection partners reported having asked their female staff to work from home when they received threats targeting women at work. Protection partners also reported increased insecurity that hampered access in few locations especially in Farah (outside of the city), Zabul, and Kandahar provinces.

Furthermore, government interference in beneficiaries' selection process for protection assistance (such as the IPA and PSN programmes) was reported in some provinces, for instance Maidan Wardak. Some protection partners also reported continuous requests from local government authorities to share beneficiaries' list. Such demands compromise the humanitarian principles and delay the implementation of general protection activities as humanitarian partners negotiate with government officials. These delays are particularly noticeable for short implementation timeframes and jeopardise achievement of planned targets.

Q2 2021 was also characterized by a significant increase in the number of incidents coming from the lack of the physical environment and lack of infrastructure; this has been predominately seen in terms of the lack of cellular phone coverage, likely dictated by constant attacks against mobile network infrastructure, as well as demands towards network providers coming predominately from Taliban to suspend or limit network coverages. These network blackouts not only affect capacity of the humanitarian actors in the field, but also significantly limit the ability of the population to communicate and request aid.

Safety of humanitarian personnel

While both parties to the conflict have reiterated their support for humanitarian activities, they are unwilling or incapable of guaranteeing the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and facilities and assets during ongoing fighting. The HAG recorded in Q2 at least 17 instances during which humanitarian facilities were collaterally damaged during ongoing clashes, including 15 health facilities. Overall, in Q2, the Taliban remained the main initiator of the access constraints with at least 461 confirmed incidents, followed by 51 incidents initiated by community members, 33 by ANDSF and 22 access incidents undertaken by the criminal elements.
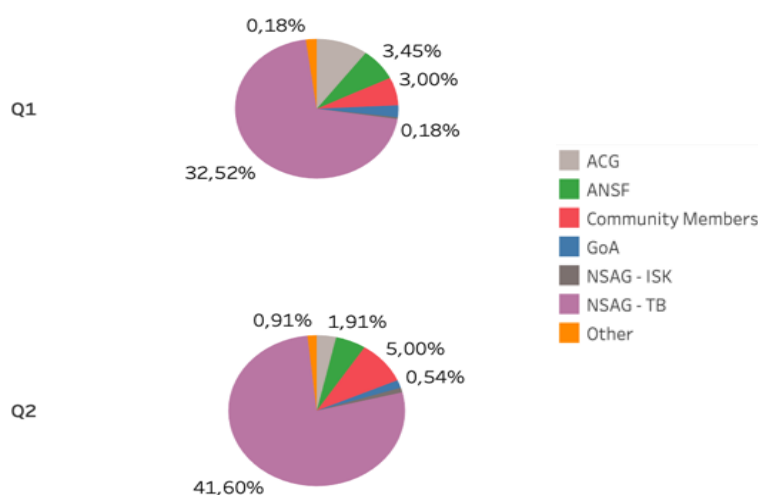

Figure 7: Access constraints by initiator Q1 vs Q2

Figure 8: Access constraints by type Q1 vs Q2

As the overall security and political situations are expected to continue throughout Q3, it is suggested that the number of access incidents affecting humanitarian personnel would remain on the same level or even rise if there is a significant change in tactics, e.g. Taliban decide to initiate offensive operations against densely populated urban areas. Such a shift would significantly expose civilians as well humanitarian personnel to collateral involvement during the clashes.

## 4.2 Population reached and severity of needs
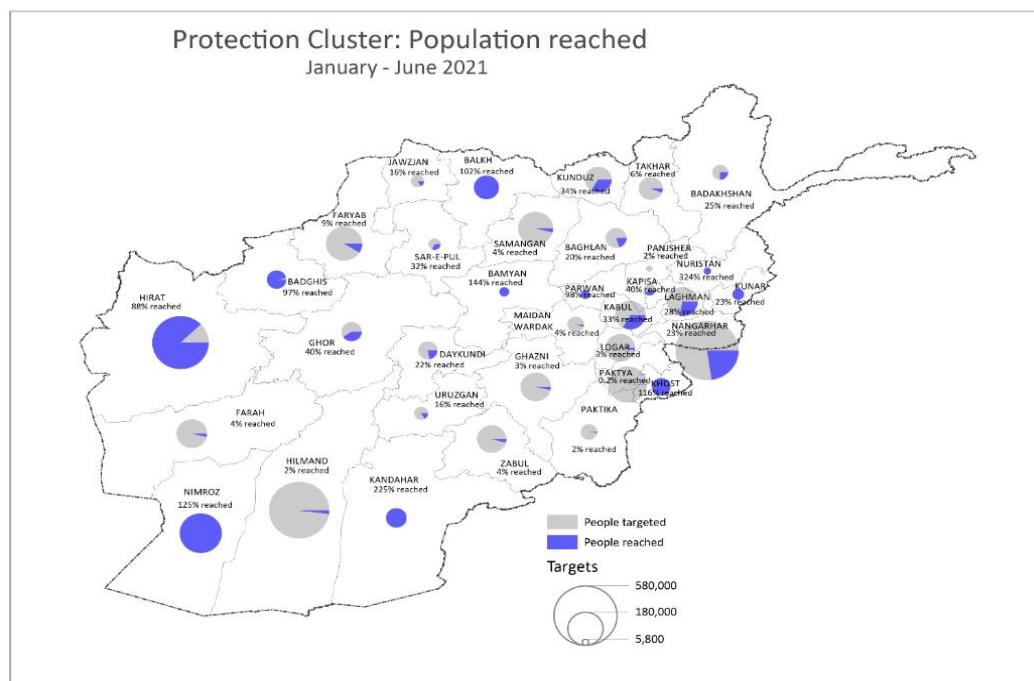
From January to June 2021, Protection Cluster partners reached 1,590,931 individuals out of the planned reach of 3,969,191 for the whole year (40% target achieved).

Figure 9: Targeted population vs Population reached

A map of the Protection Cluster operational presence for Q2 can be found under this link: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/afg_apc_operational_presence_jan-june_2021.pdf
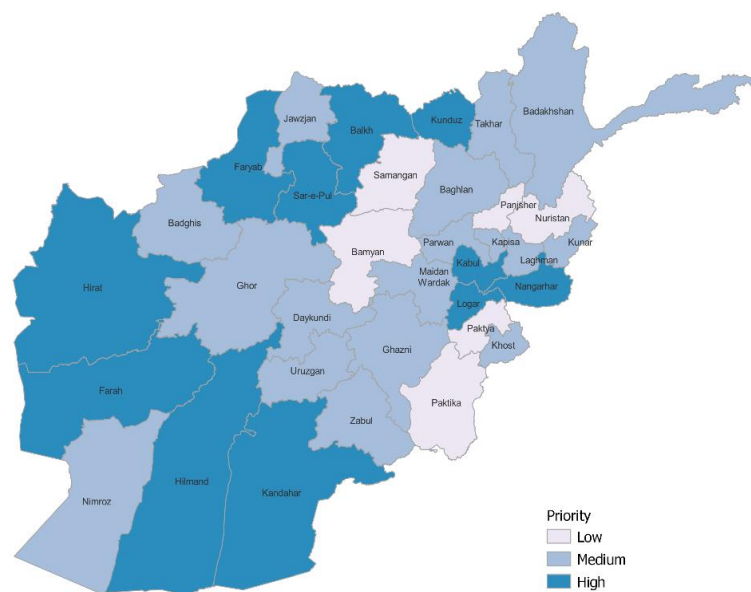
In August 2021, based on the Protection Cluster prepared the following map showing ranking from high to low on the severity of protection needs. To determine the severity, eight indicators across all AoRs were chosen. Data sources and thresholds were determined by the Protection Cluster Coordination team[13].
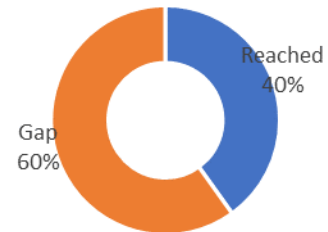
Figure 10: Severity of protection needs

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[13] For more information on the methodology, please contact the Protection Cluster Coordinators

4.3 HRP and Funding data

Total 2021 HRP target: 3.9M

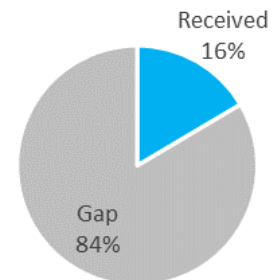**Reached as of 30 June 2021**: 1.59M

Funding data – as of 03 August 2021

Total 2021 HRP funding requirements: $114.5M

Funding received: $18.9M*

*does not include $3M CERF funds and upcoming
2021 3rd Reserve Allocation ($2M) from the AHF.*

5. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

For the humanitarian community

1. Continue country-wide Protection Monitoring to identify and analyze risks, incidents, and trends to inform decision making, prioritization, advocacy and programming. In light of the very volatile and fast changing situation, and the need for stakeholders to remain updated on emerging new trends and changing protection needs, predictable and sustainable funding should be made available to the Protection Monitoring partners of the Protection Cluster

2. Continue advocacy for the expansion of services without discrimination and the de-linking of humanitarian assistance from documentation to prevent and/or mitigate access barriers.

3. Systematically provide training for all humanitarian workers and communities to prevent harassment or exploitation in exchange of assistance based upon the Code of Conduct (CoC) and Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (PSEA).

4. Ensure that humanitarian assistance recipients are aware that they do not have to provide money, sex, or other favors in exchange for goods, food or services provided by humanitarian organizations.

5. Establish complaint and feedback mechanisms that are accessible to all demographics, train communities to use them efficiently so that trust is built.

6. Implement without delay the joint APP WG-Protection Cluster pilot on using a community-based protection committee to develop community-based mechanisms as two-way communication with affected communities.

7. Use interventions such as cash assistance, to support communities affected by displacement especially women and girls, so that they are empowered and have improved access to health services, livelihoods, shelter, education, and utilities including WASH.

8. Continue funding for Humanitarian Mine Action (MA) projects to ensure victim assistance, which should comprise of medical assistance, rehabilitation, and reintegration services to victims, including job-skills training.

9. Continue the conduct of uninterrupted Mine Risk Education to keep communities informed on mines and prevention measures as the conflict intensifies, and provide adequate funding for MRE.

10. Protection Actors undertaking community-based protection activities should support local community-based structures such as Shuras and Community Development Councils (CDCs) to build their capacity in human rights law and non-discriminatory and accountable processes which serve all members of the community equitably. This should ensure that with the support of these structures, affected population know their rights to access basic services and make an informed decision.

11. Ensure women and child protection measures are factored into all project interventions that will include both host and IDP communities, and generally contribute to enhancing the centrality of protection in all humanitarian action.

12. Advocate to the TB to lift the condition of having of Mahram for women to leave their house, and allow them to move freely, so they can access the services they need and can meet their children's needs. The mahram policy prevents widows and female family member with no male relative present in the household from leaving their house.

For the development community

13. Prioritise actions that strengthen the resilience of and promote durable solutions for displacement-affected populations and host communities through investment in livelihoods, shelter, infrastructure and with that, assistance with security of tenure; as well as investment in basic services and the local labour market.

14. Strengthen and expand the partnership at national and regional levels in order to enhance coordination and synergies across regions on specific thematic issues and challenges especially to mitigate the threats posed by explosive ordnance that requires close collaboration with GoA, provincial authorities, Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) organizations, affected communities, civil society and the private sector.

15. Identify areas where humanitarian contributions can provide greater stability e.g. repair of water, sanitation and electricity infrastructure and support interventions. and where possible replace in-kind with cash assistance to prepare the ground for a return of regular economic life or to support market creations and income generating activities (humanitarian, development, peace actors, Cash WG)

16. Ensure mitigation of economic and societal pressures on the place of displacement, including impact on host communities, while at the same time recognizing opportunities that arise as a result of the IDP population integrating into place of displacement. This can be done by providing skill trainings, creating income generating opportunities by providing small business grants and establishing market linkages followed by skill trainings. Host communities should be part of these trainings and other income opportunities to promote social cohesion. GoA should ensure to increase resources at place of displacement such as increase water supply or water points, more space in public schools and increase of teachers especially language appropriate teachers and curriculum, availability of free textbooks and uniforms, etc.

17. Support the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) and UNMAS to adopt a framework for integrating mine action in national development plans that:
    a) reduces risk of explosive ordnance and assists those affected,
    b) contributes to recovery and development processes,
    c) supports national capacity development,
    d) facilitates access for survivors to basic services and social and economic opportunities.

Advocacy messaging

18. The Protection Cluster calls on the HC and all HCT members to advocate to the government and support them through civil-military coordination to create and maintain safe corridors for civilians, in particular women and girls, to evacuate urban areas under fighting and to escort them to safer areas to reduce risk of harm *(HCT and HCT members).*

19. The Protection Cluster calls on the SRSG and HC to immediately intervene with the Taliban's Commission for the Prevention of Civilian Casualties and Complaints to investigate and held accountable for reported abductions of women in territories they control *(SRSG and HC).*

20. Continue the on-going advocacy efforts with all conflict parties and stakeholders to recognize and respect the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and refrain from using landmines, in particular anti-personnel landmines of an improvised nature (also known as victim operated improvised explosive devices (VOIEDs) or improvised mines (IM)) *(UNMAS, DMAC, Mine Action stakeholders in Afghanistan).*

21. Advocate for the safety of deminers at all times, advocate for NSAG and ANDSF to indicate locations of unexploded devices to facilitate decontamination of former battle grounds for civilian life to return to normal and allow households to move around freely and access livelihood opportunities in safety *(HCT members, GoIRA).*

22. Advocate to GoA, Taliban and NSAG to allow and facilitate the impartial provision of assistance through full and unimpeded access to enable humanitarians to reach populations affected. This may include the development of local coordinated strategies tailored to the specific contexts, actors and patterns of interference experienced, with the support of the HAG and relevant Clusters *(HCT members).*

23. Advocate to the NSAG against their practice of conducting house-to-house searches for military personnel, humanitarian personnel, personnel perceived as having collaborated with foreign bodies during attacks on the grounds *(HCT members).*

24. Consider longer implementation timeframes, in order for the bureaucratic processes to be dealt with appropriately without jeopardizing the implementation and success of protection activities. This is particularly essential as protection needs are anticipated to continue to increase given the current circumstances compounding deeply rooted and long-existing vulnerabilities *(Donors).*

25. All IDPs and their host communities should be able to benefit from free and easy access to basic services including health, WASH, education and livelihoods support by all actors involved and operating in the place of displacement by:

    i) ensuring IDPs, and women in particular, are able to have access to health services that are affordable, accessible and sensitive to the cultural and religious beliefs while ensuring this does not prevent life-saving interventions. Authorities/actors in the areas need to prioritise, ensure and enable access to core services with no discrimination, including for women and girls, ethnic minorities and those living with disabilities. humanitarian assistance and access to basic services should not be linked to documentation. Humanitarian and development actors, with support from international community, need to make sure service provision is designed with access considered and factored in (including mobile health services) and to include feedback mechanisms, monitoring quality and accountability. *(GoA/MoPH, AoGs, UN, NGOs, donors)*

ii)   recognizing access to basic and essential services is the right of everyone which should not be compromised due to displacement or insecurity on the ground, and at the same time, host communities' access to such services should not be diminished. Authorities/actors in the area need to work closely with humanitarian/development actors to ensure communities have access to core services as needed with no discrimination. Short-term and longer-term needs must be factored into proposals, projects and interventions to enable social cohesion among IDP and host communities *(GoA, non-state actors, donors, UN, NGOs)*

iii)   Authorities should enable access of displacement-affected populations, particularly women, to necessary civil documentation (especially Tazkera), including facilitating the issuance of new documents or replacement of documents lost in the course of displacement through strategies to encourage access (such as community sensitization and mobile missions to rural areas), without imposing unreasonable conditions, such as requiring the return to one's area of habitual residence in order to obtain these or other required documents (Principle 20 - Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement) *(GoA)*

iv)   monitoring and accountability measures must be strengthened to enable complaints and feedback mechanisms to function and address corruption and discrimination throughout all services provided by all actors. Communities must be made aware of such mechanisms and trust building must be ensured *(GoA, non-state actors, UN, NGOs)*

v)   the reform of the health system, particularly during the ongoing waves of Covid-19 pandemic, must continue with strengthened and increased health facilities and services made accessible and affordable to vulnerable households including female-headed, elderly-headed and child-headed households and those living with disabilities, life-threatening and mental health issues. These must include access to Covid-19 testing, hospitalization where needed, awareness raising and accelerated vaccine roll-out *(GoA/MoPH, UN, NGOs, donors)*.