



# THE CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

**A REVIEW OF FIELD AND GLOBAL CLUSTERS IN 2016**



European Union  
Humanitarian Aid  
and Civil Protection

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# OVERVIEW



Protection is now recognized as the purpose and intended outcome of humanitarian action. This was the point made in the 2013 Inter-Agency Standing Committee Statement on the [centrality of protection in humanitarian action](#): as part of preparedness efforts, immediate and life-saving activities, and throughout the duration of a crisis and beyond, Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams and all clusters and sectors must ensure that “protection of all persons affected and at-risk informs humanitarian decision-making and response, including engagement with States and non-State parties to conflict.”

The centrality of protection means more than protection mainstreaming. It includes ensuring that leadership, coordination, and engagement in protection and all sectors is more strategic, aligned and directed toward a stronger response. While protection of the rights of people is primarily the duty of member states and, in conflict, the parties to a conflict, Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) are responsible for ensuring that protection is the purpose and intended outcome of humanitarian response. This responsibility cannot be delegated solely to the Protection cluster or taken up by a single agency.

Collectively, HCs and HCTs are responsible for ensuring good programming of billions of dollars in humanitarian aid. The protection sector alone programmed \$1.2bn through Humanitarian Response Plans in 2016. It is important to make sure that we are all programming effectively and towards a common goal. In general, we can see that protection is integrated well into Humanitarian Response Plans and some, like the 2016 Iraq plan, have protection as the thread binding sector objectives together. In some, however, we see the Humanitarian Needs Overview describe a protection crisis, but the Response Plan focuses on a single sector. This report looks more closely into work in several countries.

Aside from programming, HCs and HCTs have a collective responsibility in a number of areas:

- **Addressing protection challenges which have system-wide implications.** For example, in Iraq, humanitarians have to decide how to engage in centres set up to screen civilians fleeing areas of armed conflict even though human rights violations may be occurring in these centres. In this case, humanitarians need to affirm their distinct role and the purpose of their work in order to uphold humanitarian principles and not compromise on fundamental human rights norms. In Central African Republic, humanitarians had to decide whether to support the relocation of ethnic groups being threatened with attacks or be accused of sharing in divisive politics or worst, be accused of potentially being complicit in atrocities. Again, this is an example of a case where humanitarians had to clearly articulate the urgent need of physically removing populations from harm, and advocate for a coordinated response. Both situations involve a deep understanding of the threats to and needs of people, and both require clear direction from the humanitarian leadership on what positions should be taken across the response. The position of the Humanitarian Coordinator and HCT should be informed by the analysis and expertise of the Protection Cluster, and agency Representatives in the HCT need to appreciate the potential of protection for breaking through seemingly intractable situations.
- **Ensuring that the most critical protection concerns are addressed in a given context.** In order to address these concerns in a systematic, collective and strategic manner, the HCT needs to identify the two or three most critical threats or risks faced by the population, prioritize these, and articulate them in a short strategy and ensure that they are reflected as priorities through the work of each cluster, and taken forward in the advocacy of all HCT members. The Global Protection Cluster has issued guidance to HCTs on the development of protection strategies, based on the experience of Palestine.

# COUNTRY CASE STUDIES



As part of a review of 2016, the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) and [ProCap](#) (the Inter-Agency senior protection capacity standby project). The overview provides an opportunity to gain an overall picture of national Protection Cluster objectives within a broader humanitarian response plan; understand the priorities within each response and identify what progress has been made during 2016. For each selected country, the main goals of the protection overview are to consider the:

- ➔ 2016 objectives related to protection, including the strategies from the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the Protection Cluster; and
- ➔ progress made in achieving the relevant objectives, including activities and initiatives undertaken in 2016.

As well as identifying initiatives and activities undertaken by each Protection Cluster, this overview will also provide examples of best practice and useful ideas for other Protection Clusters, which will be shared by the GPC.

## COUNTRIES SELECTED

The country operations selected for the overview are:

- ➔ Iraq;
- ➔ Nigeria;
- ➔ South Sudan;
- ➔ Ukraine;
- ➔ Whole of Syria; and
- ➔ Yemen.

These countries were selected with the aim of having a diverse range of examples and based on the data available publicly and from the Operations Cell. In addition, some of the countries may have had a particular protection focus on them throughout the year. For example, the protection concerns as a result of the sustained conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen; the renewal of conflict in South Sudan or the ongoing effects of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

## METHOD

The overview is based primarily on a desk review of documents related to each country operation and Protection Cluster which are available publicly, mainly online, or sourced from the Operations Cell. The available documents for each country have been reviewed and relevant information included as part of the section on each country. In addition, information was provided directly from each selected Protection Cluster based on the questions listed below.

Many of the documents used, particularly each HRP, have figures from late 2015/early 2016 and, unless otherwise stated, are not necessarily the most up to date at the time of the writing. This is to reflect the data available when strategies and objectives were developed for 2016.

### QUESTIONS SHARED WITH EACH PROTECTION CLUSTER

- Is the Protection Cluster's protection strategy multi-year or for a single year?
- Which of the stated objectives for protection in (a) the HRP; and (b) the Strategy were met in 2016?
- Were there any substantial trainings carried out/organized by the Protection Cluster (e.g. Protection mainstreaming, the centrality of protection, etc.)?
- For the objectives not met, what are the main reasons for this?
- How does the Protection Cluster coordinate and work with the other protection sub-clusters?
- How does the Protection Cluster interact and support other clusters and the Humanitarian Country Team with protection?

# IRAQ

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During 2016, the GPC participated in a Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) [mission](#) in August, highlighting the good practices on protection of the HC and HCT and the GPC Coordinator spent several weeks supporting the Protection Cluster during a mission in November and December.

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## CONTEXT

With 10 million people (one-third of the Iraqi population) identified as needing some form of humanitarian assistance, 3.2 million who are internally displaced persons (IDPs) and half of all IDPs children, the 2016 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan<sup>1</sup> (HRP) set out the main challenges and needs faced.<sup>2</sup> With an intensification of armed conflict anticipated throughout 2016, the HRP also set out the larger numbers of displacement and conflict-affected populations expected with the consequent associated needs and limited positive coping strategies. Key issues identified in the HRP include violence; insecurity; limited access to services or humanitarian assistance; limited freedom of movement; return; and emergency preparedness and response. Identified protection challenges include lack of safety; exploitation; harassment and intimidation in places of displacement; restrictions on freedom of movement; lack of access to basic services; evictions and expulsions.<sup>3</sup>

## HRP STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The HRP responds to the 2016 Iraq Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) which characterizes the crisis in Iraq as a protection crisis.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the strategic objectives (as listed below) reflect the Humanitarian County Team's (HCT) commitment to ensure a strong protection base. In addition to the Protection Cluster response and strategy in the HRP, each cluster also included priorities for protection mainstreaming and achieving accountability to affected persons.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES – IRAQ HRP, 2016

- ❶ Reach as many people in need as possible across Iraq
- ❷ Give options to families to live in Iraq with dignity
- ❸ Support voluntary, safe and dignified returns
- ❹ Bridge critical gaps in the social protection floor
- ❺ Help people brutalized by violence cope and recover from trauma

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<sup>1</sup> *Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan 2016*, December 2015

<sup>2</sup> The refugee response is not covered in the HRP although refugee needs and some response actions are referenced in parts of the HRP, including the Protection Sector section. The refugee response, led by UNHCR, is comprehensively set out in 2016-2017 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP).

<sup>3</sup> *Activities of the Protection Cluster, the Protection Cluster*, February 2016

<sup>4</sup> *Iraq Humanitarian Needs Overview 2016*, November 2015

## PROTECTION CLUSTER STRATEGY AND RESPONSE

The Protection Cluster (including Child Protection, GBV, Mine Action and Housing Land and Property (HLP) AOR) identified 8.2 million people in need of protection, with 2.1 million targeted in 2016. The Protection Cluster minimum assistance package is delivered in three phases for any given emergency depending on the situation, access and resources available. The first-line response aims to provide immediate, life-saving assistance and inform the overall humanitarian response through protection monitoring and assessments. The second-line response goes on to provide specialized protection support through direct and community-based provision of information, legal and community services. The full cluster response then strengthens the preventive, responsive and remedial capacity of authorities, communities and humanitarian actors, especially national ones, to deliver protection sustainably and in line with international standards.

Other overall aspects of the Protection Cluster strategy for 2016 included collection and analysis of critical information regarding needs; evidence-based advocacy; improving protective capacities of authorities and communities; scaling up protection interventions in underserved areas, and strengthening relations with national actors. The Protection Cluster also planned to provide protection mainstreaming support to other clusters to improve the inclusion of protection, GBV, gender and disability concerns into each cluster plan. Support consisted of training, sensitisation, integration of minimum standards and dissemination of specific checklists and technical guidance.

## PROGRESS OF STRATEGY AND RESPONSE IN 2016

The Protection Cluster has taken forward several initiatives of note in 2016 as part of its response and strategy. Set out below are examples of these, which reiterate the Iraq HCT's commitment that protection is a shared responsibility across the humanitarian response.<sup>5</sup>

**ADVISORY AND GUIDANCE NOTES ON KEY PROTECTION ISSUES** – The Protection Cluster prepared these notes at a strategic level for the HCT and an operational level for humanitarian actors. Topics include the establishment and management of camps; voluntary return in safety and dignity; principled engagement framework when humanitarian principles are at risk; provision of humanitarian assistance for populations living amongst combatants; and access to safety for persons at checkpoints or transit facilities. The main purposes are to work with all clusters to provide analysis of an issue and then subsequent guidance; as well as to promote concrete steps on upholding international standards for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

**SUPPORT TO ALL CLUSTERS** – As part of its ongoing support to other clusters, the Protection Cluster designated focal points for each cluster, which has also been important for ensuring protection considerations are included in cross-cutting issues. Each cluster is required to provide, to the Humanitarian Coordinator, information about how activities in each cluster plan will contribute to achieving overall protection outcomes and the Protection Cluster has supported clusters with this process.

**CRITICAL PROTECTION ISSUES NOTE** – Every two weeks, there is a standing item on the HCT agenda when the Protection Cluster shares a short document of protection issues of concern with recommendations for action. These notes have been particularly important throughout 2016 as anticipated, and then actual conflict started or intensified in various areas in Iraq. There are regular reports of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Significant issues that have arisen include extensive displacement; poor treatment of IDPs; threats of forced returns; security screening of IDPs; enforced disappearances; and lack of access to safety for civilians.

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<sup>5</sup> *Strategic Protection Framework for Iraq*, Iraq HCT, October 2015

**RAPID PROTECTION ASSESSMENTS (RPA)** – The RPA tool, based on existing GPC assessment tools, was set up in 2015 and is overseen by the Protection Cluster. It is designed to gather critical data on protection and related matters within 72 hours from the onset of any crisis. In 2016, the RPA tool has been used several times, triggered by Protection actors or on the HCT's request. The results are then shared with the HCT with analysis from the Protection Cluster and recommendations for follow-up by relevant actors across clusters. The Protection Cluster provided training to humanitarian actors on how to use the RPA tool, including as part of emergency planning for Mosul and Hawiga.

**PROTECTION MONITORING** – Using a Protection Monitoring Tool (PMT) which was rolled out by the Protection Cluster in 2015, protection monitoring continues to be important for understanding the changes in needs faced by affected populations and how they are coping. The PMT incorporates two referral mechanisms for vulnerable households: (1) which are eligible for multi-purpose cash assistance; or (2) with specific needs. Any referral made can then be followed through the relevant referral mechanism.

**IDP INFORMATION CENTRE (IIC)** – The IIC is accessible by a toll-free number and operates across Iraq. Issues identified are then referred to relevant clusters, and regular reports regarding issues of concern as a result of calls received are shared with the HCT. Referrals made to the Protection Cluster include cases that require specialized protection follow-up. In addition, the IIC is a significant tool for AAP as it receives complaints and provides feedback to clusters regarding staff or programming.

**PREPARATION FOR MOSUL** – As part of the HCT-led preparation for the humanitarian support required in relation to the Iraqi military operation in Mosul, the Protection Cluster has prepared relevant guidance and conducted ongoing monitoring of the protection situation for civilians. This continues to be useful and important to understand the needs and challenges faced, as well as support humanitarian actors to identify how best to provide ongoing protective response activities. The Protection Cluster also plays a significant and supportive role within the Humanitarian Operations Centre which is leading the operational response for Mosul.

## CHALLENGES

Meeting HRP objectives, including those involving a protection response, has been difficult due to severe access constraints across Iraq. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that in 2016, the Protection Cluster request for \$60m through the HRP was 86% funded by year end, enabling the cluster to achieve between 88%-94% of its targets.

During 2016, mobile teams providing protection services, in addition to other humanitarian assistance, have improved access to affected populations. Nevertheless, continued insecurity, conflict and changing control of certain areas has meant that access remains a constant concern and obstacle.

In relation to the 2016 HRP protection objective to strengthen the capacity of authorities, communities and humanitarian actors, this has progressed more slowly than expected and will continue to require a longer-term approach. Given the number of emergencies in Iraq throughout 2016, more focus has had to be given to the protection objectives of providing life-saving and specialized assistance to affected populations.



# NIGERIA

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During 2016, the GPC participated in an inter-cluster mission to Nigeria to support the HCT and to provide recommendations to the Protection Sector.

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## CONTEXT

With a crisis characterized by violence, armed conflict, increasing vulnerabilities and underlying tensions between communities, the Nigeria 2016 HRP focused on four states and, within them, 7 million people in need of assistance, including 2.2 million IDPs.<sup>6</sup> Elements of a protection crisis, mainly fuelled by the Boko Haram-related violence since 2009, include killings; abductions; gender-based violence (GBV); attacks on schools and hospitals; forced recruitment of children into armed groups; separation of families; lack of civilian character of IDP hosting areas and lack of freedom of movement. In addition, the increase in the number of IDPs has put a strain on the availability of basic services and, in some areas, has resulted in severe health and sanitation risks.

## HRP STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Responding to the identified protection concerns, the HRP has a strong protection focus, as highlighted by the strategic objectives (listed below). As set out in the HRP, the HCT is committed to enhancing accountability to affected people and promoting a response that has protection at its centre,<sup>7</sup> including scaled-up protection interventions.<sup>8</sup>

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES – NIGERIA HRP, 2016

- 1 Deliver coordinated and integrated life-saving assistance to people affected by emergencies
- 2 Track and analyze risk and vulnerability, integrating findings into humanitarian and development programming
- 3 Support vulnerable populations to better cope with shocks by responding earlier to warning signals, by reducing post-crisis recovery times and by building capacity of national actors

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<sup>6</sup> *Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan*, December 2015

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, page 7

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, page 13

## PROTECTION SECTOR STRATEGY AND RESPONSE

From the identified people in need of protection in 2016, the overall Protection Sector<sup>9</sup> planned to target 1.45 million; the Child Protection Sub-sector 820,765 persons; and the GBV Sub-sector 600,000 persons. Priority interventions and objectives for the Protection Sector<sup>10</sup> include the provision of targeted protection services to civilians affected by the conflict; improved protection data collection/analysis/dissemination; provision of information to IDPs and returnees; strengthening the capacity of national and local stakeholders; and ensuring protection is mainstreamed across all sectors. In addition, the Protection Sector planned a focus on involving community-based approaches; enhancing positive self-protection strategies and using advocacy and training to strengthen protection coordination and build capacity.

## PROGRESS OF STRATEGY AND RESPONSE IN 2016

In August 2015, the Nigeria Protection Sector Working Group (PSWG) held a retreat to define the vision and strategy for the protection response. With a strong focus on the centrality of protection and protection mainstreaming, the comprehensive follow-up actions were agreed to frame the vision and strategy for enhancing protection as part of the humanitarian response.<sup>11</sup> The subsequent work and initiatives of the PSWG in 2016 reflect the agreed follow-up actions, including an overarching protection strategy; regular protection briefings on urgent protection issues; effective protection mainstreaming; strengthened protection monitoring and referral systems; and protection advocacy. Examples of some of these initiatives are set out below.

**MONTHLY NOTES ON PROTECTION** – The PSWG prepares regular monthly notes on protection for (1) the HCT; and (2) the Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG). These include key protection issues, updates on protection activities (including the findings from rapid protection assessments) and recommendations for the HCT to oversee and address specific protection concerns. Numbers of civilians rescued or released from Boko Haram are included as well as the numbers of civilians killed or harmed and the number of refugee returns to Nigeria recorded.

**PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING** – The PSWG held a national protection mainstreaming workshop in April 2016. Participants included sector leads, government counterparts, and NGO representatives. In addition to the workshop, a high-level meeting, HCT, and government representatives discussed the role of the HCT and engagement with the government regarding protection.

As part of its continued support to all sectors within the humanitarian program cycle, the PSWG prepared recommendations on how to ensure protection is mainstreamed in the upcoming 2017 HRP.<sup>12</sup> In addition to setting out the main conflict and protection trends for 2017, the PSWG has included a checklist for each sector to follow to mainstream protection in programming at all stages of the humanitarian program cycle.

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<sup>9</sup> Although the cluster system has been activated, the title has remained 'Protection Sector' to reflect the Government of Nigeria's position on L3 activation.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid and *Protection Strategy for the Humanitarian Crisis in the North East Nigeria*; Protection Sector Working Group, Nigeria, November 2016

<sup>11</sup> *Visioning and Strategic Retreat, Protection Sector Working Group: Nigeria, Conclusions, Recommendations and Follow-up Actions*, Protection Sector Working Group, Nigeria, 6-7 August 2015

<sup>12</sup> *Protection and Conflict Trends in 2017, Recommendations to mainstream protection in Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan 2017*, PSWG, Nigeria, November 2016

**PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE** – In response to the high rates of sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) noted by protection actors, particularly at IDP sites, the Protection Sector has taken several initiatives to address these issues. The GBV Sub-working group prepared an advocacy note on SEA in Maiduguri, stating trends and making recommendations to relevant sectors on how to address specific concerns.<sup>13</sup> To complement the recommendations, the PSWG has also prepared an immediate action plan, mainly for protection actors, to respond to SEA in identified areas where the incidence of SEA is high.<sup>14</sup> The PSWG prepared a presentation and key messages on SEA for the HCT which highlight the connection between lack of access to humanitarian assistance and the incidence of SEA.<sup>15</sup> The advocacy messages are aimed towards key government and military officials and recommendations made to all relevant stakeholders, including humanitarian actors and the authorities.

**GUIDANCE NOTES ON KEY PROTECTION ISSUES** – The PSWG has prepared guidance notes for use by stakeholders involved in providing a response, including humanitarian actors and the authorities. For example, in August 2016, the PSWG provided guidance on the return of IDPs to newly accessible areas.<sup>16</sup> This included analysis based on focus group discussions key informant interviews previously conducted by the PSWG with IDPs returning to their places of origin.

In 2015, the PSWG prepared a framework on durable solutions which includes recommendations to the HCT on durable solutions for IDPs and returnees in Nigeria with an operational checklist on return for all stakeholders<sup>17</sup>. This remained useful throughout 2016 and continues to be important as the number of IDP and refugee returnees increases in areas of Nigeria.

**VULNERABILITY SCREENING** – Protection partners, led by UNHCR and in partnership with the authorities, conducted a second round of vulnerability screening in March – April 2016. This comprehensive exercise provided data on key vulnerabilities and protection needs faced across Nigeria<sup>18</sup> which was then used for humanitarian planning and directing targeted assistance as required.

## CHALLENGES

Lack of funding for the Protection Cluster in 2016 has meant that it has been a challenge to achieve many of the protection objectives set out on the HRP. As of December 2016, the Protection Cluster was 12% funded,<sup>19</sup> giving limited capacity for protection partners to conduct many planned protection activities in 2016.

Access to many parts of Nigeria, particularly in the North East, has been difficult and often disrupted by insecurity. Most of the inaccessible areas are in Borno state and mainly because of ongoing military operations against Boko Haram. Lack of access has meant that conducting assessments, understanding needs and developing an appropriate response continues to be challenging in such areas.

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<sup>13</sup> *Advocacy Note on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Maiduguri, Borno State*, GBV Sub-Working Group, October 2016

<sup>14</sup> *Plan of Action to Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Camps and Communities in Borno State*, PSWG, Nigeria, 3 November 2016

<sup>15</sup> *HCT Key Messages on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, Protection Sector Working Group, Nigeria, November 2016

<sup>16</sup> *Operational Standards for Relocation of IDPs in Newly Accessible Areas in Borno State*, PSWG, Nigeria, August 2016

<sup>17</sup> *HCT Framework on Durable Solutions for Displaced Persons and Returnees*, PSWG, Nigeria, 28 April 2015

<sup>18</sup> *Vulnerability Screening Report Round II, North East Africa*, June 2016

<sup>19</sup> Information available from OCHA Nigeria at [<http://www.unocha.org/nigeria>]

# SOUTH SUDAN

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In an August 2016 communication to the High Commissioner, the US State Department cited the GPC support to the Protection Cluster in South Sudan as a positive example of the strong support and guidance the GPC gives to the field.

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## CONTEXT

Although the signing of the *Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan* in August 2015, violence and conflict across South Sudan have led to 6.1 million people anticipated, in 2016, to be in need of some type of humanitarian assistance.<sup>20</sup> Issues faced by affected populations, particularly as the result of armed conflict and inter-communal violence, include killing; ongoing displacement; limited access to education; forced recruitment of children into armed groups; abduction; family separation; GBV; threats from mines and explosive remnants of war; disease and lack of sanitation; malnutrition; lack of basic services; and severe economic crisis. With one in five people forced to flee their homes,<sup>21</sup> displacement has continued to be significant. In addition to 1.66 million IDPs, there are nearly 650,000 South Sudanese refugees who have fled to neighboring countries. Many IDPs continue to seek shelter in or outside areas known as Protection of Civilian (POC) sites which face a range of protection concerns, including GBV. The UN Mission in South Sudan has faced severe criticism for its response to the violence in South Sudan, particularly against aid workers.

## HRP STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Targeting 5.1 million people, the 2016 South Sudan HRP had a strong protection focus as noted in its strategic objectives, set out below. The HRP specifically notes the importance of working towards centrality of protection in the response as a key strategic element and connects this to the 2015 HCT Protection Strategy which was developed in 2015.<sup>22</sup> In addition, each cluster has included priority activities that will help to address protection needs as part of its response activities.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES – SOUTH SUDAN HRP, 2016

- 1 Save lives and alleviate suffering through safe access to services and resources with dignity
- 2 Ensure communities are protected, capable and prepared to cope with significant threats

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<sup>20</sup> *South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2016*, November 2015

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, page 4

<sup>22</sup> *South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2016*, December 2015, page 10

## PROTECTION CLUSTER STRATEGY AND RESPONSE

In 2016, the Protection Cluster (together with the respective Child Protection, GBV and Mine Action Sub-clusters) focused on targeting 1.47 million people out of the 4.69 million identified as in need of protection. The focus was given to host communities where more than 10% of the population was made up of IDPs; the Protection of Civilian (POC) sites; counties that experienced high levels of civilian casualties; and counties identified as likely return locations for IDPs. With a three-tier strategy based on prioritizing: (1) intervention prevention; (2) response; and (3) coping/solutions.<sup>23</sup> The main approaches included reducing threat and vulnerability; reflecting priorities of affected communities; promoting positive coping strategies; and strengthening capacity to cope through community-based protection.

The Protection Cluster continued to commit to supporting the implementation of the 2015 HCT Protection Strategy, which aims to keep protection at the core of the humanitarian response. Areas of focus for this included protection mainstreaming, synergies across clusters, and the development of tools to enable evidence-based advocacy and programming.

## PROGRESS OF STRATEGY AND RESPONSE IN 2016

With a constantly evolving context, often due to waves of violence, monitoring and understanding the protection situation in 2016 has continued to be essential. With this aim, the Protection Cluster has led a number of initiatives (some examples are set out below), sharing information, recommendations, and leading activities in order to address identified protection concerns.

**PROTECTION CLUSTER UPDATES** – The Protection Cluster has continued to provide regular updates in 2016 on key protection concerns on specific issues with recommendations to relevant actors. Each update usually focused on an area of particular interest. With the escalation of violence throughout the year, particularly the outbreak of fighting in Juba on 8 July, the updates have been particularly important for understanding relevant protection issues and identifying appropriate response initiatives. In an update on the overall situation between 8 – 21 July, the Protection Cluster gave an overview of the consequences of renewed fighting including the killing of civilians; GBV; large displacement; and looting or destruction of millions of dollars of humanitarian assistance.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the Protection Cluster reported on activities conducted by protection actors to address the key concerns and made recommendations to ensure that response activities remained protective. In September 2016, the Protection Cluster prepared another update on the situation,<sup>25</sup> including the expansion of the fighting to other areas. Continued concerns reported included the increase in the number of South Sudanese refugees to Uganda as well as GBV; lack of freedom of movement; child protection concerns; challenges with the relocation of IDPs; and continued violence against civilians. The update sets out further recommendations for relevant actors to take forwards.

In another update, the Protection Cluster presented the findings of a protection assessment in Unity State conducted in April 2016, one year after an offensive in the area.<sup>26</sup> It provided updates on key protection concerns noted in 2015; an overview of the current protection environment; the scaled-up protection response; protection gaps; and recommendations to relevant actors.

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<sup>23</sup> *South Sudan, Cluster Response Plans 2016*, December 2015, page 23

<sup>24</sup> *Protection Situation Update: Outbreak of Conflict in Juba, 8 July - 21 July 2016*, South Sudan Protection Cluster, 25 July 2016

<sup>25</sup> *Protection Cluster Situation Update: Juba Crisis and Expansion of Conflict*, Protection Cluster, South Sudan, 16 September 2016

<sup>26</sup> *Protection Situation Update: Leer County, Southern Unity State*, Protection Cluster, South Sudan, May 2016

**GUIDANCE NOTES ON KEY PROTECTION ISSUES** – In August 2016, further to a significant increase in reported cases of sexual violence, the Protection Cluster issued a note on the connection of this to the July outbreak of fighting in Juba and the subsequent reduction in the reported cases.<sup>27</sup> The reports mainly addressed sexual violence close to one of the Protection of Civilian sites in UN compounds. The note provided guidance (including to non-protection actors) on how to understand data related to sexual violence and why a reduction in reports does not necessarily support a reduction in actual cases of sexual violence. There were also updates on the situation; reasons for Protection actors understanding that sexual violence remains a serious problem; possible reasons for reduced reporting; and recommendations to deal with this ongoing issue.

**GPC ALERT** – In July 2016, the GPC supported the Protection Cluster by issuing an alert on the situation in South Sudan due to the renewed escalation of conflict across the country. The alert set out the main protection concerns as a result of the fighting, namely; summary executions; GBV; attacks on humanitarian aid workers and lack of humanitarian access.

**PROTECTION TRENDS REPORT** – In May 2016, the Protection Cluster (together with the three Sub-clusters) prepared a report on protection trends in South Sudan, which was the seventh in a series.<sup>28</sup> The report provided a comprehensive overview of the protection context in the first quarter and trends since the crisis started in December 2013. The report provided data and analysis on forced displacement and population movements; grave violations of children's rights; GBV; and landmines and explosive remnants of war. The eighth in the series was issued in September 2016<sup>29</sup> updating on the protection situation and main threats faced by civilians in the second and third quarters of 2016. In addition to the updates on key protection concerns which civilians continued to face throughout the year, the Protection Cluster highlighted recommendations to improve the protection of IDPs.

**PROTECTION MONITORING** – This has continued to be a priority for the Protection Cluster in order to collect data for analysis and deeper understanding of protection issues and to identify persons with specific needs for referrals and the provision of assistance. More protection desks have been established in areas where IDPs are located, including inside and outside of POC sites.

## CHALLENGES

With the continued insecurity and instability in South Sudan, implementing protection activities has been an ongoing challenge in 2016. As noted by the Protection Cluster, government forces have continued to target specific ethnic minority groups making their enhanced protection both difficult and necessary. The Protection Cluster will lead further discussions about how best to address the severe protection issues faced by IDPs, including those located inside and outside POC sites, who have limited freedom of movement, are unlikely to be able to return to their places of origin and need ongoing humanitarian assistance and strengthened community support systems.

In addition to difficulties accessing certain areas, the Protection Cluster has also noted a lack of protection capacity of partners and no rule of law or presence of actors to promote and strengthen it. These are aspects that require further focus and are likely to continue to be included as priorities in the 2017 HRP.

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<sup>27</sup> *South Sudan Crisis: Sexual Violence around UN House, Understanding the Numbers and Risk Mitigation Needs*, South Sudan Protection Cluster, 21 August 2016

<sup>28</sup> *Protection Trends, South Sudan, January – March 2016*, Protection Cluster, South Sudan, May 2016

<sup>29</sup> *Protection Trends, South Sudan, April – September 2016*, Protection Cluster, South Sudan, November 2016

# UKRAINE

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The GPC participated in an inter-cluster mission to Ukraine in March 2016, which made several wide-ranging recommendations for the humanitarian response, including the location of clusters.

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## CONTEXT

Further to the conflict that started in April 2014 and intensified in early 2015, 3.1 million people were identified as in need of some form of humanitarian assistance in 2016.<sup>30</sup> Sporadic fighting continued along the 'contact line' which separates government and non-government controlled areas and over which the movement of people and goods is restricted. About 800,000 people live close to this line, and they face insecurity, limited access to services, movement restrictions and protection concerns. In addition, 2.7 million of those in need are living in non-government controlled areas. Increased restrictions on humanitarian agencies by de facto authorities in these areas have impeded the delivery of needed aid. Other consequences of the conflict and ongoing insecurity include civilian casualties and injuries; displacement (with about 1.7 million registered IDPs); challenges with IDP registration; limited freedom of movement; economic decline; limited access to services (particularly in non-government controlled areas) and humanitarian assistance; destruction of property and infrastructure; tensions between communities; and the presence of explosives remnants of war.

## HRP STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The 2016 HRP, targeting 2.5 million people, had a strong focus on protection, as shown by the strategic objectives set out below.<sup>31</sup> Insecurity characterises the main needs; landmines and explosive remnants of war; inadequate shelter; inability to work; psychological trauma; limited freedom of movement; and limited access to humanitarian assistance and services. Continued focus on vulnerable persons included a specific consideration for the elderly (60 years old and over) who make up a third of the persons in need. The HRP also stressed the importance of prioritizing and mainstreaming protection, gender and age considerations throughout all response activities.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES – UKRAINE HRP, 2016

- 1 Advocate for and respond to the protection needs of conflict-affected people with due regard to international norms and standards
- 2 Provide emergency assistance and ensure non-discriminatory access to quality essential services for populations in need
- 3 Improve the resilience of conflict-affected people, prevent further degradation of the humanitarian situation and promote recovery and social cohesion

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<sup>30</sup> *Ukraine Humanitarian Needs Overview 2016*, November 2015

<sup>31</sup> *Ukraine Humanitarian Response Plan 2016*, January 2016

## PROTECTION CLUSTER STRATEGY AND RESPONSE

The Protection Cluster (including Child Protection, GBV and Mine Action Sub-clusters) targeted 2.5 million people in need under the 2016 HRP, with a focus on reaching vulnerable people and supporting local partners. Protection objectives for 2016<sup>32</sup> were:

1. Strengthen protection for people of concern, including prevention and mitigation of rights' violations.
2. People of concern benefit from full and non-discriminatory access to quality essential services and enjoyment of their rights, with particular attention to the most vulnerable.
3. Improve social cohesion and resilience of conflict-affected people to support people of concern in their decision-making regarding solutions.

Of particular concern are the non-government controlled areas where most protection activities were suspended in July 2015. Strategies have been developed to address the protection needs of civilians in these areas. The Protection Cluster strategy noted the difference between protection issues faced in government controlled areas and non-government controlled areas. The strategy focused on persons living along the contact line; vulnerable persons living in non-government controlled areas; and the most vulnerable persons living in government-controlled areas.<sup>33</sup> The significance of the specific vulnerability faced by elderly persons is addressed by the Age and Technical Disability Working Group which comes under the Protection Cluster.

Part of the Protection Cluster strategy is to support the entire response, including the HCT and other clusters, on identifying protection risks; capacity building on protection and mainstreaming protection through all response activities.

## PROGRESS OF STRATEGY AND RESPONSE IN 2016

In line with its strategy and the protection objectives of the HRP, the Protection Cluster conducted a number of notable activities and initiatives in 2016. Some examples of these are set out below.

**NOTES ON KEY PROTECTION ISSUES** – In 2016, the Protection Cluster prepared regular notes on identified protection issues in order to provide more understanding of these issues and how to address them. For instance, in one note, the Protection Cluster explained the protection considerations for people living on the contact line (separating government-controlled areas and non-government controlled areas) and made recommendations on how to address the main issues.<sup>34</sup> The Protection Cluster provided a note and tackled the main consequences of the changes in law suspending social benefits and pensions to IDPs which has led to significant protection concerns.<sup>35</sup> In a guidance note on peacebuilding and reconciliation in Ukraine,<sup>36</sup> the Protection Cluster explained the concepts of peacebuilding and reconciliation; gave practical examples of activities that could be undertaken to achieve these concepts; and made relevant recommendations for the next steps.

**MONTHLY FACTSHEET** – Every month in 2016, the Protection Cluster issued a factsheet on updated protection concerns and highlights of the current protection response by protection actors. Data provided included figures on civilian casualties; the major cause of civilian casualties; and the number of civilians crossing the contact line. Updates on key protection concerns included information on freedom of movement; the suspension of social benefits and pensions to IDPs; unaccompanied and separated children; and GBV.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ukraine Humanitarian Response Plan 2016*, January 2016, page 21

<sup>33</sup> *Ukraine Protection Cluster Strategy*, Protection Cluster, Ukraine, 2016, page 2

<sup>34</sup> *Protection Considerations For People Living Along The Contact Line*, Protection Cluster, Ukraine, November 2016

<sup>35</sup> *Update on Suspension of Social Benefits and Pensions to IDPs*, Protection Cluster, Ukraine, June 2016

<sup>36</sup> *Guidance Note: Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in Ukraine*, Protection Cluster, Ukraine, 2016



**PROTECTION CLUSTER TOOLS** – The Protection Cluster has led the development of a range of tools to support the provision of protection services to those in need, including the examples below.

- A free legal aid directory<sup>37</sup> (in Ukrainian, Russian and English) for IDPs and conflict-affected people, mapping more than 140 organizations providing legal aid includes details about what support each provides and how to access them. This is a practical approach to providing persons in need with access to free legal services; in addition to facilitating referrals and information sharing.
- The Child Protection Sub-cluster prepared and distributed booklets outlining referral pathways for cases of unaccompanied children, disabled children, street children, child prostitution and family violence.
- The Age and Disability Technical Working Group developed guidelines for the WASH Cluster on hygiene items required by older people or people with disabilities. In addition, guidance was provided to the Shelter Cluster for its work on structural repairs and reconstruction as part of the response.

**PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING** – As part of the Protection Cluster’s commitment to support mainstreaming of protection throughout the response, training and support have been provided to other clusters. The Protection Cluster has prepared training material on protection mainstreaming and held a number of trainings for various actors in 2016.

**SUPPORT TO THE HCT AND HUMANITARIAN ACTORS** – The Protection Cluster presented on key protection challenges at the HCT retreat in 2016 in order to ensure that protection is included as a central element to the humanitarian planning process in 2017. With support and advice from the Protection Cluster, one key protection concern presented by the HCT in 2016 related to the suspension of social benefits and pensions to many IDPs. Highlighting how the policy resulted in hundreds of thousands of IDPs being left with no financial support, the Humanitarian Coordinator organized several briefings with key stakeholders where the Protection Cluster is providing more detailed information and briefing on the policy and its consequences for those affected. The Protection Cluster also prepared a note for all actors on incorporating gender and protection into the HRP planning process, with the aim of ensuring that the operational response was protection-driven.<sup>38</sup> The note includes protection mainstreaming principles with questions and a checklist for actors to ask as part of their planning process and sets out guidance on how humanitarian actors should include protection analysis and outcomes in any projects under the HRP. In addition, the note stresses the importance of all humanitarian actors being aware of protection issues and referring any protection or human rights related concerns to protection actors, particularly in areas where not all actors have regular access.

The Protection Cluster assisted with the development of cluster vulnerability criteria to ensure inclusion of protection considerations. When emergency assistance has been needed, such as when IDPs with disabilities were evicted and forced to relocate to sub-standard accommodation, the Protection Cluster has worked with other clusters to ensure appropriate assistance is provided in line with protection standards.

## CHALLENGES

Access to certain areas, particularly those areas along the contact line and non-government-controlled areas, remains challenging for humanitarian actors. Although there has been some progress with humanitarian agencies being able to access these areas, this has not been consistent and not available at all for many humanitarian actors. In addition, there are serious challenges faced by people living in these areas who are not able to access services or humanitarian assistance. Improving access to and for these affected populations will continue to be key areas of focus for 2017.

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<sup>37</sup> *Free legal aid directory for internally displaced and conflict-affected people in Ukraine*, available at [<http://goo.gl/rs5Sjw>]

<sup>38</sup> *HRP 2016: A Gender and Protection Lens For All Actors*, Protection Cluster, Ukraine

# WHOLE OF SYRIA

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In 2016, the GPC Coordinator facilitated quarterly meetings in the region of the Protection Sector in the (Whole of) Syria response. The GPC has also provided protection training in the region and continuously provides technical guidance in English and Arabic from remote.

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## CONTEXT

Since the start of the conflict in 2011, the situation in Syria has been characterized by violence; displacement (with over 6.5 million IDPs and over 5 million refugees from Syria); huge humanitarian needs; and regular violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Indiscriminate attacks on densely populated areas; the targeting of civilian infrastructure; and the imposition of sieges and blockades preventing movement of civilians, services or aid have all been violations perpetuated by parties of the conflict.<sup>39</sup> The 2016 Syria HRP, anticipating continued conflict and a further deterioration of the situation, targeted all the estimated people identified to be in need of some form of humanitarian assistance in Syria – 13.5 million.<sup>40</sup> Consequences of the conflict include civilian casualties; attacks on public infrastructure; economic decline including increasing food and fuel prices; loss of livelihoods; lack of access to services; limited humanitarian access; exploitation; psychosocial distress; forced recruitment of children into armed groups; GBV; and the presence of explosive remnants of war.

## HRP STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Key priorities in the 2016 HRP reflect the HCT's commitment to centralizing protection<sup>41</sup> and the significance of protection in the response, such as prioritization based on the severity of needs; improvement of access; protection mainstreaming and accountability to affected populations. The strategic objectives (set out below) emphasize this approach by including a strong protection focus with capacity building required for national authorities and actors and the more consistent inclusion of protection and gender in all response design and implementation.<sup>42</sup> The Protection Sector committed to providing technical guidance to all sectors to ensure that protection is central to the whole response.

Strengthening access to people in need remained a high priority for 2016 as this was identified as the main impediment to the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The Whole of Syria approach allows for humanitarian assistance to be provided to more parts of Syria from cross-border operations (mainly from Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq) as well as from within Syria.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES – SYRIA HRP, 2016

- 1 Support saving lives, alleviate suffering and increase access to humanitarian response for vulnerable people and those with specific needs
- 2 Enhance protection by promoting respect for international law, IHL, and IHRL through quality principled assistance, services and advocacy
- 3 Support the resilience of affected local communities, households, and individuals within the humanitarian response by protecting and restoring livelihoods and enabling access to essential services and rehabilitation of socio-economic infrastructure

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<sup>39</sup> Syrian Arab Republic, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2016*, October 2015

<sup>40</sup> Syrian Arab Republic, *Humanitarian Response Plan 2016*, December 2015

<sup>41</sup> *The Humanitarian Country Team Strategy for Protection, Syria*, HCT, Syria, 23 February 2015

<sup>42</sup> Syrian Arab Republic, *Humanitarian Response Plan 2016*, December 2015, pages 14 and 15

## PROTECTION SECTOR STRATEGY AND RESPONSE

With the protection objectives set out below, the Protection Sector targeted 7.2 million people in need under the 2016 HRP with the aim of expanding the protection presence and coverage of services. Protection activities would be provided through community centers and mobile and outreach activities, prioritizing the most vulnerable groups. In addition, the Protection Sector (including the Child Protection, GBV, and Mine Action AoRs respectively) focused on actions to prevent and mitigate protection risks and to support positive coping strategies within communities. Advocacy on upholding humanitarian and protection principles, including IHL and IHRL, was also included as a priority.

1. Increase the protection of affected people at risk from the consequences of the crisis through sustained advocacy, risk mitigation, and enhanced protection responses.
2. Strengthen the capacity of national community-based actors to assess, analyze and respond to protection needs.
3. Girls and boys affected by the crisis with a focus on those most at risk in prioritized locations have access to effective and quality child protection responses in line with the Child Protection Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Action.
4. Survivors of GBV have access to quality, comprehensive GBV services and measures are in place to prevent and reduce risks of GBV.
5. Reduce the impact of explosive remnants through risk education activities.

## PROGRESS OF STRATEGY AND RESPONSE IN 2016

As part of the Whole of Syria approach, the Protection Sector (including Child Protection, GBV and Mine Action) is represented in three main hubs – Amman (the Amman Protection Working Group), Damascus (the Protection and Community Services Sector) and Gaziantep (the Syria Protection Cluster). The structure is set out in a note prepared by the Protection Sector, including the focus of each part of the protection coordination structure.<sup>43</sup> With technical expertise on protection, child protection, GBV and Mine Action, the Protection Sector, from each hub as relevant, has undertaken a number of notable initiatives and activities in 2016, as highlighted by the examples set out below.

**PROTECTION FACTSHEETS** – The Protection Sector (Damascus) prepared regular factsheets with updates on the protection context, protection response activities and gaps and challenges. These factsheets provide information to protection and other humanitarian actors on the changes in the context and the relevant response to protection concerns identified.

**ADVISORY AND GUIDANCE NOTES** – The Protection Sector has prepared a number of notes to provide guidance and advice to humanitarian actors on specific protection concerns. The Protection Cluster (Turkey) prepared a guidance note relating to civilians on the move<sup>44</sup> which included the key principles concerned for actors to consider and incorporate into their relevant programming.

**PROTECTION TRAININGS** – The Protection Sector has led a number of protection trainings in order to strengthen the understanding of protection by all relevant actors and provide guidance on how to operationalise protection in practice.

- The Protection Cluster (Turkey) provided regular trainings (in English and Arabic) on the centrality of protection in humanitarian action. The training package includes an overview of protection principles, the legal framework,

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<sup>43</sup> *Whole of Syria Protection Response: Who We Are, Protection Sector, Whole of Syria, July 2016*

<sup>44</sup> *Guidance Note For Humanitarian Actors Responding To Civilians On The Move, Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey), June 2016*

the relevance of centrality of protection, how to mainstream protection and enhance accountability to affected populations.

- In July 2016, the Protection Cluster (Turkey) held a training of trainers on protection in practice. The training (in Arabic) was held in Gaziantep and focused on providing training to staff of Syrian NGOs on how to prepare and conduct protection learning activities addressing the main needs of affected communities in northern Syria and Turkey. The residential workshop was the second phase of a process which had initially involved an online learning phase and then would culminate in the implementation of trainings by participants. The training package was developed to be able to support the reality of remote management and oversight of protection activities in parts of Syria, which has continued to be relevant as access to many areas for many humanitarian actors remains challenging.

**PROTECTION MONITORING** – The Protection Cluster (Turkey) has a task force on protection monitoring in order to have a consistent approach to protection monitoring. Protection monitoring reports on key protection issues and areas were produced in 2016, such as the report on the protection situation in East Aleppo City while it was besieged.<sup>45</sup> Protection concerns detailed included ongoing aerial bombardment; destruction of property; displacement; loss of documentation; explosive hazards; freedom of movement; access to services and humanitarian aid; and GBV.

**PROTECTION TOOLS** – The Protection Sector has prepared various tools to support the provision of protection services, referrals and understanding of issues by relevant actors. Some examples of these are listed below.

- Snapshot of protection and community services – this provided a comprehensive overview of where protection services are provided in areas covered by the Protection Sector in Damascus, as well as the type of services provided and by which organization;
- The Amman Protection Working Group developed a basic minimum package for protection, child protection and GBV for use by protection partners delivering protection services from the Amman hub;
- Whole of Syria Protection Sector Response – this provided an overview of the whole protection response, bringing together activities from each hub and showing the reach of the Protection Sector as a whole.

**GPC ALERTS** – In November, the GPC, with the support of the Protection Sector issued an alert regarding the worsening protection situation in the besieged areas of Aleppo, calling for immediate action and reminding all parties to the conflict of their obligations to protect civilians.

**GPC SUPPORT ON CASH AND PROTECTION** – In November 2016, the Protection Cluster held a training on Protection in Cash-based Interventions (CBIs), in English with core training materials translated into Arabic. The training targeted mainly Protection Cluster members but also included program staff with expertise in CBIs. It aimed to familiarize practitioners with the “Guide for Protection in Cash-based Interventions (CBIs) and to provide practical instructions for analyzing and monitoring protection risks and benefits in CBIs. It enhanced participants’ decision-making capacities for modality choice and design with regards to mainstreaming protection in CBIs and operationalizing CBIs for protection outcomes.

The training was followed by a workshop aimed at gathering of good practices and lessons learned on protection in Cash Based Interventions (CBIs): because of the difficult context, mainly CBIs responding to basic needs are currently implemented, with a few very small and relatively simple protection programs making use of CBIs, together with other protection activities, to achieve protection outcomes. Regarding protection mainstreaming in CBIs, the workshop revealed the existence of good practices in the difficult context of Northern Syria. More efforts will need to be done to ensure the adoption of these practices by all CBI actors planning to implement programs in Northern Syria, using the newly disseminated guidelines on protection in CBIs.

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<sup>45</sup> *Monitoring of the Protection Situation in Besieged East Aleppo City*, Protection Cluster (Turkey), November 2016

# YEMEN

## CONTEXT

Of the 21.2 million people in need identified after almost a year of conflict exacerbated an existing humanitarian crisis in Yemen, the 2016 HRP targeted 13.6 million people in need.<sup>46</sup> Many protection concerns are based on violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties, leading to ongoing violations, some of which may amount to war crimes.<sup>47</sup> Consequences of the ongoing conflict include displacement (with over 2 million IDPs); civilian casualties; destruction of public infrastructure; loss of livelihoods; limited freedom of movement; lack of services; separated families; forced recruitment of children into armed groups; and GBV. The humanitarian community has had limited access to many areas of the country, and continued restrictions on commercial goods entering and being transported throughout the country have further limited access of those in need to many necessary goods and services.<sup>48</sup> Limited service provision has also led to tensions between affected populations as host communities, and IDPs struggle to cope.

## HRP STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The 2016 HRP's strategic focus was on prioritizing direct, life-saving assistance or protection for the most vulnerable. Reflecting the goal of having a protective response, the HRP strategic objectives, set out below, focused on having protection and gender as core elements within all clusters. In the HRP, each cluster included a section on its planned efforts to mainstream protection and gender into its response activities. In addition, the HRP included a focus on ensuring accountability to affected populations as a key part of the response. As highlighted in the HCT Protection Strategy, central aspects of protection from the HRP included prioritizing the most vulnerable for assistance; promoting and advocating for meaningful and equitable access for all; and supporting positive coping strategies.<sup>49</sup> Joint programming across clusters is highlighted as a way of having a more holistic approach to responding appropriately. One example of this is the development of an IDP Strategy by the HCT, which includes an agreed minimum assistance package for IDPs and sets out a methodology to prepare localized cross-cluster action plans.<sup>50</sup>

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES – YEMEN HRP, 2016

- 1 Save lives, prioritizing the most vulnerable
- 2 Protect civilians and consider protection across the response
- 3 Promote equitable access for women, girls, boys and men
- 4 Support resilience and sustainable recovery

<sup>46</sup> *Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2016*, January 2016. In August 2016, this figure was revised to 12.6 million people targeted as part of the revised 2016 HRP.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, page 8

<sup>48</sup> *Centrality of Protection, Protection Strategy 2016 – 2017, Humanitarian Country Team, Yemen*, June 2016, page 2

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>50</sup> *Strategy for IDP Response in Yemen*, Humanitarian Country Team, Yemen, 30 March 2016

## PROTECTION CLUSTER STRATEGY AND RESPONSE

The Protection Cluster targeted 5.6 million people in the 2016 HRP with the Child Protection and GBV Sub-clusters having separate targets respectively. The HRP, HCT Protection Strategy and Protection Cluster strategy<sup>51</sup> each reflect common priorities which aim to have protection as central to the entire response. The HCT Protection Strategy provides a practical approach to having an overall joined-up approach with all clusters taking responsibility for a protective response. The Protection Cluster does have a support role in the process which is important to ensure that technical expertise is provided to all relevant actors. The Protection Cluster strategy objectives (set out below) for 2015 – 2016 were further prioritised in a Protection Cluster workplan for 2016, which was regularly reviewed and updated. Priorities from the workplan were (1) protection data collection; (2) mapping of services and referral pathways; and (3) supporting all clusters to mainstream protection.

Protection Cluster strategic objectives for 2015 – 2016, which are reflected in the HRP, were identified as:

1. Systematic identification and analysis of protection risks and rights violations;
2. Delivery of direct response to individuals with protection needs;
3. Building the capacity and awareness of affected communities to enhance individual and community coping mechanisms;
4. Outreach to and communication with affected communities to ensure effective participation and accountability in response; and
5. Preparation of reports and analysis of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law for the purpose of advocacy for change.

## PROGRESS OF STRATEGY AND RESPONSE IN 2016

In 2016, the Protection Cluster progressed with some activities and initiatives in line with the Protection Cluster strategy and workplan. Some examples of these are set out below.

**PROTECTION TOOLS** – The Protection Cluster prepared various tools for use by Cluster members and other clusters.

- Mapping of protection services – The Protection Cluster led a comprehensive exercise with all protection partners to map the services available across Yemen. An initial version of this mapping was completed and shared with protection partners with the intention of using it for analysis of potential gaps in protection services and the consolidation of referral pathways for all actors.
- Protection monitoring tools – The Protection Cluster, with the support of UNHCR and partners prepared protection monitoring tools. These are intended to monitor protection issues at the household level as well as identify specific vulnerable persons in need of protection assistance. UNHCR and its implementing partners currently use the tools, and other partners were able to request the tools and training to use them in order to use them.

**TASK FORCE ON POPULATION MOVEMENT (TFPM)** – As a technical working group under the Protection Cluster, the TFPM (co-led by UNHCR and IOM) collects indicative data about displacement throughout Yemen. In 2016, through key informant interviews, the TFPM provided information on the numbers of IDPs, returnees, areas of origin, areas of displacement and priority needs. This information has been regularly collected (usually on a monthly basis) reviewed by a technical group and then an advisory group before being finally presented to the HCT for endorsement. The endorsed report was then shared publicly with recommendations made to relevant clusters or actors to follow up on specific issues identified as part of the process.

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<sup>51</sup> Including the Child Protection Sub-cluster strategy and the GBV Sub-Cluster strategy which are set out separately in the HRP and by each Sub-cluster.

**PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING** – As a focus of the Protection Cluster, protection mainstreaming support was provided to clusters. The Protection Cluster developed materials, based on the GPC protection mainstreaming training manual with relevant examples and case studies for Yemen. Initial presentations were made to each cluster, followed by the selection of protection mainstreaming focal points for each cluster who then attended a two-day workshop on protection mainstreaming in practice. Follow-up from the workshop included the development of a protection mainstreaming action plan for each cluster, which the Protection Cluster would support as required. Various protection mainstreaming tools, such as checklists and guidance on protection mainstreaming at all stages of the project cycle were shared with cluster focal points for use by each cluster.

**PROTECTION CLUSTER UPDATES** – The Protection Cluster prepared updates on initiatives and activities conducted by members, including information on recent protection assessments, protection trends and other relevant updates.

## CHALLENGES

Overall funding of the 2016 HRP was low, with the Protection Sector receiving only 38% of its requested funding as of December 2016.<sup>52</sup> This made it difficult for protection partners to increase and strengthen presence and availability of protection services across the country.

Access constraints have been ongoing throughout 2016 meaning that humanitarian actors cannot access affected populations in many areas, mainly due to insecurity, conflict and operational challenges. These challenges include bureaucratic impediments imposed by all parties to the conflict often preventing the movement of humanitarian staff as well as restricting freedom of movement for affected populations who cannot access services or humanitarian assistance. The sensitive nature of protection work has meant specific challenges conducting protection activities (including GBV and child protection activities) throughout Yemen. While some progress has been made with the provision of more mobile services and remote management of local actors, these initiatives will need to be increased and strengthened.

Connected to lack of funding and access constraints, there remain a limited capacity and number of protection partners able to deliver comprehensive protection services in many parts of Yemen. As the lack of access is likely to continue, building and developing the protection capacity of protection and other humanitarian actors, especially local actors, will continue to be a priority in 2017.

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<sup>52</sup> This includes the Protection Cluster, Child Protection Sub-cluster and GBV Sub-cluster and the information is available from OCHA Yemen at [<http://www.unocha.org/yemen>]

# CONCLUSION ON THE COUNTRY CASE STUDIES



From the range of Protection Clusters included in this overview, there are various examples of how each Protection Cluster has worked to achieve its objectives in 2016, as well as some of the challenges faced by each of them. As reflected in each HRP reviewed, each country has its own specific, frequently complex, context. Nevertheless, each Protection Cluster, as supported by the GPC, mostly takes a similar approach to understanding the context and, based on this, developing a realistic and appropriate response. This extends to overcoming obstacles since most of the countries face similar challenges, namely access constraints, lack of funding or limited overall protection capacity. With protection recognized as being central to all humanitarian operations, each Protection Cluster has a significant role and responsibility, which is frequently reflected in the activities and initiatives taken, particularly to support the HCT, the HC, and other clusters. Continuing to share experiences, find common methodologies and best practices to strengthen this approach will provide humanitarian operations with the necessary support to ensure that a protective response is implemented, achieving overall identified protection outcomes based on sound analysis of context and needs.

Some lessons and best practices have been identified during this overview, which are set out below. As shown by their prevalence in the countries included, these are useful for all Protection Clusters and are transferable and adaptable to each context. While none of these are especially new, they are reminders of how important it is to have a solid protection framework within which efforts to strengthen the protection response are consistently taken.

## EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

**ADVISORY AND GUIDANCE NOTES** – preparing notes on key protection issues, setting out the context clearly and providing operational recommendations for relevant actors is a useful way to keep humanitarian actors updated on the changing protection situation; the consequences on affected populations; as well as provide practical ways to address these together. Examples include notes which provide regular updates and analysis on certain protection issues (such as the monthly notes in Ukraine and Nigeria); notes which set out critical issues that need an immediate response (such as the critical protection issues notes in Iraq); or notes that set out specific guidance to address an issue (such as the principled engagement framework in Iraq or the addressing sexual violence in South Sudan). It is important to ensure that these notes are presented in all relevant meetings and include operational steps on how to address each identified issue. The Protection Cluster should provide these in a way that reflects that the HCT is likely to take a more strategic approach and the inter-cluster mechanism a more operational approach.



**ONGOING SUPPORT TO HUMANITARIAN ACTORS** – ongoing support by the Protection Cluster to all humanitarian actors is one of its most important functions. This support can be provided in several ways, such as preparing tools (such as notes or checklists), conducting trainings, strengthening protection mainstreaming, or including protection experts in overseeing pooled fund mechanisms. Finding ways to provide this support in a consistent, timely and practical manner is essential. Examples include providing recommendations and support to each cluster on how to incorporate protection into the HRP planning (as done in Nigeria and Ukraine); or the Protection Cluster’s support on how to address protection outcomes in each cluster response plan in Iraq. Having protection included as a standing agenda item at HCT and inter-cluster meetings is useful for actors to understand their collective responsibility for protection and helps to ensure that protection continues to be a thread which holds together the understanding, planning, and implementation of the response. Other support includes appointing protection focal points for each cluster or providing protection tools for use by all clusters (such as mapping of protection services, systematic referral pathways or checklists on how to mainstream protection practically).

**TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS** – establishing groups for specific concerns helps to focus attention and effort in a timely manner. Examples include the protection monitoring taskforce for the Syria response or the Age and Disability Technical Working Group in Ukraine. Each of these has identified issues that need specific coordination and joint efforts within the Protection Cluster and to support other clusters.

**TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS** – regularly held, these are an opportunity for the Protection Cluster to strengthen understanding, familiarity and practical knowledge of how to contribute to protection outcomes for all actors, including protection partners, other clusters, authorities, and communities. Also important is holding sessions in relevant languages (such as the Arabic training held for Syrian humanitarian actors and Russian/Ukrainian training in Ukraine) and presenting in non-technical language. In addition, providing practical approaches and support at an operational level is more inclusive and helps humanitarian actors to understand how protection is already part of their work and how they can strengthen it holistically.

**SUPPORT FROM THE GPC** – as noted above, ongoing support from the GPC is important for each Protection Cluster. This support can be technical or operational and provide a broader platform for specific issues, as seen with the GPC alerts issued for Syria and Iraq. Efforts were taken by the GPC to support Protection Clusters from different countries to interact and support each other more systematically, such as the establishment of the community of practice, have also seen significant progress during 2016.

# GPC ACTIONS TO PROMOTE THE CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION IN 2016



The [Global Protection Cluster](#) (GPC) was established in the context of the humanitarian reform in 2005 with UNHCR as the Lead Agency. It is a network of UN agencies, NGOs and international organizations working on protection in conflict and disaster settings, including in [child protection](#), [gender-based violence](#), [housing, land and property](#) and [mine action](#). The work of the GPC is defined by its vision: “All people affected or threatened by a humanitarian crisis have their rights fully respected in accordance with international law and their protection assured by relevant and timely action through all phases of the crisis and beyond”.

Within the overall humanitarian response architecture, the GPC works to improve the predictability, leadership, effectiveness and accountability of response to ensure that protection is central to humanitarian action. The protection of the rights of people in conflict and disaster settings requires a broad range of action by a wide variety of duty-bearers, so the GPC also acts as a bridge between humanitarians and others, including development, political, peace-keeping and other relevant actors.

The GPC uses the IASC definition of protection which states that protection is “all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee laws).” That means protection is an objective, a legal responsibility and a multi-sector activity to (1) prevent or stop violations of rights, (2) ensure a remedy to violations- including the delivery of life-saving goods and services- and (3) promote respect for rights and the rule of law and to create early warning systems.

## THE INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE ADOPTS A POLICY ON PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

In 2016, the Global Protection Cluster delivered a draft [Policy on Protection to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee](#) (IASC), which adopted it on 5 October 2016. It is the first time the IASC has adopted such a comprehensive policy. The Policy seeks to reinforce complementary roles, mandates, and expertise of all relevant actors. Specifically, the policy emphasizes an IASC commitment to prioritize protection and contribute to collective protection outcomes, including through the development of an HCT protection strategy to address the most critical and urgent risks and violations. It also underlines the need to implement this commitment in all aspects of humanitarian action and across the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. As such, the collective IASC roles and responsibilities in placing protection at the centre of humanitarian action are explained, with due consideration for mandates and expertise and in line with humanitarian principles.

## THE EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR ENDORSES THE GPC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2016-19

In an extensive [consultation](#) on-line, with staff in the field and at headquarters the GPC developed a new strategy to reflect the evolution of the humanitarian response system highlighted by the IASC Statement on the Centrality of Protection, Human Rights Up Front and the Transformative Agenda; the new strategy adapts the GPC's working methods to respond to multiple simultaneous crises and protracted situations and the recommendations of an independent Whole of System Review of Protection in 2015 as well as the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peacekeeping Operations and other studies.

The new [Strategic Framework](#), covering 2016-19, builds on the implementation of the existing framework but is more outward looking, reflecting the views and expectations of the humanitarian community at large, the field, partners in the Global South and stakeholders like DPKO, DPA, states, IASC, global clusters and others. The Framework also took into account the consultations on the World Humanitarian Summit. More specifically, the GPC Strategic Framework adopts the two following strategic objectives:

- A Protection is central to humanitarian action**
- B Protection response is timely, of high quality and relevant**

Guided by the above-mentioned strategic objectives, the GPC prioritises support to field colleagues in developing [Humanitarian Country Team \(HCT\) protection strategies](#), to act as a programming framework, and the work of protection clusters in critical, large-scale emergencies and countries with integrated missions. The GPC is also ready to support the development of strategies and protection coordination mechanisms and country teams in all situations, including in preparedness and in working with the Solutions Alliance in finding solutions to displacement.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator endorsed the Strategic Framework in a statement available [on-line](#).

## WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT, 21-22 MAY 2016 IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY

The scale of internal displacement today is unmatched since the Second World War, and it outstrips the rate of the world population's growth since measurements of internal displacement began in the early 90's. There has been an upward trend in displacement due to conflict and violence since 2011, and the figure now stands at 40.8m IDPs. Disasters have currently displaced around 19.2 million people in 113 countries. In addition, the scale of displacement caused by development is believed to be even greater than conflict and natural disaster displacement, and operations already have to deal with development-induced displacement as part of complex solutions responses (e.g. South-East Myanmar).

The Secretary-General's report for the World Humanitarian Summit ([One Humanity, Shared Responsibility](#)) recognizes that "displacement is not only a humanitarian challenge but a complex political and developmental one". This is visible in the multiple causes of displacement, which include a growing lack of respect for international humanitarian law (Syria, Yemen), transnational criminal networks (Central America), environmental degradation (Philippines, Darfur), climate change (Lake Chad, Vanuatu), development (Myanmar, India), and disease outbreaks (Liberia, Sierra Leone). The link between internal displacement and its root causes and external displacement is often over-looked, particularly in operational terms. An example of this displacement continuum is visible in the drought in Ethiopia, which is causing migration to urban areas and internal displacement, which is in turn leading to external migration and to the use of smuggling and trafficking networks across the Arabian Peninsula and Europe. While the drivers and triggers of internal displacement are not inherently a humanitarian problem, the humanitarian system has been challenged to act faster and more effectively. Importantly, effectiveness is more and more understood in terms of protecting the human rights of crisis-affected people (see for example, [Report of the Secretary-General's internal review panel on UN action in Sri Lanka](#)).

The lack of solutions for protracted displacement is particularly noteworthy where, on average, the duration of internal displacement is 17 years (Brookings-LSE Project on Displacement, [Ten years after humanitarian reform: How have IDPs fared?](#)). For this reason, three quarters of humanitarian funding in the last decade has gone to the same 20 countries, while six of the largest recipients have had humanitarian appeals for ten consecutive years. Defining in operational terms the end of displacement and disengagement is a recurrent issue. A WHS target for reducing internal displacement by at least 50 percent by 2030 has the potential of generating momentum if the necessary protection and policy safeguards are respected.

At the WHS, the GPC hosted a [side event](#) on protection on the front-line, with a panel including Dr Sima Simar of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and Secretary-General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Jan Egeland, and opened a “protection village” to showcase the work of the GPC’s partners and to highlight that if current trends continue, the percentage of displaced persons as a proportion of the world’s population will continue to increase. Moreover, if the SDGs are not met by 2030, the cost of humanitarian assistance will have risen to \$50 billion and 62 percent of the world’s poor could be living in fragile and conflict-affected states, a clear warning that humanitarian needs could spiral even higher than today.

## COHERENCE OF EFFORT

In light of their thematic expertise, the agencies designated as focal point agencies for specific Areas of Responsibility (AORs) within the GPC are:

- Child Protection (UNICEF);
- Gender-Based Violence (UNFPA);
- Land, Housing, and Property (NRC);
- Mine Action (UNMAS).

The AORs form part of the Programming Reference Group of the GPC and also have a unique forum –monthly breakfasts- to discuss how to ensure coherence of approach in protection programming in the field. Additionally, the GPC is part of the AORs’ strategic advisory groups.

Guidelines on collaboration on protection analysis, protection mainstreaming, provision of protection advice and support to the HCTs were issued to the field from the GPC and the AORs in the form of HCT Protection Strategy Guidance, a GPC Checklist on Protection and Accountability, Protection Information Management training materials, an update of the Protection in Practice training modules, GPC Communication Package, Gender Guidelines and the AOR Tip-Sheets on Cash and Protection (available at [www.globalprotectioncluster.org](http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org)).

GPC field missions regularly include partners from the AORs, including a joint technical mission to Nigeria. At the field level, sub-clusters are part of the Protection Cluster SAG at field level, ensuring that a strong country protection strategy is developed by all. They also work jointly on the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC).

## CASH AND PROTECTION

Cash-based interventions (CBIs) are a program delivery modality that has been increasingly used by humanitarian actors to deliver assistance and are seen in some contexts to help deliver greater choice and empowerment to affected people and to strengthen local markets when contrasted with in-kind assistance. Following the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016, humanitarian organizations committed to increase in the coming years the use of CBIs when delivering assistance to affected populations. In order to ensure that programmes using CBIs are protection-informed, and that field clusters make use of CBIs in their programming in an age, gender and diversity sensitive manner, the GPC requested a deployment from the Norwegian Refugee Council’s CashCap roster to travel to Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and northern Syria to support field clusters on protection in CBIs through trainings, gathering of good practices and lessons learned on

protection mainstreaming in CBIs, protection integration and the use of CBIs in protection programs, as well as support for planning and increased integration of protection aspects of CBIs in the humanitarian program cycle.

The resulting lessons learned show that CBIs can help to reduce risks of negative coping mechanisms, such as child labor, transactional sex, and early marriage. On the other hand, lessons learned indicate that the risks that do arise as a consequence of implementing CBIs are usually related to program design, rather than being inherent to the use of cash. Good program design requires protection risk and benefit analyses to prevent and mitigate risks, and identify opportunities for CBI to support protection.

## PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING

The 2016 work-plan has complete information on the progress and achievements of the GPC Task Team on Protection Mainstreaming (see [online](#)). In 2016, the Task Team continued its efforts to better mainstream protection into humanitarian action, by developing a comprehensive Protection Mainstreaming Toolkit for Design, Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation (hereafter referred to as “Toolkit”). The Toolkit is designed by OCHA, UNICEF, International Rescue Committee, Handicap International, NRC, World Vision, and CHS Alliance and Sphere as a companion to the GPC Training Package. While the GPC training package provides the starting point for understanding the concept and key principles of protection mainstreaming, the toolkit is designed to practically assist practitioners to mainstream protection at a program or project level as well as at a strategic and coordination level.

The toolkit targets coordination bodies and donors by providing the tools and necessary advice to mainstream protection into their strategies and throughout the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC). It also provides individual agencies with the concrete tools to mainstream protection into their organizational procedures and programs. The toolkit also allows practitioners to monitor and evaluate the process and the impact of having protection mainstreaming on the affected population.

In August 2016, the Task Team developed a Protection Mainstreaming Guidance App available for download through the Google Play and iTunes App Stores. The Protection Mainstreaming Guidance App is based on the Global Protection Cluster Protection Mainstreaming Training Package and provides a solution to streamline protection mainstreaming guidance to specific project/program. The App is currently being updated to fix technical bugs and add multi-language support for English, French, and Arabic as well as the possibility to share projects and export them into Excel for use on a computer.

## PROTECTION OF THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

On 29 June 2016, the Global Protection Cluster convened a panel of WHO, MSF, ICRC, Johns Hopkins University and UNRWA at an ECOSOC side event in New York to discuss what can be done to uphold International Humanitarian Law, particularly to protect access to health services. The meeting was attended by the Permanent Missions of Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States and a wide range of UN agencies, NGOs, Red Cross and academic institutions.

Notwithstanding the bleak picture of attacks on health access in current conflicts the panel noted some positive developments and suggested some steps forward. First, the unanimous adoption of Security Council Resolution 22/86 sends a strong message and is very helpful. Second, there is a new consciousness about the wrongfulness of attacks on health care facilities. Third, tremendous innovative measures to reduce and mitigate attacks on health care have been taken, including moving hospitals under ground, modifying the types of interventions and negotiating access. Fourth, there are many sources of authority in the system and while not all are being used- for example, the provision in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) for fact-finding enquiries- some are being used in effective ways. With respect to Gaza, the UN Secretary-General used his powers to set up a board of enquiry and he also created a special investigative commission on Syria. The Special Representative on Children in Armed Conflict can also undertake enquiries. Finally, it was noted that armed forces can be persuaded to change their tactics and adopt training in IHL, particularly in situations of counter-insurgency.

The panel noted that it is not easy to collect facts in conflict situations and there was a suggestion that the fact-finding process should be opened up. The panel made a number of concrete proposals to safeguard health access in conflict:

1. There must be dialogue with all belligerents as a fundamental operational principle. Dialogue with anti-government elements must not be criminalised because it saves lives.
2. The treatment of all people, whoever they are, must be respected and the provision of health services should never be labelled a crime.
3. The good momentum created by the World Humanitarian Summit needs to be followed by concrete discussions about IHL and counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations.
4. Prevention and mitigation of attacks and the identification of attacks, including through the use of new technology and innovation, needs to be emphasised.
5. Data on attacks needs to be consolidated, to better understand trends and incidents.
6. The existing fact-finding mechanisms need to be used better- this is not about justice and punishment but about finding out what happened and why.
7. Member states should hold each other accountable and the political cost of attacks on health facilities and personnel needs to be raised.
8. There needs to be more advocacy on this issue, including on related questions such as the sale of arms to belligerents.

The GPC's engagement with the health sector is not limited to advocacy in respect to the safety of health workers and facilities. At the operational level;

- In October 2016, the GPC Operations Cell participated in the MHPSS Reference Group Annual meeting, to ensure closer engagement, cooperation, and coordination on MHPSS issues. One of the main outcomes of the meeting was the need to enhance information sharing and collaboration between the GPC Operations Cell, the Health Global Cluster, and UNHCR (Health) to better address MHPSS issues emerging from the field and ensure their integration in cluster responses.
- The GPC Operations Cell has been closely engaged with the MHPSS coordinator and the Nigeria protection working on MHPSS coordination structures and their work with the protection working group in the north-east.

# INNOVATION



The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) has placed more emphasis on the role of national and local actors, including communities themselves, as duty-bearers. Yet innovative approaches in protection work, in relation to the development and transmission of standards, in capacity development and to make protection more broadly understood, are lacking. Using the momentum of the WHS, the Global Protection Cluster has thus partnered with UNHCR Innovation to explore whether innovation processes could help define the challenges associated with localizing protection and identify possible solutions.

## SCOPING STUDY

As a first step, the GPC is undertaking a scoping study structured around three phases—inception, learning and analysis, and proposition building and recommendations—to help us learn, thereby posing essential questions:

- **What are some key challenges being experienced in the delivery of protection?** This question invites us to consider challenges from two perspectives: from that of the Global Protection Cluster, and the perspective afforded by the wider protection landscape (both at Headquarters and at the field level).
- **What is the role of innovation in addressing (these) protection needs more effectively?** In other words, what kinds of innovation practices might be useful for addressing GPC's needs and challenges in meeting Protection gaps?
- **Is there a role for a lab in enabling such innovation?** Innovation "labs" are not the only way to operationalize an innovation strategy. Therefore, the GPC will consider a range of existing approaches to innovation management to determine how the GPC can best leverage innovation practices to improve its effectiveness and contribute to addressing wider protection gaps.

If there are innovation practices suited to addressing the challenges and needs above, the GPC might then consider what functions a Lab would need to serve in order to support those practices; the role a Protection Lab might play, and for whom; and the core services and programmes it would need to offer and perform in order to play this role effectively. By beginning to map out the basic elements of a Protection-oriented Innovation Lab, the GPC hopes to assess whether a Lab is a viable and effective way to manage innovation for meeting protection needs.

[\[GPC Scoping Study on Protection Lab flyer\]](#)

## GPC COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The Community of Practice, guided by the [GPC Strategic Framework 2016-2019](#), arose out of the field's desire to share ideas, existing approaches and techniques, learn about practices and approaches that worked (or not worked), and to share knowledge about this work. It has a focus on engagement and aims to bring together a pool of protection cluster coordinators, co-facilitators, as well as other protection actors in the field in order to build a more inclusive and diverse community that shares practices and discusses innovative ways to make protection action more effective;

Following a period of research and preparations, the Community of Practice became operational as a formal network in June 2016. A [How to Use Guide](#) and [Working Code](#) were developed and widely distributed to help registered members navigate the platform and utilize the various facilities it offers. The platform currently functions as a network for sharing and disseminating knowledge on protection, exchange of experiences, guidance and tools. In doing so, it aims to foster a culture of innovation and information sharing;

- To ensure coherence, the platform dedicates space to the GPC Areas of Responsibility (AoRs) and task teams.
- Over the reporting period, the Community of Practice has strengthened its membership to 350 registered members, from the field and headquarters. The Community of Practice has an average of 127 visitors per month, and a total of 29 active conversations.
- Main themes discussed included Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) protection strategies, humanitarian evacuations, protection monitoring and analysis tools, referral mechanisms, protection mainstreaming, cash-based interventions, and protection information management.
- A considerable number of guidance notes, strategy documents, training material and field approaches were exchanged by field protection clusters around some of these themes. For example:
  - ▶ the Yemen Protection Cluster shared its approach regarding protection mainstreaming including protection mainstreaming training material it developed and case studies relevant to the Yemen context.
  - ▶ the Syria Protection Cluster (Gaziantep) shared guidance notes related to humanitarian evacuations, as well as the activities it carries out to ensure that protection is central to humanitarian action such as rolling out ToTs on protection to local partners working inside Syria, arranging short monthly trainings for all clusters on protection as an outcome of humanitarian action, and the development of training material in Arabic for wide dissemination to protection and non-protection actors.
  - ▶ the Iraq protection cluster gave insights on protection monitoring and how assigning protection focal points to work with other clusters helped ensure protection considerations are included in cross-cutting issues.
  - ▶ based on a request from the DRC protection cluster on the CoP, the Pakistan and oPt Protection Clusters shared their experience and challenges they faced in setting up referral mechanisms.
  - ▶ the Nigeria protection working group and Ukraine Protection Cluster shared their recommendations on how to mainstream protection in the Humanitarian Program Cycle.
  - ▶ the Iraq, oPt, and Yemen field protection clusters shared their HCT protection strategies as well as insights on how to ensure that protection informs the overall humanitarian response.
  - ▶ based on the request of the South Sudan protection cluster, the Iraq field protection cluster shared guidance on their stakeholder mapping exercise.
  - ▶ based on a request made by the Yemen protection cluster, the Afghanistan protection cluster provided insights and recommendations on GBV and tribal justice mechanisms.
  - ▶ a group comprising local partners working on protection inside Syria was established and is being moderated by the UNHCR Arabic speaking Training Officer based in Gaziantep. The group discusses protection issues, challenges, and receives technical guidance from the training officer when rolling out protection trainings inside Syria.

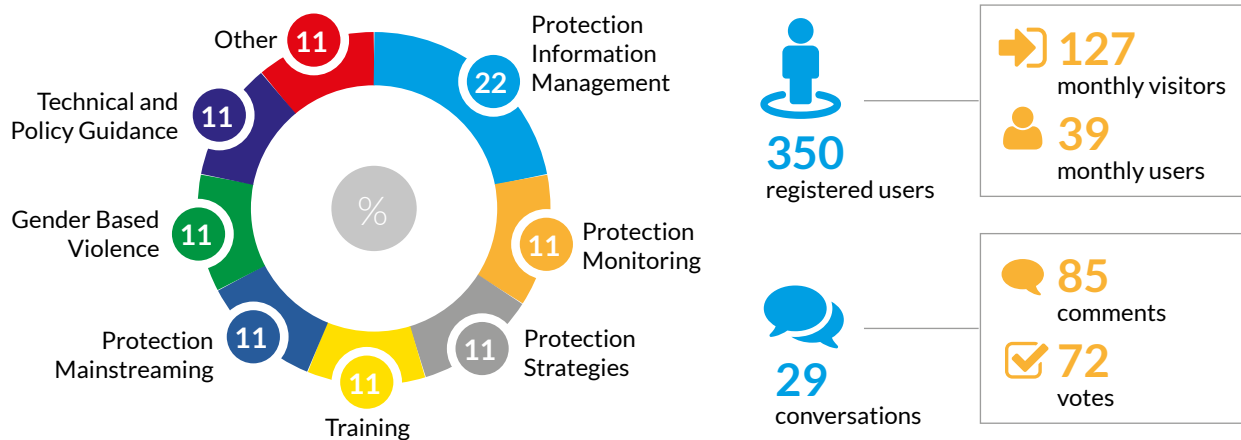
To ensure efficient and effective management of information traffic on the platform, regular and customized dashboards are run on a regular basis. The latest dashboard that displays user statistics themes discussed and level of engagement is available [here](#).

## PROTECTION CHALLENGE

The GPC Operations Cell in partnership with UNHCR Innovation has launched a protection challenge that focuses on convening the collective talents of practitioners within and across traditional and non-traditional actors. Building on the GPC Strategic Framework 2016-2019 objective of engaging with a wide variety of actors and potential new partners, the protection challenge will be open to a wider community to enable collaborative problem solving and idea generation. It is a space, where a wider online community, contributes ideas, solutions, and discussion to a common problem. The protection challenge mapping matrix developed during the GPC Retreat 2016, will set the theme for the 2017 protection challenge.



## Community of Practice Website



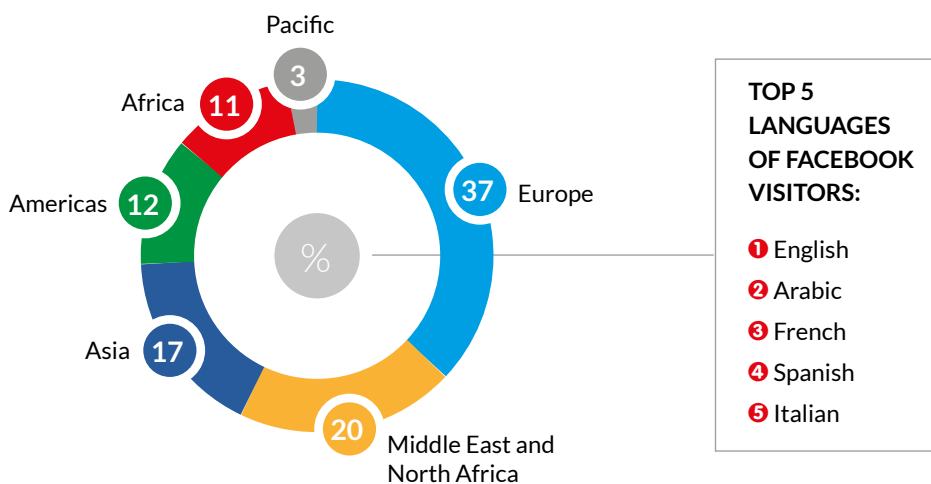
### TOP 3 TOPICS DISCUSSED:

- 1 I am looking for examples of protection tools that are useful in emergency contexts
- 2 I am looking for examples and lessons learnt on humanitarian evacuations
- 3 How to put together an effective and comprehensive HTC protection strategy?

## GPC Website Users



## Social Media Engagement



# PARTNERSHIPS IN PROTECTION



As a collaborative endeavour, the GPC understands that placing protection at the centre of humanitarian response requires partnership with a wide range of stakeholders. Some of those partnerships are highlighted here but there are many others. Of critical importance is to increase the participation of local and national agencies in the GPC and more generally in protection: <http://www.fmreview.org/community-protection.html>. The GPC is making progress in this area through the participation of national NGOs in its Technical Working Group and field clusters are more inclusive of national and local partners.

## PARTNERSHIPS IN PROTECTION PROGRAMMING

The [Protection Programme Reference Group](#) (PPRG) gives a voice to the collective that makes up the GPC and represents one of its governance components. The PPRG is responsible for ensuring coherence of approach between the constituent parts of the GPC and building strategies that advance the centrality of protection through protection programming and mainstreaming in the field. It is composed of agencies who lead Areas of Responsibility, i.e. UNICEF, UNFPA, the UN Mine Action Service and the Norwegian Refugee Council, and leads of Task Teams, i.e. InterAction, UNHCR, International Rescue Committee, International Development Law Organisation and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

## OCHA AND INTER-CLUSTER RELATIONSHIPS

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs convenes the Global Clusters Coordination Group in Geneva, working to strengthen the functioning of inter-cluster coordination groups in the field, particularly on delivering the response coherently, linking with the HCT for strategic decisions, developing collective situation analysis, prioritizing and mobilizing resources together and advocating on key protection issues. A properly functioning ICCG at the country level is an important mechanism for ensuring the centrality of protection.

## NORWAY

The GPC acknowledges and welcomes Norway's strong support of peace, of multilateralism and of protection. In 2016, the GPC also engaged with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Mission in Geneva, as chair of the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group.

## NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

Norwegian Refugee Council is an independent humanitarian organization that has followed a distinctive, practical and pragmatic approach to operational protection through its core competencies. The GPC's partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council is extensive and has many levels:

- NRC leads the GPC Area of Responsibility on Housing, Land and Property;
- NRC deploys staff to the GPC through ProCap (who conducted missions to Ethiopia, Niger and Haiti in 2016) and CashCap (who conducted missions to Afghanistan, DRC, CAR and northern Syria); and
- NRC partners in development of policy and advocacy at the global level (e.g. the IASC Protection Policy).

At the field level, NRC is co-coordinating protection clusters/sector working groups in several of the most serious current emergencies – South Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan and CAR and is engaged in other field clusters/sector working groups – Iraq, Nigeria. The NRC also leads or co-leads sub-clusters or working groups on Housing, Land and Property. The NRC Information, Counselling and Legal Aid programmes are practical, casework programmes that produce tangible protection results for large numbers of people.

## **FINANCIAL AND STRATEGIC SUPPORT: THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND ECHO**

The United States provides crucial financial support to the GPC and to field clusters as well as strategic and operational advice through the GPC Task Team on Donor Dialogue, field missions with the GPC and the Annual Field Clusters Retreat in Geneva. As part of its strategic relationship with UNHCR the USG also reviews country operations; in 2016, that review reported that “UNHCR clusters are receiving strong support and guidance from Headquarters, most notably from the Global Protection Cluster (GPC)” and commended the GPC for its outreach and support to field missions

The European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office has been funding work of the GPC for several years through its Emergency Response Capacity facility, coming to a close in 2016. ECHO has adopted a new protection policy, which is a useful tool in promoting the centrality of protection in humanitarian response. While the ECHO funding has supported several work-streams of the GPC, here we highlight just one, focused on the development of IDP law and policy.

### **THE GPC TASK TEAM ON LAW AND POLICY**

The Global Protection Cluster established a Task Team on Law and Policy in the latter half of 2015 that brings together a broad range of actors from inside and outside the UN with experience in the protection of the internally displaced and expertise in the development and application of national and regional legal instruments and policies. In 2016, the Task Team which was co-led by UNHCR and IDMC, and includes 20 organizations so far, completed a number of high-profile activities during the year. This included the creation of a database of national and regional IDP laws and policies (<http://www.internal-displacement.org/law-and-policy>), a stocktaking exercise based on this mapping that identified trends as well as best practices and lessons learned (<http://goo.gl/8ktVdH>), the organization of several learning and technical support missions (Mali, Addis Ababa, Panama City, Budapest) to strengthen national-level capacity to promote international standards including the Guiding Principles, and support to Sri Lanka and Mali towards establishing a policy or law on IDPs. The Task Team and its members will continue to serve as a forum of experts on IDP law and policy in 2017.

## **THE DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL AND PROTECTION INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

There is a multi-layered partnership between the GPC and the Danish Refugee Council, including staffing contributions to the GPC Operations Cell and participation in several work-streams as well as policy development. In one particular area, the DRC leads on tackling the problem of solid information gathering and analysis, which is critical to humanitarian response. In line with its contributions to the Protection Information Management (PIM) initiative, with financial support from ECHO, the GPC working together with Danish Refugee Council (DRC) developed a training package on PIM for the field clusters. The training was designed based on the outcomes of the semi-annual PIM meeting and incorporated the new PIM definition and all of the PIM principals into the training content.

The PIM trainings were first of its kind, and addressed the needs of the Cluster Coordinators to better understand Information Management (IM) as well as addressing the needs of Information Management Officers (IMO) to better understand protection. One of the objectives of the training was to strengthen the communication and exchange of experience among the colleagues in the field.

In 2016, the GPC organized four trainings, in four regions with participants from 11 different operations. The first training was held in Ukraine for the Ukrainian Protection Cluster and its members. The second training was organized for MENA region field protection clusters. The third and fourth training were conducted for Africa and Asia regions respectively. In all, over 100 staff from different protection cluster members were trained, and the feedback from the PIM Champions has been beyond the expectations, having an immediate positive impact in the field.

## THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

In addressing the criticisms of the 2015 Whole of System Review, the Humanitarian Policy Group and the SG Report for the World Humanitarian Summit that humanitarian action needs to include national and local actors, the GPC governance structure was reformed to provide greater participation of national NGOs. One of the new groups is the Technical Working Group (TWG), whose composition more accurately reflects the participation in the GPC in general and the realities of the field.

The TWG is responsible for overseeing implementation of the GPC Work-Plan 2016-17. To this end, the TWG is responsible to:

- Monitor progress on implementation of work-streams in the Work-Plan;
- Monitor progress on the implementation rate of activities;
- Monitor progress on the expenditure of funds;
- Advise on thematic areas of work, including round-tables, Task Teams and AORs;
- Advise on proposals for funding.

## THE OFFICE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

In operationalising the centrality of protection, UNHCR is an important partner within the GPC. UNHCR leads 26 of the 33 protection clusters/sector working groups in the field, including in the complicated situations of Syria, South Sudan, Yemen, Iraq, Myanmar and Ukraine. As Global Protection Cluster lead, UNHCR has led initiatives like the IASC Statement on the Centrality of Protection and HCT Protection Strategy Guidance and, perhaps most importantly, an improvement in the quality of cluster leadership on the ground. There are almost 100 protection staff working exclusively or partly on protection coordination and information management in the field, with the position of protection coordinator in the largest operations staffed at P5 level. At the operational level, within the cluster approach, UNHCR is not only a major responder to displacement but, more broadly, it leads a response to protection needs, whether of displaced persons, host communities or besieged people. The Office is regularly called upon for analysis and advice on a wider range of issues including international humanitarian law (IHL) in practice, devising protection advocacy strategies, operational ways of enabling access to justice, humanitarian evacuations, etc.

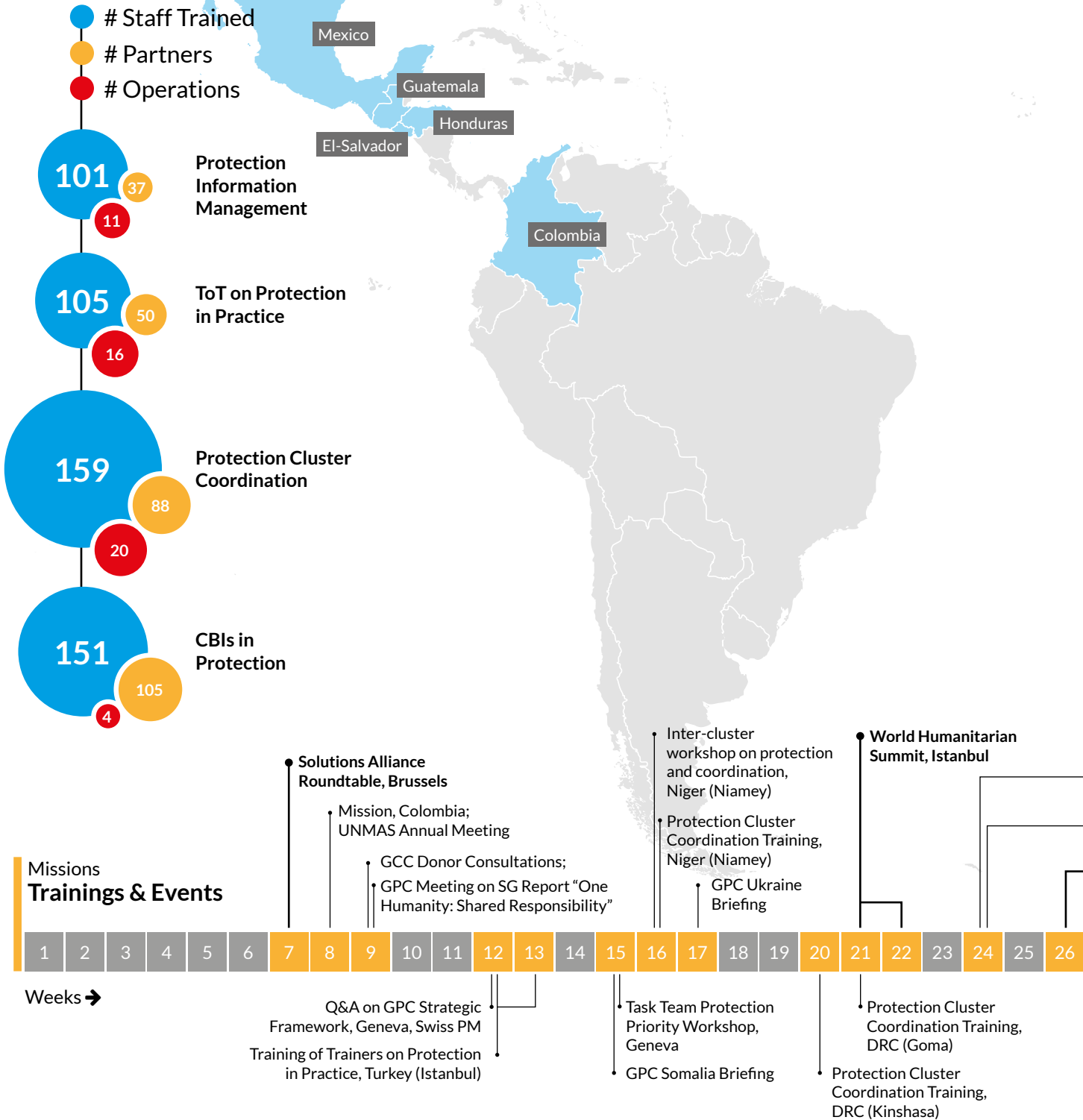
The strategic directions of UNHCR align well with the GPC Strategic Framework: to pick two examples, UNHCR partners with 750 NGOs in protecting and delivering services to refugees, IDPs and other persons of concern; of those NGOs, 62% are national and local partners, making UNHCR a good partner in helping to “localise” the work of the GPC. Secondly, the High Commissioner adopted a new policy and strategy on cash-based interventions in 2016, making good on a Grand Bargain commitment to doubling the amount of assistance given in cash form.

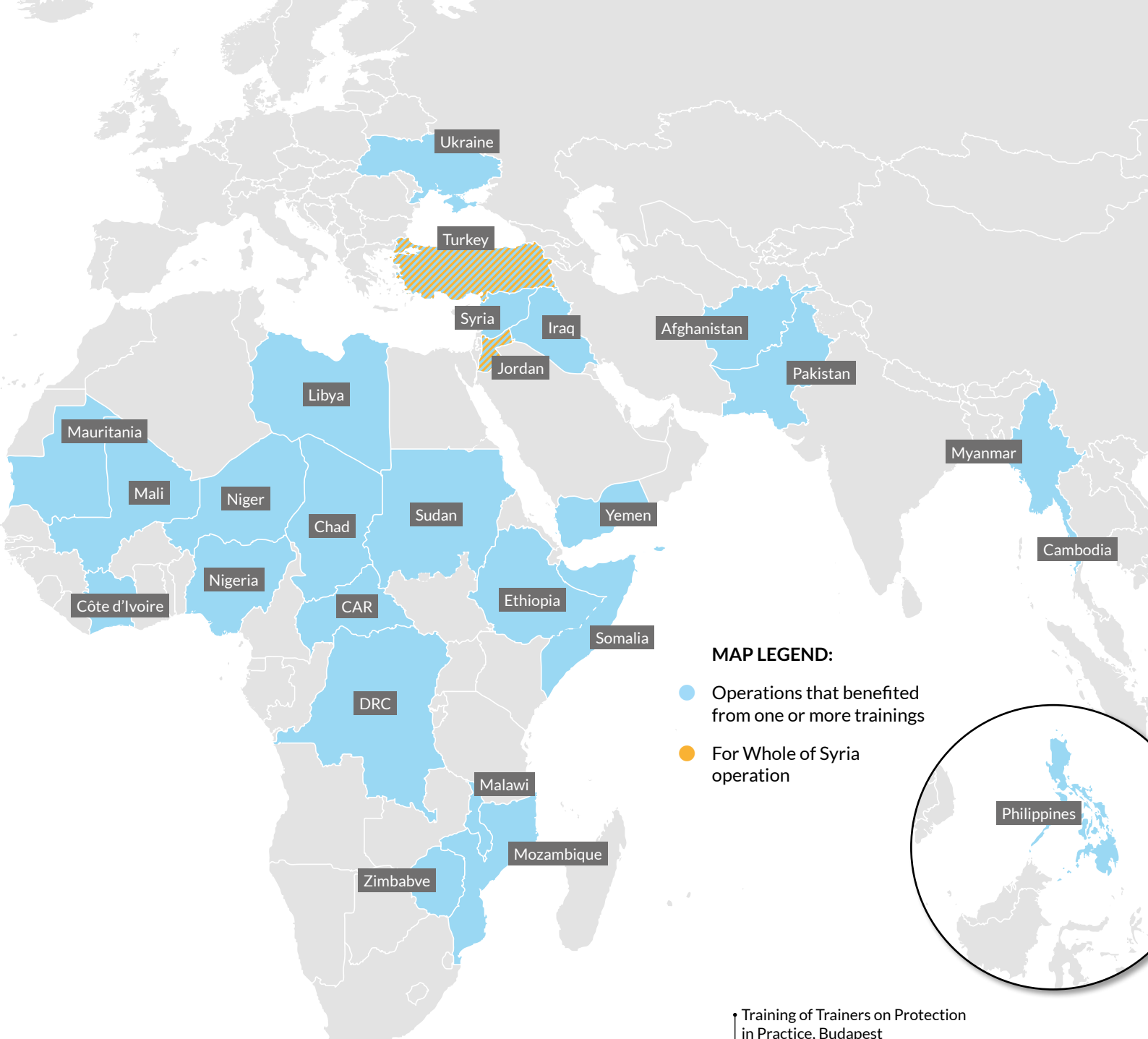
# LEARNING



With a membership of 350, the [Task Team on Learning](#) continues to provide a forum where interactions around trainings, learning, and peer to peer support can actively take place. In 2016, the Task Team delivered its programme of training but also began to address issues of breadth and depth of the programme by opening discussions with Harvard University Humanitarian Initiative on the development of a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC), looking at degree-level programmes on humanitarian protection and planning joint trainings with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide on the identification of and response to atrocity crimes.

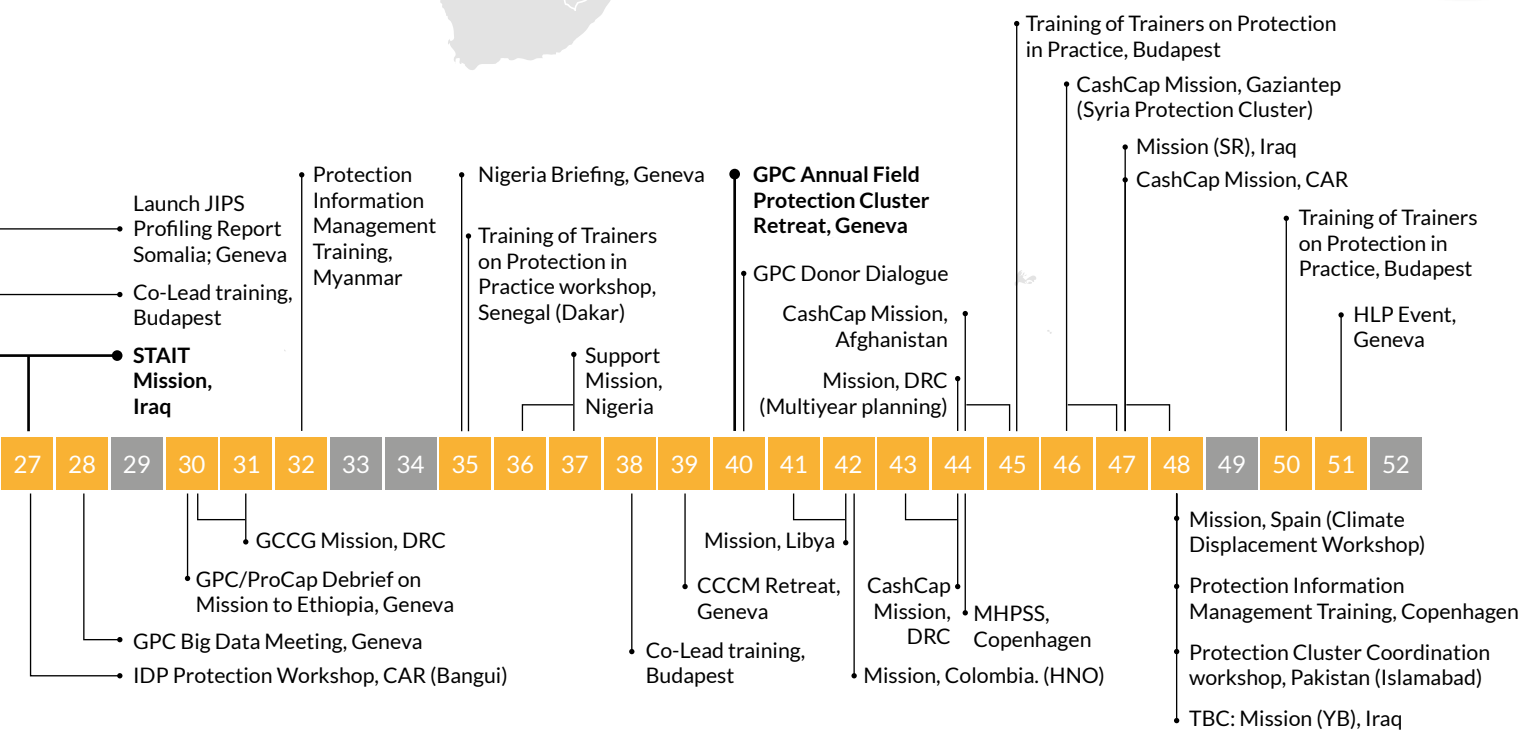
# 2016 OPERATIONS BENEFITING FROM TRAININGS & MISSIONS





**MAP LEGEND:**

- Operations that benefited from one or more trainings
- For Whole of Syria operation





European Union  
Humanitarian Aid  
and Civil Protection