

HPG Commissioned Report

Global Protection Cluster

Advocacy scoping study

Damian Lilly with Alexandra Spencer

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About the author

Damian Lilly is an independent consultant and author of the report.

Alexandra Spencer is a Research Officer with the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at ODI and supported the quantitative data collection and analysis.

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Acronyms

| | |
|-------------|---|
| AoR | area of responsibility |
| CAAC | Children Affected by Armed Conflict |
| CRSV | conflict-related sexual violence |
| ERC | Emergency Relief Coordinator |
| FGD | focus group discussion |
| GBV | gender-based violence |
| GPC | Global Protection Cluster |
| HC | Humanitarian Coordinator |
| HCR | High Commissioner for Refugees |
| HCHR | High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| HCT | Humanitarian Country Team |
| HPC | Humanitarian Programme Cycle |
| HPG | Humanitarian Policy Group |
| HRC | Human Rights Council |
| IASC | Inter-Agency Standing Committee |
| IDP | internally displaced person |
| MARA | Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements |
| MRM | Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism |
| OCHA | Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| RG | Results Group |
| SAG | Strategic Advisory Group |

| | |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| SC | Security Council |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCHR | UN High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| UNHCR | UN High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UPR | Universal Periodic Review |

Executive summary

Advocacy is a key component of protection action in humanitarian response. The need for more robust and focused advocacy on protection issues with duty-bearers and within the humanitarian system is a key challenge identified by the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) and field protection clusters. Within the context of its new Strategic Framework (2020–2024) and 2020–2021 workplan, the GPC intends to develop an advocacy strategy that defines its role in protection advocacy and sets out the activities that it will undertake at the global level and in support of field protection clusters to enhance collective advocacy. This scoping study reviews current practice in protection advocacy by the GPC and field protection clusters as the first step towards developing this GPC Advocacy Strategy. It is based on consultations with GPC members, field protection clusters and other stakeholders, as well as an online survey.

The scoping study underlines the importance of evidence-based advocacy using a proper protection analysis and the need to develop ways for better protection monitoring and measuring the results and impact of protection advocacy. Based on the different consultations, there was strong support for the development of the GPC Advocacy Strategy, which stakeholders felt should focus on the GPC's perceived added value/comparative advantage in protection advocacy of providing a collective voice on neglected protection issues and to ensure the centrality of protection in the humanitarian response, providing support to local advocacy efforts.

While the GPC has undertaken different advocacy activities in recent years, these have been ad hoc and not based on a clear theory of change for what works and what does not. The scoping study reviewed the potential priority protection issues as well as the advocacy targets, partnerships, products and

tools that should be focused on in the GPC Advocacy Strategy based on existing practice. In particular, the GPC has prioritised indirect forms of advocacy, channelling its concerns through other actors (including donors and other humanitarian actors) to take up with duty bearers rather than engaging in direct forms of advocacy itself. It has also shown a preference for private, as opposed to public, forms of advocacy with the products and tools that it has produced reflecting such an approach.

While each context presents its own challenges, there are several common elements to the approach to protection advocacy adopted by field protection clusters and areas that could be strengthened through the development of the GPC Advocacy Strategy. Advocacy has been included in relevant field protection strategies and the two main advocacy targets of field protection clusters have been national authorities and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs). As with the GPC at the global level, field protection cluster advocacy has reflected a preference for private as opposed to public forms of advocacy. The study underlined the importance of engaging local actors in their protection advocacy efforts, although such approaches requires further development. Field protection clusters face several challenges and risks in their protection advocacy with political factors seen as the most important of these. The GPC has not provided significant support to field protection clusters; this could be strengthened and the processes to channel concerns to the global level made more predictable.

A proper strategic planning process will need to be undertaken to elaborate the GPC Advocacy Strategy based on the findings of this scoping study. In particular, given the extremely broad experience of protection advocacy, it will be important to prioritise some areas and to ensure that there are sufficient resources to implement the activities

chosen. In this regard the scoping study recommends that the GPC Advocacy Strategy should:

1. Clarify the GPC's added value/comparative advantage on protection advocacy.
2. Define a theory of change for protection cluster advocacy.
3. Strike a balance between external and internal advocacy.
4. Adopt a strategic and results-oriented approach to protection advocacy.
5. Increase support for field protection cluster advocacy.
6. Focus on priority protection issues for advocacy.
7. Strengthen and increase the utilisation of protection analysis for advocacy.
8. Strengthen existing partnerships for protection advocacy.
9. Develop guidance, tools and training to support field protection clusters.
10. Ensure sufficient resources to strengthen GPC protection advocacy.

1 Introduction

The GPC coordinates the development of policy, standards and operational tools relating to protection in humanitarian action, and provides technical support to protection clusters at the field level. The need for more robust and focused advocacy on protection issues with duty-bearers and within the humanitarian system has been identified as a key challenge by the GPC and field protection clusters (GPC, 2018). Within the context of its new Strategic Framework (2020–2024) and 2020–2021 workplan, the GPC intends to develop an advocacy strategy that defines its role in protection advocacy and sets out the activities that it will undertake at the global level, and in support of field protection clusters, to enhance collective advocacy.

The development of the Advocacy Strategy is a project of the GPC, with technical support from the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at ODI¹ and Oxfam. The process of developing the Advocacy Strategy has been split into phases, the first of which is this scoping study, undertaken by HPG, to review the current practice of protection advocacy by the GPC and field protection clusters² and make recommendations for what should be included in the Advocacy Strategy. This report provides the findings of the Scoping Study. It is based on consultations with GPC members, field protection clusters and other stakeholders, as well as an online survey. The research and consultations were conducted between March and May 2020.

1.1 Background

Advocacy is a key component of protection action.³ Protection advocacy is about convincing and persuading duty-bearers and decision-makers to change their behaviour, policies and actions in line with international standards on the protection of civilians in humanitarian crises. As outlined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in its guidance on the cluster approach, robust advocacy is one of the six core functions of a cluster at country level (IASC, 2015). It is the responsibility of cluster leads to identify concerns and contribute information and messages to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and HCT and undertake advocacy on behalf of the cluster. The IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, adopted in 2016, also includes advocacy as an action that IASC members should undertake to implement the policy (IASC, 2016). In accordance with the policy, a number of HCTs have developed protection strategies, providing an opportunity to coordinate protection advocacy with HCT members.

Despite these policy commitments, field protection clusters have reported several challenges related to protection advocacy, and indicated that this is an area they would like to see strengthened. The GPC has acknowledged that protection advocacy is an area of weakness. It has undertaken advocacy in different forms at different times, but its role and comparative advantage have not been clearly defined. To address this, Strategic Priority 2 of the GPC Strategic Framework (GPC, 2020: 18) commits the GPC as follows:

1 In 2019, HPG at ODI launched a two-year programme of research on protection advocacy and has supported the GPC by conducting this scoping study.

2 The term 'field protection clusters' has been used in this report to include the 32 country contexts where there are protection clusters, protection sectors or protection working groups that receive support from the GPC.

3 For an overview of what is meant by advocacy as part of humanitarian protection action, see Slim and Bonwick (2006: 84–87).

We will ensure voices of crisis affected persons and communities are heard, especially the forgotten ones ... We will amplify the voices of persons affected by humanitarian crises and ensure consistent and predictable representation of their issues, so they can be addressed by relevant responsible parties.

The purpose of the Advocacy Strategy is to set out the GPC's strategic approach to protection advocacy globally, and the support it will provide to advocacy conducted by field protection clusters. Its development is timely given the impact of Covid-19 on the protection situation in many humanitarian crises and the advocacy being undertaken by GPC and field-based clusters in relation to the pandemic.

1.2 Objective, scope and methodology

The objective of this scoping study is to review the current practice of protection advocacy by the GPC and field protection clusters in order to extract learning to inform the development of the Advocacy Strategy. It outlines the potential role and added value/comparative advantage of the GPC on protection advocacy, both at a global level and in support of field protection clusters. This includes the possible objectives of the Advocacy Strategy and its priority themes as well as the approach that the GPC should adopt in terms of advocacy tactics, partnerships, tools and products. It also defines the key expectations of field protection clusters in terms of their role in protection advocacy (mindful of the specific risks and challenges they face), and the support they would like from the GPC.

The research for this scoping study considered protection advocacy in all relevant

types of humanitarian crises, including armed conflicts and natural hazard- or climate-related disasters. It considered the broad range of current and previous protection advocacy interventions undertaken by field protection clusters and the GPC, including activities by the cluster itself or in collaboration with the HCT or other stakeholders.

A mixed-methods research methodology was used based on a series of research questions (see Annex 1 for more details), including a desk review of relevant documents, bilateral consultations with GPC Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) members and other stakeholders (21 in total), an online survey disseminated to GPC members, field protection clusters and other stakeholders (116 respondents⁴), focus group discussions (FGDs) with 16 field protection clusters⁵ and a review of field protection strategies (HCT Protection Strategies, Protection Cluster Strategies and HCT Advocacy Strategies) for countries where FGDs took place. The FGDs were conducted with protection cluster coordinators and NGO co-coordinators, as well as representatives of each area of responsibility (AoR)/sub-cluster and local partner NGOs. In total, 37 interviews took place, including the bilateral consultations and the FGDs. A roundtable with the GPC's SAG was organised on 25 March to review the findings from the initial consultations and agree the analytical framework for the field consultations. Presentations were made to IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy and a ProCap webinar, and a reference group (comprising representatives of the GPC, AoRs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Oxfam and the Libya field protection cluster) was established to guide the process and report to the SAG.

The following sections outline the key findings from the scoping study, based on the research and consultations described above.

4 Of the 116 survey respondents, 64% were from field operations and 36% from headquarters; 31% represented international NGOs, 24% UN entities, 23% clusters, 10% national NGOs, 4% independent and 8% other undefined organisations.

5 These included Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, State of Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela and Yemen.

2 General findings and observations

There was support from all stakeholders consulted in the scoping study for the development of a GPC Advocacy Strategy, with many highlighting advocacy as a long-standing area of weakness requiring greater attention. A number of field protection clusters are already taking steps to address the issue in their respective contexts, and the Advocacy Strategy should build on these efforts. Based on the research and feedback from stakeholders, the GPC Advocacy Strategy should have two main components: the role of the GPC at the global level on advocacy; and the role of the GPC in support of field protection clusters. Stakeholders emphasised the latter as the way the GPC could have the greatest impact on protection outcomes, with support to the field viewed as the priority. Indeed, there was scepticism among some of those consulted about the results that could be achieved through global advocacy, whether by the GPC or any other actor. Before addressing these two components, the study explores general findings and observations relevant to the entirety of the protection cluster's advocacy.

2.1 Protection advocacy objectives – external versus internal

A distinction was made throughout the scoping study between 'external' and 'internal' protection advocacy. 'External' protection advocacy is targeted outside the humanitarian system towards duty-bearers (i.e. national authorities, non-state armed groups), with the objective of seeking their greater compliance with international law. 'Internal' protection advocacy is targeted within the humanitarian system

towards other humanitarian actors (i.e. the HCT, other clusters), with the objective of promoting the 'centrality of protection' in the humanitarian response. Often, external and internal advocacy go hand in hand, as it is necessary to convince other humanitarian actors to take up a position on a specific protection issue before advocating effectively with relevant duty-bearers. Some actors, such as donor governments, might equally be considered an advocacy target in both external and internal advocacy. External and internal advocacy, however, have separate objectives and may require different approaches, so it will be important to clarify how they are each addressed in the GPC's Advocacy Strategy.

The consultations and interviews indicated that there are different views among stakeholders about which dimension of protection advocacy – external or internal – should be prioritised in the GPC Advocacy Strategy. Many stakeholders see external advocacy as the priority because less attention has been given to this in the past by the GPC, and it has been particularly challenging and thus needs greater focus. Other stakeholders felt there was still a long way to go on internal advocacy, so this aspect should also be considered a priority. The survey results showed that there was support for the GPC Advocacy Strategy's objectives to address both external and internal advocacy. The majority of survey respondents (74%) either said they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that one objective of the GPC Advocacy Strategy should be about 'Seeking greater compliance with international law from duty bearers'. An even larger proportion – 80% – said they 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that the strategy should focus on 'Awareness raising of forgotten protection crises and issues'. However, there was equally strong support for the GPC

Advocacy Strategy to address internal advocacy. The large majority of survey respondents – 87% – either said they ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ that an objective of the GPC Advocacy Strategy should be about ‘Promoting the centrality of protection in the humanitarian response’, with a similar proportion – 86% – either ‘strongly agreeing’ or ‘agreeing’ that one objective should be ‘Increasing resources and capacity for protection work by humanitarian actors’. Significant work has been undertaken in recent years to promote the centrality of protection, with advocacy only one approach to address the issue, alongside protection mainstreaming and other initiatives. However, this was clearly seen by many stakeholders as an area where further advocacy is still required.

In sum, both dimensions of protection advocacy are important for achieving protection outcomes, and there are many links between the two. Based on the above analysis, it will be important for the GPC Advocacy Strategy to address both external and internal dimensions of advocacy.

2.2 Evidenced-based advocacy and protection analysis

Protection advocacy must be based on in-depth protection analysis (see ICRC, 2018: 43–52). This requires several mechanisms to collect data and information on protection, including protection and multi-sector assessments, human rights fact-finding and documentation, and programme reporting. As well as the means to collect data and information, it is also important that protection actors can analyse these, including through information management systems and reporting. Many field protection clusters have effective protection monitoring systems, developed over time, that produce this kind of protection analysis. Indeed, many examples were shared of advocacy notes and other products produced by field protection clusters demonstrating a comprehensive and in-depth protection analysis that had been well-received by the HCT and other stakeholders, including donors. However, for some field protection clusters, data and information collection has

been extremely challenging due to the difficult operating environments they work in. There has also been a lack of capacity and investment in protection monitoring systems and analysis. The need to strengthen both was identified by several field protection clusters, with a number taking steps to make improvements.

Apart from the inputs provided for the *Centrality of protection in humanitarian action* report produced by the GPC each year, there has been no other formal reporting between field protection clusters and the GPC. While there is regular contact and communication between the GPC and field protection clusters, there is no systematic way for the protection analysis produced by field protection clusters to be shared with the GPC. Advocacy notes and other documents are shared on an ad hoc basis with the GPC but are not systematically requested. The GPC Operational Cell does not have the capacity to actively monitor the protection situation in the 32 countries where it provides technical support. Building on the GPC’s workstream on information management, as part of the Covid-19 response field protection clusters are now regularly sharing their updates with the GPC through a harmonised database that includes a dedicated section on advocacy activities conducted and key messages developed. This platform could be extended to gather protection analysis more systematically from the field. Indeed, there is significant scope to further utilise the protection analysis being produced by field protection clusters to inform GPC protection advocacy, including channelling advocacy messages from the field to global-level actors, and coordinating a strategic approach on issues of major concern to field protection clusters.

2.3 Measuring advocacy results and impact

The difficulty in measuring advocacy results and impact was acknowledged throughout the consultations. Based on feedback in interviews, it was not easy to ascertain what was working and what was not in terms of protection advocacy: it is difficult to pinpoint protection

outcomes for affected populations that result from protection advocacy and, even when this is possible, it is even harder to attribute changes that might have occurred thanks to the actions of those undertaking the advocacy. Given that much of the advocacy of the GPC and field protection clusters is indirect, channelled through third-party actors, this makes analysing the results and impact of protection advocacy even more complex. Only a few of the protection strategies analysed (for example from Nigeria, Mozambique, the DRC and Myanmar) included

(measurable) indicators to monitor results related to protection advocacy. However, these tended to be output and process indicators – such as the number of meetings conducted or documents produced – rather than indicators at the outcome or impact level. A few of the field protection clusters interviewed said they did measure their protection advocacy efforts, including through Humanitarian Response Plan reporting, but most acknowledged that measuring results and impact in this area remains aspirational and requires greater attention.

3 GPC protection advocacy at the global level

This chapter relates to the first component of the GPC Advocacy Strategy, namely the role of the GPC in protection advocacy at the global level in complement to, and in support of, country-level advocacy by field protection clusters.

3.1 Added value/comparative advantage of the GPC as a protection advocate

A central question addressed throughout the scoping study related to the added value/comparative advantage of GPC protection advocacy. There are already many actors and mechanisms engaging in advocacy on protection issues and, if a GPC Advocacy Strategy is to be developed, it should substantively enhance what is already occurring, not duplicate existing efforts. From the survey results, bilateral consultations and FGDs, the potential added value/comparative advantage of GPC protection advocacy includes the following.

3.1.1 Positioning protection within the humanitarian system

A key role of GPC protection advocacy has been to ensure that protection is not overlooked but rather is addressed within all relevant decisions, strategies, plans and funding mechanisms. Indeed, positioning protection within the humanitarian system was considered a key added value/comparative advantage of GPC protection advocacy, with 90% of survey respondents saying they either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with this. In recent years, the GPC has made significant investments in promoting the prioritisation of

protection in the humanitarian response following the 2013 IASC Principals’ statement on the ‘Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action’ (IASC, 2013), which led to the adoption of the IASC Policy on Protection in 2016. However, many stakeholders felt that protection is still not being sufficiently addressed within humanitarian responses and, therefore, the GPC should continue to advocate on this theme to ensure that commitments made are implemented. Reaching out to development, political and other actors so that they engage in protection and support protection outcomes was also viewed as important by survey respondents and interviewees, although not quite to the same degree as within the humanitarian system: 70% of survey respondents said they either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ that positioning protection within these broader agendas is an added value/comparative advantage of GPC protection advocacy.

3.1.2 A collective voice to raise awareness on protection issues

As a coordinating body of hundreds of different organisations working on protection in 32 different countries around the world, a key comparative advantage of the GPC in terms of protection advocacy is its ability to provide a collective voice to raise awareness on protection issues. Eight-nine per cent of survey respondents said they either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with this as a comparative advantage of the GPC. Several examples were provided where the GPC sought to raise awareness of protection issues related either to specific contexts or thematic topics. The GPC has published public statements – branded as ‘GPC Alerts’ – to raise awareness of protection concerns in certain countries,

including Syria and the DRC.⁶ The GPC has also taken up advocacy on thematic protection issues covering several different contexts. For example, in 2017 it issued a series of advocacy notes and products on protection challenges in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, analysing the underlying causes perpetuating the food and cholera crisis in the four countries at that time.⁷ More recently, the GPC is producing regular sitreps and posting country advocacy notes on the protection dimension of the Covid-19 pandemic on a dedicated section of its website.⁸

However, in general stakeholders did not view the GPC as having been particularly active in terms of protection advocacy over the years, with its members more likely to advocate on their own rather than through the GPC. In addition, most advocacy activities were considered opportunistic, rather than strategic: there were no clear criteria or triggers for when the GPC would advocate on an issue, and no sign-off procedure for the advocacy products that had been produced. Many stakeholders felt that the Advocacy Strategy should clarify who the GPC is advocating on behalf of and when it would make sense to undertake a collective effort under the name of the GPC, rather than focusing on advocacy by its individual constituent members.

3.1.3 Amplifying local advocacy at the global level

The link between local advocacy at the field level in humanitarian crises by field protection clusters – with duty-bearers or within the humanitarian system – and global-level advocacy by the GPC was a common theme in the consultations. Despite scepticism among some stakeholders about the utility of global-level advocacy, many survey respondents considered that the GPC had a comparative advantage in terms of amplifying

local advocacy at the global level: 76% said that they either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with such a statement. However, the interviews and consultations indicated that the links between local and global advocacy were not always clear and depended on the specific context. In general, global advocacy is undertaken when local advocacy fails, or in order to amplify messages being passed at a local level. In some contexts (e.g. Palestine), local advocacy is so challenging that global-level advocacy plays a key part in the strategy of the field protection cluster. In other contexts, field protection clusters saw global advocacy as adding little to the actions being taken at local level to achieve protection outcomes. Even when global advocacy was pursued, it was more likely to go through individual agencies than the GPC.

Many field protection clusters said that they were not aware of opportunities to engage in global advocacy, and these had not been outlined to them by the GPC. There was only brief mention of global advocacy mechanisms in the field protection strategies analysed as part of the scoping study, and there was no explicit mention in any of these strategies of engaging the GPC to take up local advocacy at the global level. Indeed, most field protection clusters said that they currently have far less contact with the GPC on advocacy than on other areas of its work, such as protection response and mainstreaming. It was more common for global-level advocacy opportunities to be pursued by individual agencies than collectively through the GPC. However, field protection clusters were keen to see the Advocacy Strategy outline opportunities at the global level, and hoped that the GPC would engage with them on where they could provide inputs. They also requested a dedicated focal point within the GPC Operational Cell to engage with on advocacy.

6 See the news section of the GPC website for examples of these GPC Alerts (www.globalprotectioncluster.org/news-and-events/gpc-news).

7 For more details about this in-focus advocacy initiative, see the GPC website (www.globalprotectioncluster.org/themes/drought-famine-cholera-and-displacement).

8 For more details on the GPC’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic, see the GPC website (www.globalprotectioncluster.org/covid-19/).

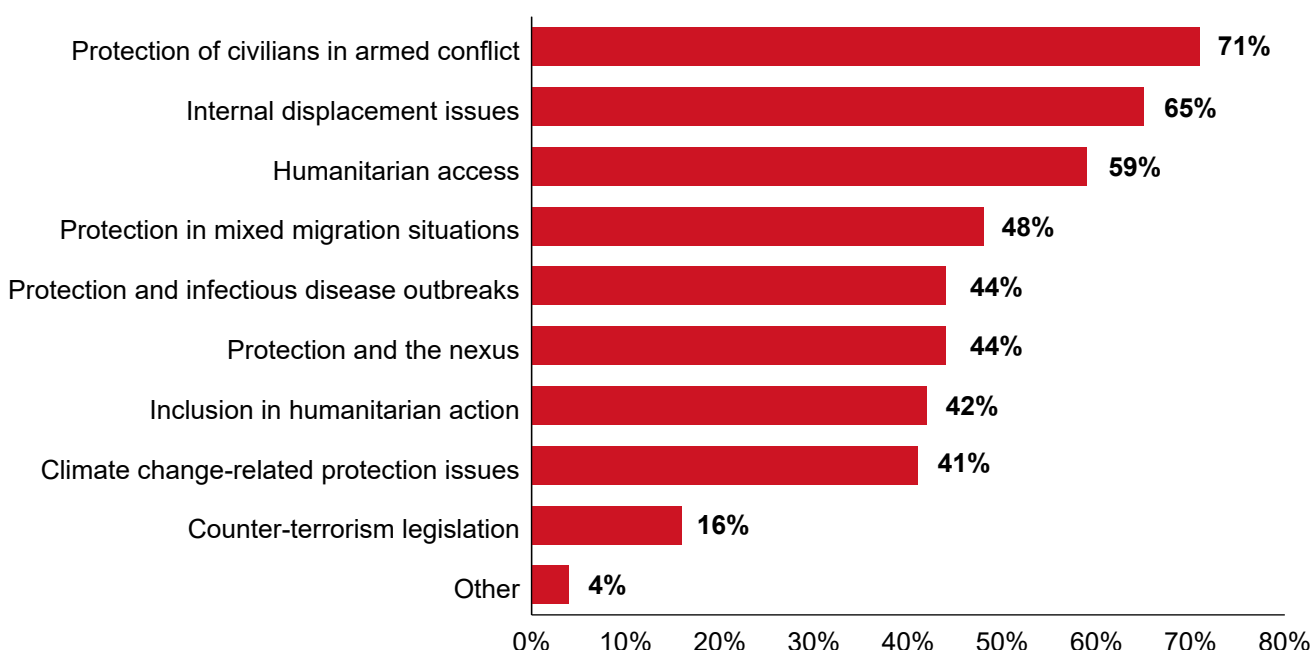
3.2 Protection issues to advocate on

The GPC has advocated on a wide variety of protection issues, and these could be prioritised in the Advocacy Strategy. While protection issues are context-specific, many common issues affect several crises, and the GPC could advocate on these at the global level (including those outlined in Figure 1). As noted earlier, the GPC has taken up advocacy on individual crises previously, for example through publishing ‘GPC Alerts’. It also regularly conducts field missions to specific contexts, to provide technical support and raise the profile of neglected crises. The GPC has also advocated on a number of thematic issues, such as internal displacement, protection and famines, and climate-related protection issues. For example, it supported the G20 ‘Prevent,

protect, resolve’ campaign marking 20 years of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.⁹ Each of the AoRs has undertaken advocacy on their respective issues of concern and produced guidance and advocacy documents. The gender-based violence (GBV) AoR produced a GBV in Emergencies Advocacy Handbook in 2014 (GBV AoR, 2014);¹⁰ the Explosive Ordnance Risk Education Advisory Group – linked to the mine action AoR – produced an Advocacy Strategy in 2020; and the child protection AoR has produced a number of advocacy documents.¹¹

As Figure 1 shows, the survey results highlighted a range of protection issues to be addressed as part of the GPC Advocacy Strategy. Protection of civilians was ranked highest (71% of respondents), although this is not surprising as it is the most relevant to the largest number of contexts where field protection clusters operate. Internal displacement was also, for the same

Figure 1: Cross-cutting protection issues (affecting all AoRs) that the GPC Advocacy Strategy should focus on at the global level on behalf of all field protection clusters



Note: The figures in this graph – and subsequent ones - represent the proportion of survey respondents that selected different options in multiple answer questions.

⁹ For more details, see the G20 Campaign section of the GPC website (www.globalprotectioncluster.org/gp20/).

¹⁰ Core Function 6 of the GBV Coordination Handbook is also dedicated to advocacy (<https://gbvaor.net/coordination-tools-and-resources/advocacy#engaging-media>).

¹¹ See the child protection AoR website for more details (www.cpaor.net/).

reason, ranked highly (65% of respondents). Some stakeholders indicated that the new UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Internal Displacement offered a potential advocacy opportunity, and several field protection clusters indicated that they had been actively advocating for the adoption of the Kampala Convention on Internally Displaced Persons in their respective contexts. Development-induced displacement was also mentioned as an issue that could benefit from greater advocacy by the GPC. Humanitarian access also ranked highly (59% of respondents). Field protection clusters are active members of Access Working Groups in many humanitarian operations, providing protection analysis related to access issues. Given that it does not affect all contexts, protection in mixed migration situations ranked quite high (48% of respondents) and was considered a neglected issue by some interviewees.

Protection and infectious diseases were ranked lower (44% of respondents) than might have been expected given the Covid-19 pandemic. While many field protection clusters said that Covid-19 was clearly a significant new advocacy priority, they were also at pains to point out that efforts in this regard should not replace advocacy on pre-existing protection concerns. Some felt that, as well as raising new protection challenges requiring advocacy, Covid-19 has provided an opportunity to tackle existing protection issues given the implications of the disease and the measures required to prevent the spread of the virus. For example, the field protection cluster in Palestine is reinforcing its advocacy on the arbitrary detention of children who might be at increased risk of Covid-19 in detention, and in Somalia the field protection cluster is advocating for a moratorium on evictions of IDPs that might spread the disease if displaced. The majority of field protection clusters have produced advocacy notes on protection and Covid-19 in their contexts, and the GPC is developing a dedicated advocacy plan on the pandemic.¹²

Many field protection clusters reported that they had begun to consider, or were already

undertaking, advocacy on issues pertaining to protection and the nexus (i.e. efforts to enhance collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors), and the importance of this issue was reiterated in the survey responses (44% of respondents) (for an overview of this issue and the potential role of the Protection Cluster, see Lilly, 2020). The long-term nature of protection risks and vulnerabilities in many protracted crises has forced field protection clusters to confront this issue, which has also been given greater impetus following the policy commitments made on the nexus approach at headquarters in recent years, the implementation of which is now cascading down to field level. However, limited concrete examples were provided of advocacy activities towards development actors, and this is an emerging issue that could merit a more strategic approach by the GPC. As part of its 2020–2021 workplan, the GPC intends to develop guidance and standards on protection and the nexus.

Inclusion in humanitarian action – including different genders, people with disabilities, youth and older people – came across as a priority (42% of survey respondents), especially for specialised agencies dealing with these thematic areas, which said during interviews that the GPC is an important body in taking forward advocacy. These issues do not have a dedicated AoR of the GPC, although the NGOs Humanity and Inclusion (for people with disabilities) and Help Age International (for older people) are both GPC SAG members. More advocacy could be undertaken to raise the profile of these issues, as well as ensuring complementarity with efforts to promote gender equality beyond the GPC. Given the global importance of climate change, it is perhaps surprising that climate-related protection issues were not ranked higher (41% of respondents), though only a few field protection clusters deal with environmental disasters. Based on feedback from stakeholders, the experience of Cyclone Idai in Mozambique and Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas shows that, while advocating on protection issues in such contexts can be less

12 See the Covid-19 section of the GPC website for more details (www.globalprotectioncluster.org/covid-19/).

sensitive when compared to situations of armed conflict, it is still challenging to promote the centrality of protection in such contexts when the protection dimensions of the crisis are not always well understood by other humanitarian actors. The impact of counter-terrorism legislation on humanitarian action was ranked the lowest (16% of respondents) in the survey and was not mentioned in the FGDs. This issue affects some contexts more than others, and is being taken up by IASC Results Group 1 on Collective Advocacy.

While it was an objective of the scoping study to identify priority issues for the GPC Advocacy Strategy, it would be hard to say from the above analysis that there is consensus among stakeholders about what those issues might be. The consultations confirmed divergent views of potential protection issues that the GPC could advocate on. However, many stakeholders felt that the added value of the GPC is to speak as a collective voice on neglected/forgotten issues and contexts where it has recognised technical expertise and can act as a catalyst for other actors to take up advocacy on these issues. This should be the criterion for selecting and prioritising the protection issues to be addressed in the GPC Advocacy Strategy. There are core issues (such as forced displacement and protection of civilians) that the GPC will need to continue to advocate on as part of its mandate, while the AoRs also have their respective issues of concern. Beyond these responsibilities, though, the GPC needs to prioritise a small number of issues to advocate on when it has a clear added value/comparative advantage. For example, protection in mixed migration situations and inclusion in humanitarian action are two issues for which there has not been sufficient focus, and which would merit greater attention. There are emerging issues such as the nexus for which greater advocacy is also needed. The GPC also needs to be ready to pivot its advocacy towards quick-onset crises such as Covid-19. Given the limited resources at the disposal of the GPC and the protection advocacy already being done by other actors, it will be important for the GPC to

select a handful of priority issues on which it has demonstrated expertise, comparative advantage and added value. For 2020, Covid-19 has de facto become the priority advocacy theme, but looking ahead further additional thematic areas should be selected each year and focused on in the GPC Advocacy Strategy.

3.3 Advocacy targets

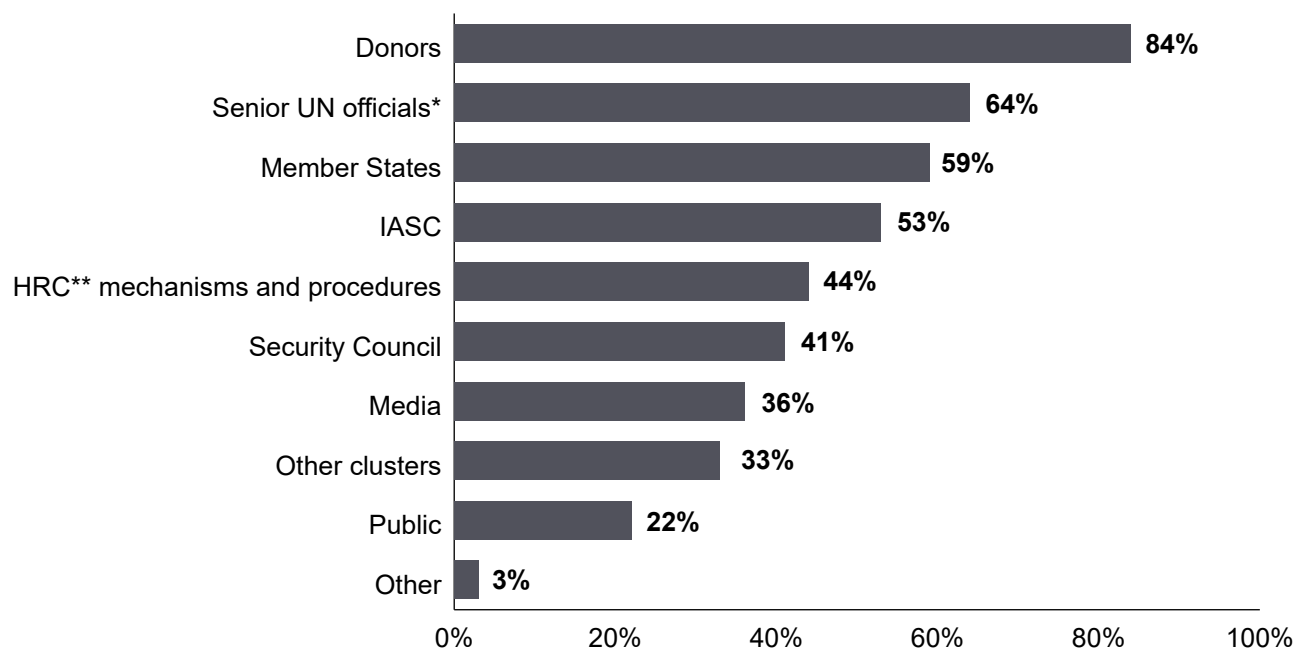
The GPC has engaged with several advocacy targets at the global level, with the results of the survey demonstrating a clear preference for some over others (see Figure 2).¹³ Much of the protection cluster's advocacy is indirect, and these targets are used as a way to channel messages to other actors.

3.3.1 Donors

According to the survey results, donors were considered the most important advocacy target (84% of respondents) at the global level, while Member States also scored highly (59% of respondents). The consultations confirmed that donors can be important in ensuring the centrality of protection, as well as being important advocacy targets in tackling context-specific and neglected protection issues. They can be a direct target for advocacy, and a channel for conveying specific messages that can be taken up by donors with other advocacy targets, including foreign or defence ministries, or other donor countries or member states. The GPC has coordinated a donor liaison group in recent years. This has been reformulated into a new Donor and Member States Liaison Platform, which will include advocacy within its strategic priorities in line with the GPC Strategic Framework 2020–2024. The Liaison Platform provides an obvious forum in which to structure and enhance GPC advocacy towards donors on specific contexts and themes, and should be a major feature of the GPC Advocacy Strategy. The AoRs regularly organise donor briefings with their field coordinators, which was also seen as a useful model to pursue advocacy on other issues.

13 National authorities and non-stated armed groups were not included as options in the survey as the GPC does not directly engage them in advocacy but rather supports field protection clusters to do so.

Figure 2: Most important advocacy targets for the GPC Advocacy Strategy at the global level



* Secretary-General, Emergency Relief Coordinator, High Commissioner for Refugees, High Commissioner for Human Rights, etc.

** Human Rights Council

3.3.2 Senior UN officials

Senior UN officials also scored highly (64% of respondents) as important advocacy targets for the GPC. The Secretary-General (SG), Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR) and High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR) were all recognised by stakeholders as having important mandates on protection advocacy, with the potential to be strong protection advocates within the UN system. However, no concrete examples were provided during the consultations of the GPC having directly engaged with these potential protection champions and proposing protection issues for their respective offices to take up. This is a missed opportunity and a gap that could be addressed in the GPC Advocacy Strategy. Given that the GPC has limited political leverage itself as compared to senior UN officials, it could use them as a way to channel its advocacy concerns to a wider audience, including Member States and other political actors.

3.3.3 Inter-Agency Standing Committee

The IASC was also seen as an important advocacy target based on the results of the survey (53% of respondents). It already has a Results Group (RG 3) on Collective Advocacy (attended by the GPC Operations Cell and GPC members) and is addressing a number of protection-related issues, including the impact of counter-terrorism legislation, engagement with non-state armed groups and climate change.¹⁴ IASC RG 1 on Operational Response has a Centrality of Protection subgroup, which at the end of 2019 coordinated a Critical Protection Concerns advocacy note for an IASC Principals meeting based on – among others – inputs from field protection clusters. Neither of these IASC RGs is an advocacy target per se, but they are forums through which the GPC can coordinate its advocacy with other humanitarian actors and channel concerns from field protection clusters. The IASC Principals and Emergency Directors Group – part of the IASC structure – are also forums in which the GPC can engage and target senior UN officials and other humanitarian actors. There are, therefore, several entry points

14 See the work plan of IASC RG 3 (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/results-group-3-collective-advocacy>).

for the GPC to coordinate advocacy towards the IASC, especially the internal dimension of advocacy to position protection within broader discussions within the humanitarian community.

3.3.4 Human Rights Council

An appreciable number of survey respondents – 44% – considered the Human Rights Council (HRC) an important advocacy target. This includes the special procedures, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and other related mechanisms associated with the HRC. The treaty bodies are also an important human rights mechanism to which advocacy can be targeted. In May 2020 the GPC launched a Task Team on Human Rights Engagement to increase awareness and utilisation of these mechanisms by the GPC and field protection clusters. While there is an established process (coordinated by OHCHR) to solicit submissions to these mechanisms from country contexts – usually through the UN Country Team (UNCT) or individual agencies – field protection clusters could play a more active role in these mechanisms as advocacy channels and targets. Such mechanisms are rarely mentioned in field protection strategies, indicating that they are not yet considered an important advocacy opportunity. Field protection clusters can also help promote the implementation of the recommendations coming out of these mechanisms and help hold state parties accountable, especially through the UPR.

At the global level, the GPC has a long-standing and close working relationship with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, with whom the GPC has undertaken several joint advocacy activities. The Special Rapporteur's country visits were seen by stakeholders as a practical way to leverage protection advocacy at the field level, which could be utilised more by field protection clusters. The recent visit to Iraq of the GPC Coordinator with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs in February 2020 was provided as an example of how protection advocacy can be leveraged through such missions (Jimenez-Damary, 2020). The GPC has, however, had limited contact with the other 43 thematic procedures and 10 independent country experts mandated by the HRC. Some of these other special procedures, particularly those with country-specific

mandates, could offer the GPC opportunities for collaboration. For example, protection analysis prepared by field protection clusters could be shared more systematically with the Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts to inform their understanding of a particular situation, especially if they have limited access themselves to the country in question. The GPC should conduct further outreach with these mandate-holders and map out which would be most relevant for engagement as part of the GPC Advocacy Strategy.

3.3.5 UN Security Council

The UN Security Council (SC) was not considered a priority advocacy target by respondents in the survey (only 41% of respondents indicated this as a target). Field protection cluster members are key contributors to the SC-mandated Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) related to children affected by armed conflict (CAAC) and the Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), which are frequently mentioned in field protection strategies. The field protection clusters also provide inputs for briefings to the SC Informal Expert Group on Protection of Civilians in advance of mandate renewals of UN peace operations and political missions. However, there are already established focal point UN entities that coordinate inputs to these SC mechanisms. The GPC Operations Cell is a member of the New York-based Protection of Civilians Working Group, chaired by OCHA, but has not been particularly active in this forum. In general, stakeholders considered that there is little added value for the GPC in enhancing its role in these mechanisms, given that they already have well-established procedures.

3.3.6 Media and public

The media (36% of respondents) and the public (22% of respondents) were viewed as the lowest priority in the survey results in terms of advocacy targets, confirming a common pattern noted in the consultations about the minor importance of public advocacy for the GPC. The GPC has produced public statements on different protection issues and contexts, as well as social media content. However, there is no regular media

engagement and the GPC probably does not have an identity that would be easily understood or recognised by a public audience, compared to, for example, some of its individual members. Consequently, it has not viewed its role in terms of increasing public awareness about protection issues. While advocacy activities frequently include a communications element with the media and public, this is perhaps not a priority for the GPC. Other coordination bodies in the UN system on communication and advocacy might be better placed to take up such issues.

3.4 Partnerships on advocacy

The GPC frequently undertakes protection advocacy in conjunction with other partners, as compared to acting alone. Indeed, many stakeholders felt that this should be the GPC’s preferred approach to protection advocacy – that it should see itself as a catalyst for pushing more prominent entities within the humanitarian system to advocate on protection issues, or seek out strategic partnerships to amplify its messages on key protection issues.

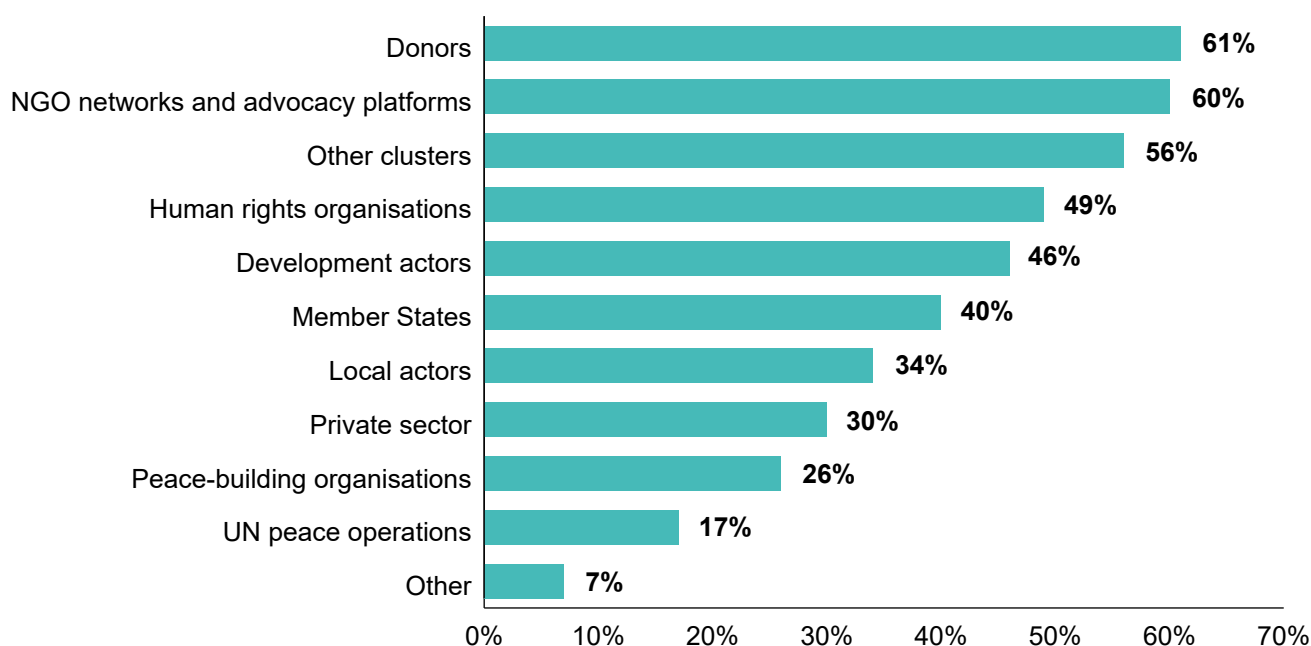
Some actors were considered both an advocacy target and an advocacy partner. For example, from the results of the survey (see Figure 3)

donors were seen as the most important partner on advocacy (61% of respondents), having also been considered a priority advocacy target, underlining the importance of this relationship and the need to reinforce it.

NGO networks and advocacy platforms were also considered important (60% of respondents), although there are relatively few examples of the GPC establishing such partnerships. The GPC works closely with the NGO networks ICVA and InterAction, both of which are GPC SAG members. There are a number of other relevant NGO networks and advocacy platforms related to protection with which the GPC has had intermittent contact in the past, but it has not established more long-term advocacy partnerships. While the GPC has a broad membership, these NGO networks and advocacy platforms provide a collective voice and advocate on issues of concern to the GPC. They also have established campaigns and procedures for conducting advocacy that the GPC could benefit from, and influence others, rather than undertaking its own advocacy, which it might not have the resources to do. In this sense, NGO networks and advocacy platforms represent an important partnership for the GPC, which it should prioritise and strengthen.

The GPC has worked closely with other global clusters on protection topics, and this was

Figure 3: Advocacy partnerships that the GPC should seek to strengthen as part of its Advocacy Strategy



viewed as another important partnership in the survey (56% of respondents). For example, in 2019, the GPC and the Global Health Cluster launched a Joint Operational Framework to set clear guidance and actions for an integrated response to health and protection coordination and service delivery (GPC, 2019). Given the cross-cutting nature of protection there are many common issues of concern with other clusters, and it may be more effective to pool resources to address them, prioritising clusters with a clear protection dimension to their work.

Human rights organisations were also viewed as an important partner based on the survey results (49% of respondents). However, coordination between the GPC and field protection clusters and these organisations has – at least until recently – been ad hoc and often based on personal relationships. Human rights advocacy uses different tools and approaches to humanitarian protection advocacy, and human rights organisations do not always face the same operational constraints as humanitarian counterparts, which has made them more vocal advocates than the protection cluster. While this difference in approach may explain why a stronger partnership has not been developed, it may also present opportunities to maximise impact by coordinating different tactics, tools and channels to achieve shared objectives. The GPC should be selective and prioritise situations where it could complement its advocacy with greater partnership with human rights organisations.

As mentioned earlier, the humanitarian–development–peace nexus was frequently mentioned by stakeholders as an agenda that the GPC should seek to influence to ensure that it reflects key protection principles and mobilises development and peace actors as non-traditional protection actors. The GPC has organised several panel discussions, webinars and meetings on the topic (for example, see PHAP, 2019). Advancing this agenda requires further relationship-building, in the first instance with development and peace actors. While development actors were viewed as potential advocacy partners (46% of respondents), many interviewees felt that efforts were first needed to increase development actors' awareness of humanitarian protection principles and approaches. Some stakeholders felt that development actors

have different agendas and approaches regarding advocacy on protection and human rights issues, which are sometimes at odds with those of humanitarian protection actors (for further detail see Lilly, 2020: 10–11). In this respect, development actors may need to be a target of GPC advocacy first, before more significant partnerships can be developed. Given the growing importance of the nexus agenda this is a partnership that the GPC could usefully invest in further.

Although the survey results seemed to indicate that peace actors – both peacebuilding organisations (26% of respondents) and UN peace operations (17% of respondents) – are not considered important advocacy partners, the field protection clusters in countries where there are UN peace operations and political missions (including DRC, South Sudan, Somalia and Libya) confirmed that human rights offices, Protection of Civilians staff and other components of these missions are key partners on protection advocacy. There are several ways in which collaboration between field protection clusters and UN missions can lead to positive protection outcomes. For example, in the DRC the protection analysis of the field protection cluster has been used to help direct the deployment of UN peacekeepers to locations where civilians are at greatest risk. For its part, the GPC has focused in the past on civil–military coordination for protection with UN peace operations, and has developed specific guidance on how field protection clusters should address the issue (see GPC, 2013). The GPC also coordinated with field protection clusters on inputs to the High Level Panel on UN Peace Operations in 2015, which was mentioned as a good example of how the protection cluster could take a common position and provide technical inputs on issues of relevance to field clusters.

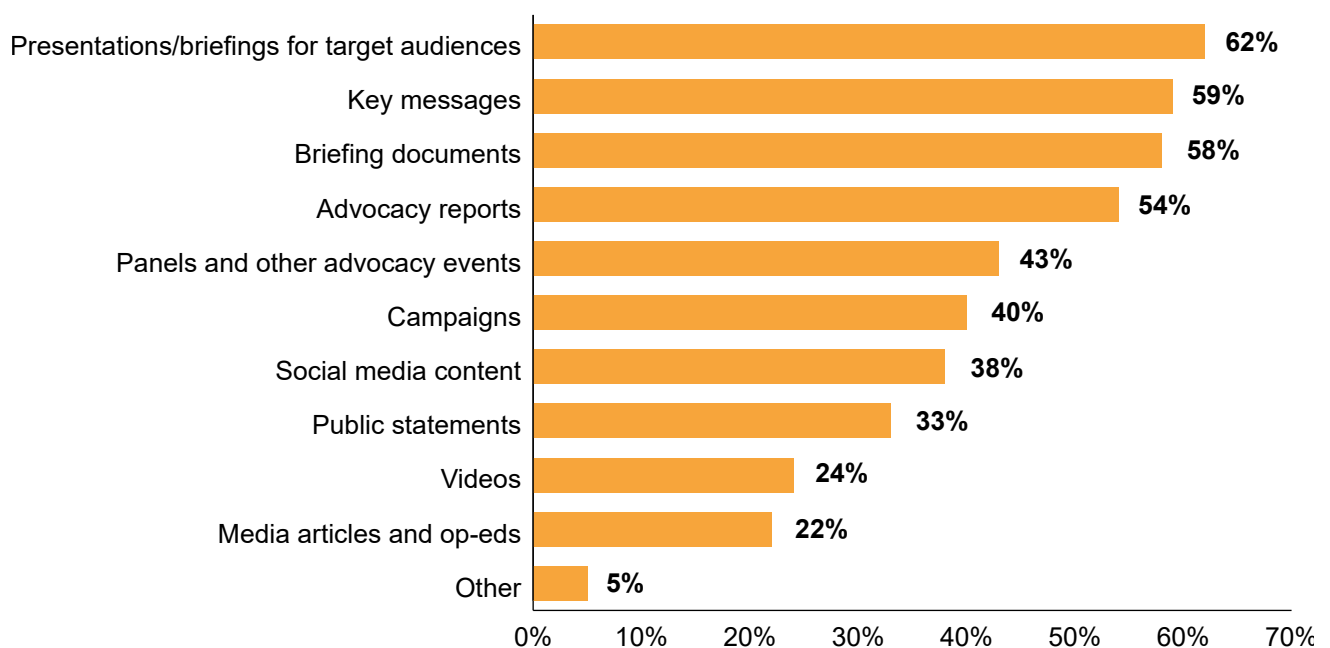
3.5 Advocacy products and tools

Over the years, the GPC has produced a variety of advocacy products and tools (see the GPC website for examples) including public statements (GPC Alerts), briefing and position papers, social media content and videos, and has organised a number of advocacy events, including panel discussions.

As Figure 4 shows, there was a clear preference from the survey results, supported by the interviews, for face-to-face and direct forms of advocacy as compared to public advocacy. Presentations and briefings for target audiences were viewed as the most useful advocacy intervention (62% of respondents). The GPC has regularly organised advocacy meetings on specific themes and countries with donors and other advocacy targets in Geneva and during field missions. Briefings by field protection cluster coordinators when they are in Geneva were considered a useful but under-utilised mechanism to bring voices from the field directly to international decision-makers, and this could be done more systematically. The GPC has also recorded several videos by field coordinators and posted them to its website. Key messages (59% of respondents), briefing documents (58%) and other written documents were also viewed as priorities. The GPC website has several examples of these,¹⁵ although there are few standardised templates provided by the GPC. In-depth advocacy reports were also seen as important

(54% of respondents), although the GPC has produced relatively few of these. In 2013, the GPC published a study to draw attention to the lack of funding for the protection sector (Murray and Landry, 2013). The GPC Operational Cell is keen to make more use of the *Centrality of protection in humanitarian action* report for advocacy to raise awareness on key issues and contexts. Public advocacy products and tools, including campaigns (40% of respondents), social media content (38%), public statements (33%), videos (24%) and media articles and op-eds (2%) were viewed as less of a priority, based on the survey results. Indeed, in 2018 the GPC stopped producing the Alerts mentioned above. Consultations also confirmed that the GPC’s added value/comparative advantage is in terms of the more direct forms of protection advocacy. While such communication tools might be a more efficient way to provide advocacy messages to wider audiences, the GPC will need to consider whether it should expend resources in this area, if its members do not consider this kind of activity a priority.

Figure 4: Advocacy products and tools that should be prioritised by the GPC



15 See the news and events section of the GPC website (www.globalprotectioncluster.org/news-and-events/gpc-news/).

4 Protection advocacy at the field protection cluster level

While each context presents its own challenges, there are several common elements to the approach to protection advocacy adopted by field protection clusters and the areas that could be strengthened through the development of the GPC Advocacy Strategy. Stakeholders frequently cited protection advocacy as a weak aspect of the field protection clusters' work, and there was strong support for the development of a GPC Advocacy Strategy that could help address this.

4.1 Protection advocacy strategies

A review of field-based protection strategies shows that protection advocacy is normally included within protection cluster strategies or HCT protection strategies as the means by which to achieve certain objectives or outcomes. More specific advocacy activities are also included in strategies and associated action plans.¹⁶ However, the objectives and outcomes to be achieved through advocacy are not always clearly defined or measurable in terms of the results that could be expected. For example, strategies frequently included broad statements about enhancing compliance with international law by parties to conflict, but without clear steps on how to achieve this or how to measure whether this had happened. Many HCT protection strategies stated that a stand-alone advocacy strategy should be developed. Indeed, several contexts had either already developed (Palestine and Yemen) or were in the process of developing (Ethiopia,

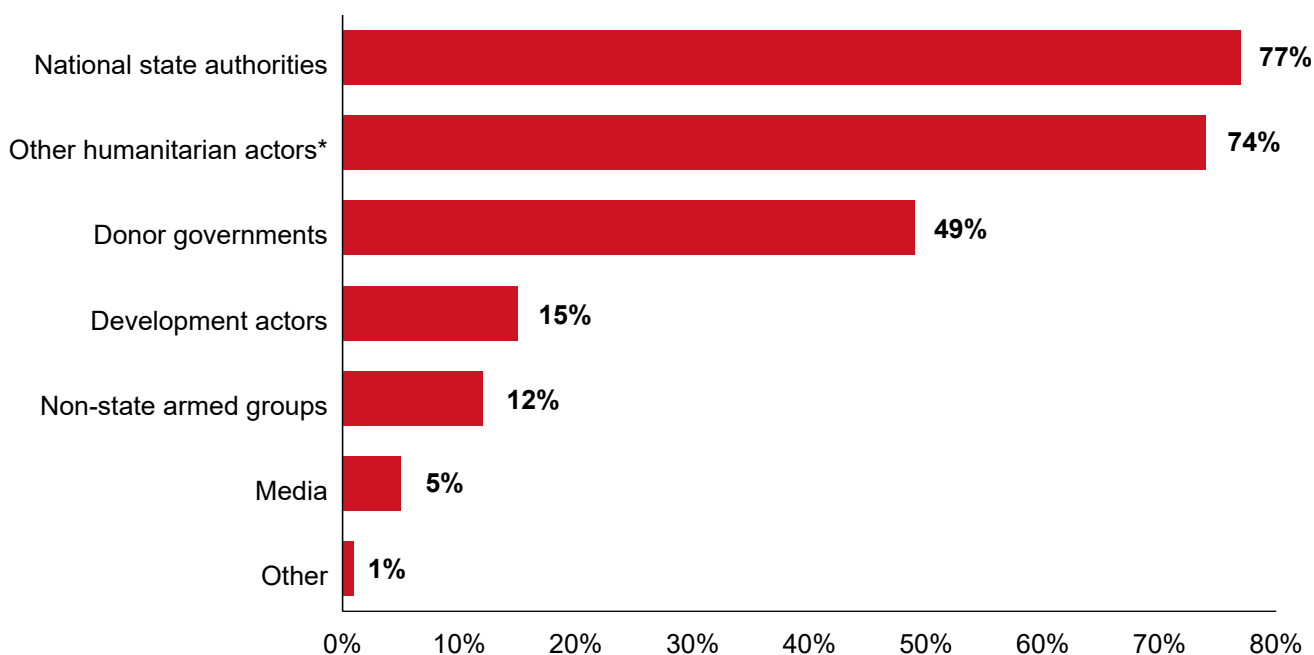
Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Libya, DRC and Afghanistan) stand-alone advocacy strategies. Such strategies have the advantage of providing focused attention to the issues, but also risk detaching advocacy from broader approaches to protection. While it was widely recognised that protection advocacy requires strengthening, there was also concern about 'strategy fatigue' with too many parallel and fragmented strategic approaches. For field protection clusters that are developing advocacy strategies with their respective HCTs, there were requests for the GPC to share a template and good practices for these. However, the GPC will first need to take a policy position on the merits of developing stand-alone advocacy strategies as opposed to integrating this aspect in protection cluster strategies and HCT protection strategies, to provide clarity about where strategic planning on protection advocacy should take place. Stand-alone advocacy strategies should be avoided when this is already being planned in other documents. The guidance note for developing HCT protection strategies, which is currently being updated, provides an important opportunity to outline how advocacy should be addressed in these strategies.

4.2 Advocacy targets

While each context has its own structures and approaches to protection advocacy, there was a clear pattern in terms of the advocacy targets of the field protection clusters. As Figure 5 shows, the two main advocacy targets are national authorities (77% of respondents) and other humanitarian

¹⁶ The HCT protection strategies review conducted by the IASC RG 1 subgroup on the centrality of protection, which analysed the 23 HCT protection strategies, came to the same conclusion.

Figure 5: Main advocacy targets of the field protection clusters/sector at the field level



* HC, HCT, other clusters, etc.

actors (including the HC, HCT and other clusters), with 74% of respondents. This indicates where the GPC should focus support as part of the development of the Advocacy Strategy.

4.2.1 National authorities

While the survey identified national authorities as the main advocacy target of field protection clusters, FGDs indicated a more nuanced picture, with significant variation in the ability of field protection clusters to effectively engage with these actors on protection issues. In some contexts, it has been possible for field protection clusters to have a dialogue with national authorities on protection, and for them to advocate on issues of concern. In the DRC, South Sudan, Ukraine and Burkina Faso, field protection clusters said that they had been able to engage directly with national authorities. However, many field protection clusters reported having limited, and in some cases no, direct contact with national authorities, instead channelling their protection advocacy to these actors indirectly through the HCT and HC (see below). In these contexts, it has either been too sensitive for field protection clusters to engage in protection advocacy directly with national authorities, or they have deferred to other, better

placed actors. For example, the field protection clusters in Yemen, Venezuela, Myanmar and Nigeria all reported significant difficulties in undertaking protection advocacy with national authorities given the limited scope for dialogue on protection issues. In such contexts, the objective of any dialogue with the national authorities has often been to promote principled humanitarian action as a first step towards advocacy on specific protection issues. Some field protection clusters said that they did not have a natural interlocutor or relevant line ministry within the national authorities, which made advocacy more difficult. This challenge was less pronounced for the GBV and child protection AoRs, which can normally raise concerns with ministries of social affairs. In some contexts, the national authorities co-chair the field protection cluster, which was seen in some respects as an advantage in addressing certain advocacy issues directly, and in others as a potential challenge as it made it harder to bring up more sensitive issues in an open forum. While protection advocacy with national authorities was often viewed as challenging at the national level, it was considered more feasible at the subnational level, where sensitivities were not seen to be as great and advocacy with local authorities

was part-and-parcel of addressing practical operational issues.

4.2.2 Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)

The survey responses indicated that stakeholders consider the HCT an important advocacy target. In the FGDs, the HCT was frequently mentioned by field protection clusters as their most immediate and natural advocacy target. In line with the IASC Protection Policy, protection has been made a standing agenda item of the HCT in most contexts reviewed, to ensure the centrality of protection in the humanitarian response.¹⁷ Given the cross-cutting nature of protection, it is usually relevant to many HCT discussions. For example in Myanmar, of 81 HCT agenda items discussed in 2019 during 13 meetings, 32 were primarily focused on protection-related issues. Field protection clusters typically produce Critical Protection Issue (CPI) or other advocacy notes to mobilise the HC and other members of the HCT – including donors and heads of agencies – to take up advocacy on issues of concern. Advocacy towards the HCT was viewed by field protection clusters as both ‘internal’ – to ensure protection was adequately addressed in the humanitarian response – and ‘external’, since the HCT was the forum in which to channel advocacy messages and mobilise other actors to take up advocacy with national authorities, which field protection clusters have been less able to pursue themselves. In many contexts Advocacy and Communications Working Groups also report to the HCT, and may have stand-alone advocacy strategies, and field protection clusters attend and closely coordinate with them.

While protection advocacy towards the HCT was seen as an effective way for field protection clusters to ensure that issues of concern were raised with the relevant advocacy targets, there were a number of reports of HCTs failing to take full ownership of and responsibility for pursuing certain issues. There was widespread concern about the limited feedback provided and the results and follow-up actions taken by HCTs. This underlines how protection may not always be considered central to the humanitarian response and, even

where it is, it remains difficult to monitor and measure the impact of advocacy. According to the field protection clusters engaged in this study, the HC’s leadership role was seen as critical to robust advocacy, though the willingness of these individuals to take on such a responsibility varied from one context to the next. The IASC Protection Policy is clear about the fundamental role of the HC in ensuring that protection priorities are identified and result in collective action by the HCT. However, actions agreed by the HCT often get delegated to the protection cluster, which might not have the political influence to implement recommendations and may be unable to carry out the requested actions.

4.2.3 Donor governments

Noting the challenges involved in engaging national authorities on protection issues, channelling messages and concerns through donor governments was viewed by many field protection clusters as an important (indirect) way to bring up protection concerns, with 49% of survey respondents citing this as one of the main advocacy targets. Briefings and sharing advocacy notes with donor governments has also been an effective means to seek alliances to promote the centrality of protection in humanitarian responses. Donors are often members of the HCT, providing a direct channel for field protection clusters. Field protection clusters are also often part of more formal donor briefings, and many spoke of bilateral engagements with donor governments on protection advocacy.

4.2.4 Non-state armed groups

Very few field protection clusters have direct contact with non-state armed groups to conduct protection advocacy, with only 12% of survey respondents citing this as an advocacy target. While acknowledged as an extremely important actor in terms of achieving protection outcomes, most field protection clusters are either unable, or do not see it as their role, to engage with non-state armed groups on protection advocacy. In many contexts, such protection advocacy is simply too sensitive, or requires capacities,

17 This was also the finding of the HCT Protection Strategy Review and consultations of the IASC RG 1 subgroup on the centrality of protection.

approaches and tools that field protection clusters do not have at their disposal. This kind of protection advocacy is, therefore, left to other actors to pursue. An indirect approach to protection advocacy with non-state armed groups for field protection clusters involves channelling concerns through the HCT, although field protection clusters often did not know whether or how these issues were raised with non-state armed groups by the HC or HCT leadership. This is an area of protection advocacy that could merit greater investment from the GPC through, for example, training to protection clusters on engaging with non-state armed groups on protection, including negotiation skills. However, direct engagement with non-state armed groups is extremely resource-intensive and requires a specific skill-set, and it is doubtful whether this is where the comparative advantage of the protection cluster lies; rather, this might be better left to other actors with greater competence in this area.

4.3 Advocacy products and tools

As with the GPC at the global level, field protection clusters have produced a variety of advocacy products and tools. Figure 6 shows those seen as most useful from the survey results.

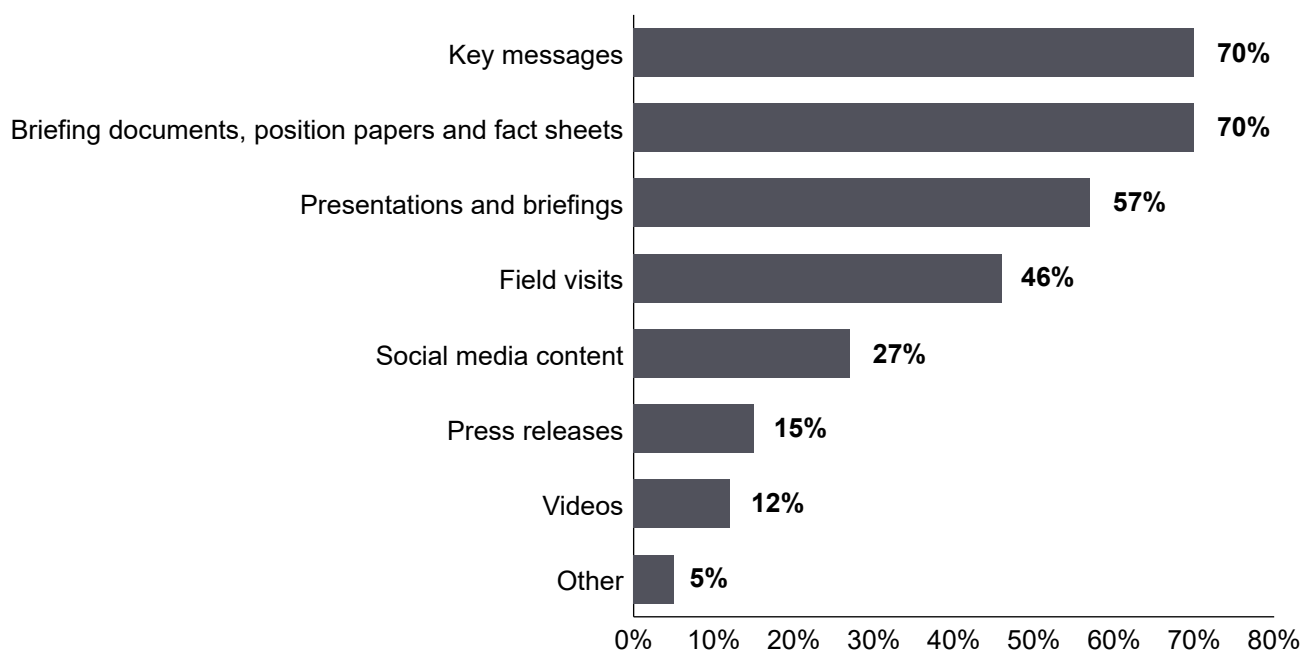
Key messages (70% of respondents), briefing documents, position papers and fact sheets (70%), presentations and briefings (57%) and field visits (46%) were considered the most useful products and tools. Field protection clusters are producing a wealth of protection information and analysis, which, based on the FGDs, is well received by HCTs and other target audiences. Each field protection cluster has tended to develop its own templates and approaches, with some sharing and replication of best practice from one context to the next, but no standardisation of their design by the GPC. Such standardisation could help set quality standards and share good practice around what works best. As noted earlier, the GPC has significantly strengthened its information

management capacity and introduced, in relation to the Covid-19 response, a systematic way to upload products from the field protection clusters. This could be expanded to protection advocacy tools and products more generally, so that there is regular reporting from the field to the GPC. The survey results (see Figure 6) indicated that stakeholders considered tools developed for public advocacy as less useful. As with the response to the role of the GPC at the global level, there is a clear preference for private rather than public advocacy.

4.4 Advocacy tactics

As outlined in the IASC Policy on Protection (IASC, 2016), there are several modes of action related to protection advocacy, including persuasion, mobilisation and denunciation. While each context and issue requires a different kind of approach and, therefore, mode of action, there was a common pattern from the survey results and FGDs with regard to the advocacy tactics most commonly used by field protection clusters. In particular, from the survey, ‘private advocacy and diplomacy’ was prioritised more than ‘mobilisation of other actors’ and ‘public advocacy’. Based on the feedback provided in the FGDs, field protection clusters only very rarely make public statements themselves, and instead more frequently engage in dialogue with advocacy targets and partners, or try to mobilise other actors, such as the HCT and donors, as potential advocacy allies, as outlined in the sections above. This was not only the result of field protection clusters being risk-averse with regard to public advocacy, but also their view that other actors, such as the HC or head of agencies, would be a stronger voice to conduct public advocacy. In some contexts, such as Syria, there has also been a trade-off – as outlined in the FGDs – between making public statements and securing access to affected populations, with the latter being prioritised over the former (another reason why public advocacy is not pursued more).

Figure 6: Protection advocacy products and tools developed by field protection clusters over the last 12 months that were considered most useful



4.5 Engaging local actors in protection advocacy

There has been a strong push in recent years towards the localisation of humanitarian action, including in relation to protection. However, aid agencies are still often failing to consider the concerns of affected populations and the capacities of local actors when designing and implementing protection responses, including advocacy (see Metcalfe-Hough, 2019). The strategic priority on protection advocacy in the GPC Strategic Framework cited earlier makes clear the need for the protection cluster to amplify local voices and represent advocacy messages towards relevant advocacy targets. Local actors (including NGOs and civil society groups) have engaged in protection advocacy in several contexts for many years, and are valued members of field protection clusters. Coordinators acknowledged in the FGDs the importance of engaging local actors in their advocacy, although most said that this is an area that requires strengthening. The precise relationship between the field protection cluster and local actors varies significantly from one context to the next. In some contexts, for example Palestine and

Ukraine, local NGOs have developed significant capacities to undertake protection advocacy (albeit with noted challenges) and pursue their own strategies and activities. In others, local actors lack not only resources and capacity to conduct protection advocacy, but also access to advocacy opportunities, both at the national and international levels. They often risk hostile reactions from national authorities for taking critical positions and advocating publicly, and are not aware of, or linked into, advocacy opportunities at the global level.

Local actors in the FGDs confirmed that the field protection clusters in their contexts had provided an important forum in which to raise issues that would otherwise be difficult for them to address alone, and to channel their advocacy messages to relevant targets. Field protection clusters mentioned that local actors are a key source of information and analysis on specific protection concerns, especially where international actors are unable to access certain locations. For example, the protection cluster in Syria is almost entirely reliant on local actors to analyse the protection situation in the north-west of the country. The survey results indicated that ‘Technical support to the development of advocacy strategies and activities’, ‘Providing a platform to local actors

and affected populations in international fora’ and ‘Conducting training for local actors on protection advocacy’ are considered important ways in which local actors could be supported by the protection cluster. It would thus be important to integrate and prioritise such elements in the GPC Advocacy Strategy.

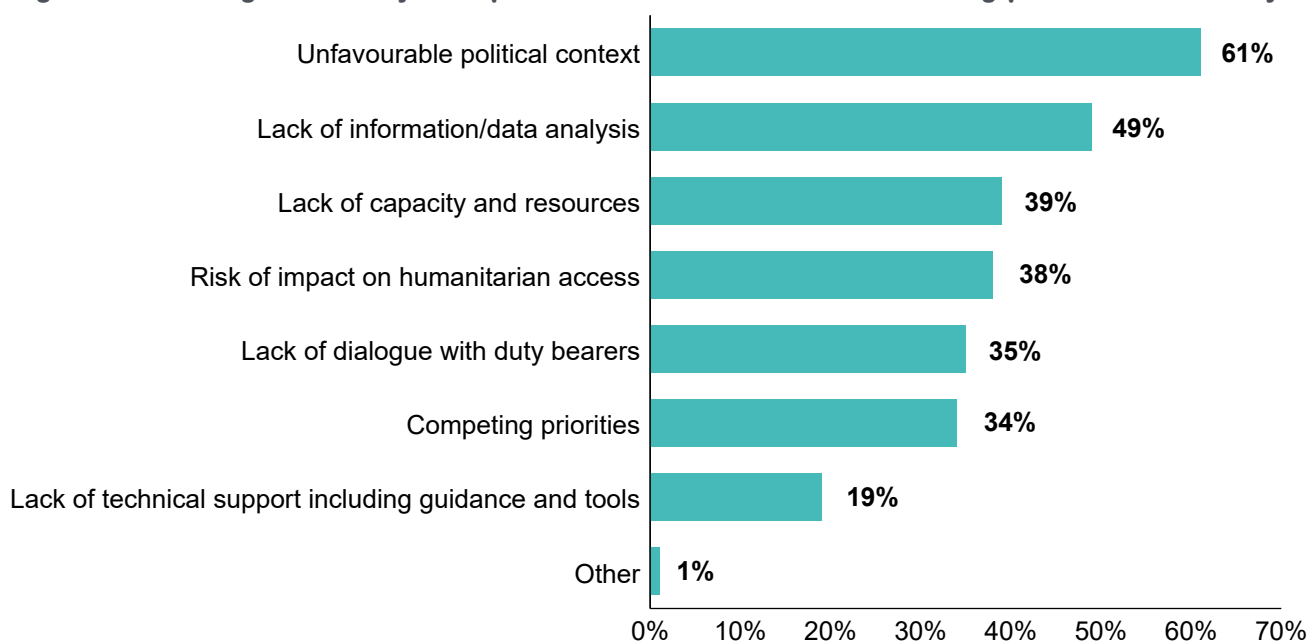
4.6 Challenges and risks

Field protection clusters reported different challenges and risks when undertaking protection advocacy. In many contexts there was a feeling of advocacy fatigue as it has been so difficult to achieve results. When success has been possible it has often been relative, based on specific issues and objectives rather than an overall theory of change about what does, and does not, work in terms of protection advocacy. As Figure 7 shows, the most significant difficulties expressed in the survey were political factors, with 61% of respondents citing ‘unfavourable political context’ as a challenge. In many of the contexts assessed, which are characterised by armed conflict and political stability, there has been almost complete impunity for violations of international law and limited possibilities for bringing up protection issues through advocacy. This finding is consistent with the analysis

presented earlier about the difficulty of engaging with national authorities, and even more so with non-state armed groups, on protection advocacy. Indeed, 35% of respondents cited a lack of dialogue with duty-bearers as a challenge. The politically contested and unstable contexts in which many field protection clusters operate, characterised by limited respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, makes it extremely challenging to achieve results through protection advocacy. Many protection issues have simply been too sensitive for risk-averse field protection clusters to advocate on for fear of potential repercussions. A lot depends on the political will and openness of national authorities to their international obligations to protect their civilian populations. It is precisely in these more difficult contexts, however, where protection advocacy is needed most. Given the challenges they have faced, field protection clusters have adopted the approach of channelling advocacy messages through the HCT and other mechanisms. During FGDs and interviews, the willingness of the HC to undertake advocacy on sensitive issues was highlighted as a factor in the extent to which field protection clusters can pursue advocacy in challenging contexts.

Beyond political factors, 49% of survey respondents cited ‘Lack of information/data and analysis’ as the next most important challenge.

Figure 7: Challenges faced by field protection clusters when undertaking protection advocacy



As mentioned earlier, protection advocacy should be evidenced-based, yet some field protection clusters currently lack the protection monitoring systems and analysis capabilities to undertake effective protection advocacy. This may, in part, be because of the challenging operational contexts in which they work, and the lack of investment in developing the robust protection monitoring systems critical to evidence-based advocacy. Indeed, 39% of survey respondents cited ‘Lack of capacity and resources’ as a key challenge. From the FGDs, such lack of capacity and resources is not preventing field protection clusters from conducting protection advocacy together, but it was widely recognised that such protection work requires a specific skill-set and training that protection cluster staff do not always possess.

There is often a trade-off between conducting protection advocacy (especially public advocacy) and securing humanitarian access to affected populations, with the former potentially detrimental to the latter. This was cited as a challenge by 38% of survey respondents, with the FGDs providing examples (such as in Syria, mentioned earlier) where protection advocacy had not occurred due to fear of the negative impact it might have on access for humanitarian operations. Effective risk management is essential in such contexts, and more guidance should be provided by the GPC to help field protection clusters undertake risk assessments and formulate appropriate mitigation strategies.

4.7 Support required from the GPC to field protection clusters

The description of field protection clusters’ advocacy has indicated a tendency towards some approaches over others, and the priority areas where the GPC Advocacy Strategy should focus. It will also need to address the challenges and risks outlined above if it is to support the work of field protection clusters. In general, field protection clusters said that they had had limited support and contact with the GPC on protection advocacy, less so than for other core functions of the protection cluster. This had not necessarily impeded their protection advocacy. Indeed, only 19% of survey respondents cited a lack of technical support as a challenge when undertaking protection advocacy. The FGDs indicated that some field protection clusters had developed approaches to protection advocacy far more than others. For those that had not, there were specific requests for further support. The Advocacy Strategy will be an opportunity to set out expectations across all field protection clusters with regard to advocacy.

As Figure 8 shows, there are a number of areas where support is required from the GPC. The sharing of good practice between contexts was most frequently cited (59% of respondents). The GPC has recently relaunched its online community of practice platform, which could be used for this purpose.¹⁸ The development of advocacy products and tools was also mentioned by many survey respondents (57%), which perhaps supports the need to provide standardised templates for the common products that are being produced. Training came up in several FGDs, with 57% of survey respondents also mentioning this. There is existing training on human rights monitoring and negotiation that could be drawn on in this regard. Protection analysis (45% of respondents) and information gathering and protection monitoring (32%) were seen as less of a priority, but as noted earlier this is a challenge for some field protection clusters more than others.

18 The Community of Practice is hosted on the GPC website at <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/tools-and-guidance/protection-cluster-coordination-toolbox/community-of-practice/>

Figure 8: Support required from the GPC by field protection clusters on protection advocacy



5 Conclusions and recommendations

This scoping study has reviewed current practice in protection advocacy by the GPC and field protection clusters as the first step towards developing a GPC Advocacy Strategy. A proper strategic planning process will need to be undertaken to elaborate the GPC Advocacy Strategy based on the findings of this scoping study. In particular, given the extremely broad experience of protection advocacy, it will be important to prioritise some focus areas, and to ensure that there are sufficient resources to implement the activities chosen. In this regard, a number of conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from the scoping study to inform the next phase:

- 1. Clarify the GPC's added value/comparative advantage on protection advocacy.** The GPC does not have significant political leverage to exert influence on duty-bearers and decision-makers when compared to other actors in the humanitarian system. Instead, the GPC's added value/comparative advantage on protection advocacy comes from its ability to provide a collective voice on issues of common concern to its membership, and to provide technical expertise to other actors within the humanitarian system (particularly other humanitarian actors and donors) to inform and support their advocacy on protection issues. The GPC Advocacy Strategy should:
 - Based on its added value/comparative advantage, establish clear criteria, triggers and sign-off procedures governing when the GPC will advocate on behalf of its membership and in support of field protection clusters.
- 2. Define a theory of change for protection cluster advocacy.** The protection cluster currently lacks a theory of change for its protection advocacy that defines the approach that is expected to achieve protection outcomes. The scoping study findings revealed a tendency for certain kinds of advocacy objectives, tactics, products and tools. While each protection advocacy initiative requires an individual approach, the scoping study also revealed a clear preference for private over public advocacy. Much of the protection cluster's advocacy is also indirect, with messages channelled through other actors (such as the HCT and donors), rather than directly to duty-bearers. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to protection advocacy, these findings should form the basis for the GPC to develop a theory of change for its protection advocacy. In particular, the GPC Advocacy Strategy should:
 - Focus on a few key advocacy targets through which it can channel key messages. These include donors, by providing regular advocacy briefings on thematic issues and country contexts to the Donor and Member States Liaison Platform; the IASC, to engage with senior officials in the humanitarian community; and the HRC, using the Task Team on Human Rights Engagement to enhance field protection cluster inputs to human rights mechanisms.

3. **Strike a balance between external and internal advocacy.** The scoping study confirmed that external and internal protection advocacy often go hand in hand, and it is important that both are included in the GPC Advocacy Strategy. The external dimension has received less attention and should, in many ways, be prioritised. The internal dimension is also important, although the GPC should carefully consider how it will complement, rather than duplicate, other processes promoting the centrality of protection in humanitarian action. In particular, the GPC Advocacy Strategy should:
- Develop key guidance and tools (see below) for field protection clusters to strengthen their external advocacy with duty-bearers, including both direct and indirect approaches.
 - Coordinate with the subgroup of IASC RG 1 to see how the GPC Advocacy Strategy can be used to support advocacy on the centrality of protection.
4. **Adopt a strategic and results-oriented approach to protection advocacy.** Advocacy is being adequately addressed in field protection strategies, but there is a fragmented approach, with stand-alone advocacy strategies also being developed in several contexts. Furthermore, there is currently limited means to measure whether protection advocacy conducted by the GPC and field protection clusters is achieving its objectives. Success is often relative and hard to pinpoint, and it is extremely difficult to measure results. However, a results-oriented approach to protection advocacy should be adopted. In particular, the GPC Advocacy Strategy should:
- Make clear how advocacy should be addressed through HCT protection strategies (the guidance note for which is currently being updated), protection cluster strategies and stand-alone advocacy strategies.
 - Include a performance framework and guidance on how field protection clusters can measure results and the impact of their advocacy, including through specific indicators, and a feedback mechanism for when field protection clusters advocate to the HCT.
5. **Increase support for field protection cluster advocacy.** Technical support on advocacy for field protection clusters was viewed as more of a priority for the GPC than engaging in advocacy itself. There is currently limited support being provided by the GPC to field protection clusters on advocacy (as compared to other areas of its work), as well as limited guidance setting out the expectations of field protection clusters in this area. Few mechanisms exist for them to channel protection concerns from the field to the GPC to address through global-level mechanisms. In particular, the GPC Advocacy Strategy should:
- Provide guidance on the minimum actions that all field protection clusters should be conducting in terms of advocacy.
 - Establish procedures for the GPC to work more closely with field protection clusters and outline the key advocacy opportunities that they can engage with (through, for example, an advocacy calendar of key events) and procedures to provide relevant inputs.
6. **Focus on a few priority protection issues for advocacy.** A myriad of protection issues could be addressed in the GPC Advocacy Strategy. While there are core issues that the GPC should continue to advocate on, it will be important to select a few key issues to focus on, given the limited resources available. The scoping study has provided some indications of the protection issues seen as of most concern and where the GPC might have a comparative advantage, especially neglected issues not already being addressed by other actors. In this regard, the GPC Advocacy Strategy should:
- Focus on two or three thematic priority issues relevant to all field protection clusters each year.
 - In addition to these overall themes, include a mechanism by which field protection clusters can bring to the attention of the GPC those protection issues that they would like it to take action on in terms of advocacy.

7. **Strengthen and increase the utilisation of protection analysis for advocacy.** The GPC and field protection clusters are collecting an enormous amount of data and information on protection issues and conducting analysis on these as a basis for advocacy. While some field protection clusters face challenges in this area and require support to strengthen their protection monitoring systems, others are already able to provide a level of analysis that could be utilised far more by the GPC in its advocacy at the global level. This would require ensuring more consistent reporting procedures to the GPC to channel the different advocacy messages from the field at a global level. In particular, the GPC Advocacy Strategy should:
- Develop standardised tools and information management systems for field protection monitoring, including through the GPC Information and Analysis Working Group.
 - Develop and promote a selection of standardised templates for advocacy notes, key messages, briefing documents and other key advocacy products that can be used by field protection clusters.
 - Regularly disseminate GPC advocacy products through mailing lists, social media and the GPC website.
8. **Strengthen existing partnerships to undertake protection advocacy.** Given the limited resources of the GPC and the significant number of other actors already working on protection advocacy, it would be more strategic for the GPC to strengthen some of its existing partnerships with key actors that share similar mandates or objectives on protection advocacy. The scoping study has revealed that certain partnerships, such as with donors and other clusters, and those that are seen as most effective, could be strengthened further. In particular, the GPC Advocacy Strategy should:
- Be based on a mapping of key partners with whom some strategic partnerships can be strengthened.
 - Include a mechanism to coordinate and better support the advocacy activities of individual GPC members.
9. **Development of guidance, tools and training to support field protection clusters.** There were no significant requests for guidance and tools, with sharing of best practice often seen as a more useful way to support field protection clusters. Unlike other areas of the GPC's work, there are relatively few guidelines and tools that have been developed on protection advocacy. These could be developed, as well as training packages to help roll them out. In particular, the GPC Advocacy Strategy should:
- Use the GPC Community of Practice to share good practice on protection advocacy between field protection clusters.
 - Develop a Protection Advocacy Toolkit (similar to the Protection Mainstreaming Toolkit).
 - Provide a training package on protection advocacy (either stand-alone or as part of existing training) developed by the GPC or in association with another organisation already providing such training.
10. **Include sufficient resources to strengthen GPC protection advocacy.** Protection advocacy is resource-intensive and requires particular skills and capacities. The scope and scale of the objectives of the GPC Advocacy Strategy will depend on what resources will be made available to strengthen this area of the GPC's work. The GPC Advocacy Strategy should:
- Be supported by a senior protection officer in the GPC Operational Cell, and other support staff as required, who will act as a dedicated focal point on advocacy for field protection clusters.
 - Include a detailed budget of the planned activities and mapping of costs.
 - Provide means to mobilise resources for protection advocacy at field level through the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and associated funding mechanisms.

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Annex 1 Interview guide

The following research questions were used to structure and guide the consultations as part of the scoping study and the online survey.

What is the added value and comparative advantage of the GPC in terms of protection advocacy?

- What is the role of the GPC on advocacy given its mandate and global position as compared to other advocacy actors?
- Are there specific kinds of circumstances and situations where the GPC has advocated?
- What has worked in terms of protection advocacy by the GPC? Are there specific examples that can be shared?

What are the specific protection outcomes and objectives that the GPC and field protection clusters have tried to achieve through their advocacy?

- How are these outcomes and objectives determined and to what extent have these been based on priorities of local actors and affected populations?
- How has external advocacy towards duty-bearers to ensure compliance with international law been balanced with internal advocacy towards the humanitarian community to ensure the centrality of protection?
- Should the GPC Advocacy Strategy aim to address both these external and internal dimensions of advocacy?

What are the protection issues that the GPC and field protection clusters have been, and should be, advocating upon?

- How have the GPC and field protection clusters determined and prioritised which issues they advocate on? Are they best placed to advocate on some issues rather than others?
- Which are the protection issues that the GPC has taken or should be taking on advocacy for on behalf of field protection clusters?
- Do field protection clusters have adequate protection information to conduct advocacy? What has been good practice in terms of protection analysis?

What strategies related to advocacy are currently in place?

- To what extent has advocacy been included in the HCT protection strategies and protection cluster strategies?
- Does the protection cluster or HCT have stand-alone advocacy strategies?
- How do these strategies relate to those of individual agency advocacy efforts and the HRP?
- Is there specific support from the GPC required in terms of developing advocacy strategies?

Who have been and should be the main advocacy targets for the GPC and field protection clusters?

- To which actors at the global level (SC, HRC, Member States, IASC, etc.) has the GPC targeted its advocacy and with what success?
- To what extent are field protection clusters engaging with duty-bearers, including state authorities and non-state armed groups, in terms of their protection advocacy? Who else are the advocacy targets at the field level and how are these decided?

What tactics have the GPC and field protection clusters employed as part of their advocacy, and which have been more successful?

- How has persuasion, through private advocacy, been balanced with denunciation, through public advocacy?
- To what extent has mobilisation of other actors been employed as a tactic?
- What other tactics have worked in terms of advocacy?

What challenges and risks (internal and external) are there for the GPC and field protection clusters in conducting advocacy?

- Has there been a trade-off with humanitarian access to affected populations from conducting protection advocacy?
- Has there been the required protection monitoring and analysis to conduct advocacy?
- How can the challenges and risks be better managed/mitigated?

What advocacy products and tools used by the GPC and field protection clusters have been effective?

- Have GPC alerts, joint messages and press statements been useful?
- What kinds of advocacy meetings, briefings and other events have been successful?
- In what ways have social media and communication products been used to advocate on protection?

In what ways have the GPC and field protection clusters coordinated their protection advocacy?

- How does the GPC coordinate with field protection clusters on advocacy?
- Are there specific areas of technical support that are required by field protection clusters from the GPC?
- How do the GPC/field protection clusters coordinate with the AoRs on protection advocacy?
- How does the protection advocacy of field protection clusters relate to that of the HCT, UNCT and RC/HC?
- In what ways are local advocacy efforts being linked to global advocacy? Are these effective?

Is there adequate capacity in the GPC and field protection clusters to undertake effective advocacy?

- What gaps are there in this respect, and how can these gaps be addressed?
- How is/should advocacy efforts be resourced?

What partnerships exist/could be developed to increase the impact of GPC and field protection cluster advocacy?

- How has the GPC interacted with the IASC on protection advocacy?
- What advocacy networks has the GPC engaged with at the global level?
- What has the relationship been with human rights organisations on advocacy?
- Is there scope for engaging with development actors on protection advocacy as part of the nexus approach?
- What has been the relationship with UN peace operations on protection advocacy?
- What are the risks inherent in partnerships with non-humanitarian actors (e.g. human rights, political, peacekeeping, development actors)?

How have the impact/outcomes of protection advocacy been monitored and measured by the GPC and field protection clusters?

- How is protection advocacy incorporated in the monitoring of the HPC?
- What specific indicators and/or monitoring methodologies have been used or could be used?
- What is feasible in terms of measuring impact?
- How are the perspectives of local actors and beneficiaries featured in the assessment of protection advocacy?

HPG

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Humanitarian Policy Group
Overseas Development Institute
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

Tel.: +44 (0) 20 7922 0300
Fax.: +44 (0) 20 7922 0399
Email: hpgadmin@odi.org
Website: odi.org/hpg

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Civilians site in Malakal, South
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