

THE PROTECTION CLUSTER INCLUDES SUB-CLUSTERS ON CHILD PROTECTION, GENDER BASED VIOLENCE, MINE-ACTION AND HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY TASK FORCE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Internal displacement:** From 1 January 2017 to 19 March 2017, 54,455 individuals fled their homes due to conflict. A total of 25 out of 34 provinces had recorded some level of forced displacement. 57% are children, facing additional risks due to the flight and plight of the displacement, including child recruitment, child labour and increased GBV risks. According to OCHA, 23% IDPs are displaced in hard to reach areas. Top hosting provinces are: Uruzgan (12,481 ind.), Kandahar (6,566 ind.), Nangarhar (6,174), Zabul (3,332 ind.) and Baghlan (5,782 ind.)¹.
- Return to Afghanistan:** 6,628 undocumented Afghans returned from Pakistan and 9,315 undocumented Afghans returned from Iran (IOM) from 1 January to 8 April 2017, 75% undocumented returnees from Pakistan and only 2% from Iran were assisted². UNHCR resumed repatriation on the 1 April after a winter pause: 3,202 refugee returnees have returned and were assisted (as of 11 April 2017)³.

PROTECTION CLUSTER 2017 OBJECTIVES

Objective 1

Acute protection concerns, needs, and violations, stemming from the immediate impact of shocks and taking into account specific vulnerabilities, are identified and addressed in a timely manner.

Objective 2

Evolving protection concerns, needs, and violations are monitored, analysed, and responded to, upholding fundamental rights and restoring the dignity and well-being of vulnerable shock affected populations

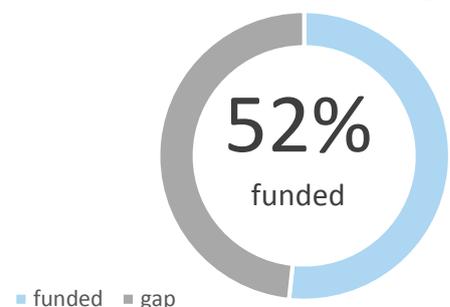
Objective 3

Support the creation of a protection-conducive environment to prevent and mitigate protection risks, as well as facilitate an effective response to protection violations

2016 at glance

- 661k** newly displaced persons during the year
- 11.4k** civilian casualties recorded by UNAMA
- 102k** vulnerable conflict- and natural disaster affected girls and boys assisted with direct child protection support activities
- 29k** girl, boy, female and male GBV-survivors assisted with direct protection support services focused on specialised healthcare, psycho-social support, legal, and protection
- 29k** IDPs assisted with legal counselling, civil documentation issues, and acquiring, maintaining or restoring Housing, Land, and Property rights
- 75%** of population in prioritized areas contaminated by mine/ERW have been provided with Mine Risk Education

2016 Cluster funding



2017

3.7M people in need
2.6M people targeted
56.5M funding requested

¹ Source: Conflict induced displacement in Afghanistan, OCHA. Available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/idps>. Accessed on 12 April 2017

² Source: Weekly Situation Report 2-8 April 2017 "Return of undocumented Afghans". Available at: https://afghanistan.iom.int/sites/default/files/Reports/iom_return_of_undocumented_afghans_weekly_situation_report_2-8_april_2017.pdf. Accessed on 12 April 2017

³ UNHCR Encashment Centre monitoring as of 11 April 2017

KEY PROTECTION CONCERNS

Increase in civilian casualties. Number of civilian casualties in 2016 was the highest since UNAMA started systematic monitoring, with 11,418 civilian casualties (3,498 deaths and 7,920 injured) documented. Main reasons are: ground engagements, suicide and complex attacks, explosive remnants of war and aerial operations. Adherence to the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution in the conduct of hostilities are often not respected by parties to the conflict. Further, practice of issuing advanced warnings to the civilian population as a precautionary measure is not regular and consistent by the parties to the conflict: warnings should leave adequate timeframe for all populations to voluntarily leave the areas where operations are to be conducted, although they do not rescind the obligation of the parties to the conflict from the absolute prohibition to run military operations in areas populated by civilians and to target civilian objects in the area. Severe impact of the conflict on children is especially noticeable: children comprised 31 % of all conflict related civilian casualties in country; 59 incidents of child recruitment involving 91 boys were recorded by the MRM (numbers most likely are underreported)¹.

Record-level conflict-induced displacement: In 2016, some 661,000 individuals had been newly displaced by conflict, exceeding the number of 450,000 individuals who were newly displaced in 2015, and adding to a caseload of protracted IDPs estimated to number some 325,000 in total. 31 of 34 provinces produced IDPs in 2016, and all 34 provinces hosted verified IDP populations. If present trends continue, the international humanitarian community estimates that as many as 450,000 individuals may be displaced by fighting in 2017².

Severe strains on existing absorption capacity and infrastructure: The enormous surge in returns resulted in extreme stress on the already overstretched absorption capacity in Afghanistan's main provincial and district centres, as many Afghans joined the legions of IDPs unable to return to their areas of origin due to the worsening conflict.

Secondary displacement and lack of solutions for the urban displacement: 70% of IDPs reside in urban areas, like Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif and Jalalabad. With limited job opportunities, no social protection nets and poor shelter conditions, displaced people not only face increased protection risks in their daily life, but are also forced into secondary displacement and negative coping strategies, like child labour, early marriage, reducing quantity and quality of food etc. Humanitarian actors have limited resources to conduct interventions at the scale that urban context requires. Hence, development interventions are required together with integrated programs that include host communities and displaced population groups. Humanitarian actors are capable of playing an advisory role in designing programs and applying knowledge of the situation.

Large-scale return under adverse conditions, partly due to lack of access to documentation: Approximately 372,000 registered refugees returned to Afghanistan in 2016³, the vast majority from Pakistan following the significant deterioration of the protraction situation in the second half of 2016, including reported incidents of harassment, extortion, unlawful arrest and detention. In addition to the registered refugee returns, some 242,000 undocumented Afghans returned during the year from Pakistan in similar circumstances, while over 420,000 Afghans spontaneously returned or were deported from Iran⁴.

90% men and only 38% women possess Tazkera (national ID) in Afghanistan⁵, while levels of access to birth and marriage certificates, and passports is even less, especially among women and children. While the Government has introduced changes in the legislation waiving the requirement to return to the place of origin for the displaced people to obtain civil documentation; another waiver was applied by the Government to allow to enrol children without Tazkera into school; these changes are not implemented effectively in the field. Further, lack of civil documentation presents other numerous challenges, hindering access to the formal justice, inheritance rights, freedom of movement etc, which are basic rights that need to be upheld. Access to humanitarian assistance, which should not be based on the civil documentation status, is hampered by numerous actors on the basis of absence of documents. These numerous challenges need resolution to ensure that Afghans, both displaced and returning from other countries, have equal access to the basic services provided by the Government.

Humanitarian access is shrinking in numerous districts due to high levels of insecurity. Assessments, delivery of aid and presence in number of areas is highly risky for both UN and NGOs.

Solutions for prolonged IDPs and returnees therefore remains a key challenge. Protection Cluster and UNHCR have been continuously advocating to include prolonged IDPs and returnees in the development programs, like Citizen's Charter and others that aim at bringing sustainable solutions to the population in need.

PRIORITIES OF THE PROTECTION CLUSTER FOR 2017

NATIONAL LEVEL

Harmonize standards and guidelines for service delivery;

Strengthen reporting among Cluster partners and conduct evidence based advocacy;

Involve partners in developing and delivering advocacy messages;

Develop HCT Protection Strategy and work with the Inter-Cluster Coordination team and HCT on the Accountability to Affected Population Framework

Ensure all cross-cutting aspects (gender, participation and partnership etc) are considered during the three steps of preparedness, response and monitoring;

Resource mobilization

FIELD LEVEL

Consolidate and analyze information from partners on needs, protection risks, response and identify gaps, feeding that back to partners and donors in a structured manner on a regular basis to advocate for covering gaps;

Service mapping and referral pathways;

Capacity building of the national actors

Protection mainstreaming through monitoring

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¹ UNAMA Protection of Civilians Annual Report 2016. Available at: <https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>

² Source: Conflict induced displacement in Afghanistan, OCHA. Available at:

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/idps>. Accessed on 12 April 2017

³ UNHCR returnee monitoring as of 11 April 2017

⁴ IOM data on undocumented returnees

⁵ NRC "Access to Tazkera and other Civil Documentation in Afghanistan" study, 2016