



## 1. REPORT SUMMARY

Protection Monitoring demonstrates that at the close of Q1 2021 the long-documented risks facing the Afghan people persist. Many of these protection concerns are the direct result of armed conflict (including civilian deaths and injuries, conflict-induced displacement, destruction of property and infrastructure and contamination by improvised explosive devices and other unexploded remnants of war, recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups) and long-standing economic hardship. Grinding poverty that now grips vast swathes of the population, caused in large part by the decades-long conflict, pushes families to take ever more desperate measures to survive.

### Key Protection Figures

#### **Civilian casualties January-March**

**2021:** 1,783 civilian casualties (573 killed and 1,210 injured)

#### **Child casualties between January-**

**March 2021:** :552 child casualties (151 killed, 401 injured)

**Total IDP figure:** 4.8M

**2021 People in Need (PIN):** 12.8 M

2020 People in Need (PIN) 9.38

## 2. CONTEXT OVERVIEW

The operating environment in Afghanistan has deteriorated over the last quarter of 2020. The security situation remains volatile and unpredictable since the start of the peace talks in Doha in September 2020. Targeted assassinations, including through attacks using magnetic improvised explosive devices and suicide vehicle borne explosive devices, especially in the city of Kabul persist. Bases and checkpoints operated by the Afghan National Security Forces, high-profile people including members of parliament, male and female judges, female professionals, prosecutors, provincial governors' officials, religious scholars and civilians even children are targeted<sup>1</sup>.

Statistics published in UNAMA's first quarterly Protection of Civilians (PoC) in Armed Conflict report for 2021 should put all on notice: Humanitarian and other responders cannot afford to focus solely on trying to improve the humanitarian response to civilians affected by armed conflict; attention, effort and resources must be put into efforts to prevent or at least mitigate harm to civilians.

Numbers of UNAMA-verified attacks on healthcare facilities for the first quarter of 2021 are slightly higher than those for Q1 2020. WHO's Surveillance System of Attacks on Healthcare (SSA) shows that this year incidents are just as deadly,

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Secretary-General to the United Nation Security Council on the development in Afghanistan 21 March 2021. Available at: [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg\\_report\\_on\\_afghanistan\\_march\\_2021.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_afghanistan_march_2021.pdf)

but also more likely to leave survivors with injuries. The impacts of attacks on health services, infrastructure and personnel are wider and long-lasting. Personnel fearful for their safety may opt to leave the sector, so that services interrupted reopen in a weakened state, or do not resume at all. Patients, also fearing attack, may choose not to seek treatment, and suffer poor health outcomes that could have been avoided. And during the current pandemic, efforts to bring the spread of the COVID-19 virus under control and to ensure treatment for those who contract it, risk being critically undermined by the forced closure of some facilities and prohibitions on vaccination work in some locations in addition to disruptions that are anticipated in the event of an upsurge in fighting.

Attacks on education verified by UNAMA for the quarter show a decrease against the same period for 2020, but vigilance and strategic engagement with all parties to the conflict will be essential in the coming months. Lessons learned from past periods of intensified fighting should be revisited now in order to ensure that no opportunity goes unexploited.

The planned draw-down of US and allied forces from Afghanistan throughout Q2 and Q3 of 2021 is expected to leave intensified fighting in its wake. In this scenario it is reasonable to assume that prohibited conduct, already noted by UNAMA to be increasingly in use,<sup>2</sup> will be seen more frequently. In addition to the trends noted by UNAMA's Protection of Civilian (PoC) report, the most recent data from the Protection Cluster's monitoring indicates that children continue to be at risk of recruitment and use by both pro- and anti-government entities.

In addition to constant security threats, food insecurity is reaching alarming levels which could likely lead to many vulnerable households adopting negative coping strategies. 1 in 3 Afghans (14 million people) are acutely food insecure according to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report released by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The food insecurity in Afghanistan is attributed to the lingering impact of COVID-19, armed conflict, a jump in food prices, high unemployment rates and income loss, and arrival of impending drought triggered by the complex and recurrent *La Niña* weather event. The combination of hunger, economic distress and an uncertain political future present immediate protection challenges in coming months.

In spite of these trends, return rates from Iran and Pakistan are continuing at a steady pace. 254,766 undocumented Afghans returned from Iran (251,466) and Pakistan (3,300) between 1 January - 1 April 2021. Returns from Iran are historically high - more than double the rate of pre-pandemic returns, and more than half are deportations<sup>3</sup>.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Partners conducted interviews with the IDPs, returnees, refugees and the host community across 19 provinces (out of 34 provinces) and 52 districts (out of 325), using the KOBO protection monitoring HH questionnaire. collected data was consolidated, reviewed and validated before being used in the interactive PowerBI Protection Monitoring dashboard, accessed [here](#), which presents key data from the questionnaire, agreed upon by partners.

**6,150 Household-level (HH) interviews** were conducted 52 districts across 18 provinces by 6 partners: ARAA and WAW (Implementing partners of UNHC), DRC, INTERSOS, IOM and NRC. **404 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** were conducted in 39 districts across 19 provinces by 5 partners: DRC, INTERSOS, IOM, NRC and WAW. **300 Key Informants** were interviewed (KIIs) in 28 districts across 15 provinces by DRC, INTERSOS and IOM.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, targeted killings, use of non-suicide IEDs and the use of weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas and a failure to adequately act to minimise harm to civilians during ground engagements. See UNAMA PoC Q1 Report

<sup>3</sup> IOM - <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/return-undocumented-afghans-weekly-situation-report-26-march-01-april-2021>

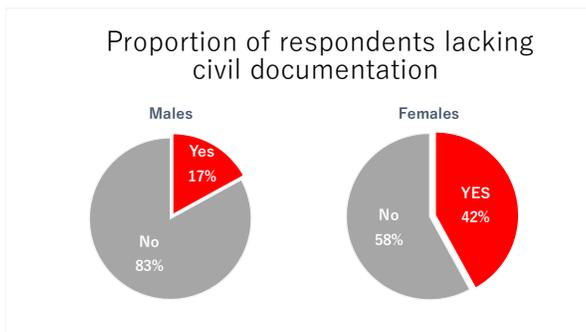
Of those interviewed at household level, 61% were women and 6% had some form of disability. 43% of those interviewed at Focus Group Discussions were women while for Key Informant Interviews, 49% of those interviewed were women.

The three interview modalities overlapped in some districts and provinces, but different locations and population groups were systematically targeted in order to avoid having the same community members being interviewed several times by different Protection Monitoring partners.

## 4. PRIORITY PROTECTION RISKS AND IMPACT ON AFFECTED POPULATION

### Civil Documentations

32% of respondents lacked at least one form of civil documentations with females having a higher rate (42%) compared with males (17%). Findings indicated that Tazkiras (both paper and electronic) were the most prominent document people lacked (43%) followed by passports for refugees and undocumented returnees (18%), marriages certificates (12%), and birth certificates (10%). The proportion of respondents lacking documentation varied by different population groups (i.e., refugee returnees (40%), host community (32%), IDPs (24%). Disaggregation based on provinces indicated that Kandahar had the highest rate of respondents lacking documentation (70%) followed by Herat (37%), Badghis (31%) and Balkh (27%). The most frequently cited reasons for lacking documentation were: never obtained it (64%), lack of knowledge about procedures (11%), not intended (11%), concern for personal safety (5%) and lost/destroyed (5%).



The most significant impacts of a lacking documentation were inability to access basic services (74%) and not being able to move freely (34%). Moreover, although the sample size was very small, refugees cited a lack of birth certificates, marriage certificates and passports. Birth and marriage certificates are available to refugees in Afghanistan. Refugees often lack passports given they are unable to return to their country of origin or as they have a fear of persecution from their country of origin.

Household-level

The lack of legal identity documents affects undocumented returnees' ability to access education and other services, or take up regular work, which further exacerbates existing vulnerability, particularly for women.<sup>4</sup>

### Safety, freedom of movement

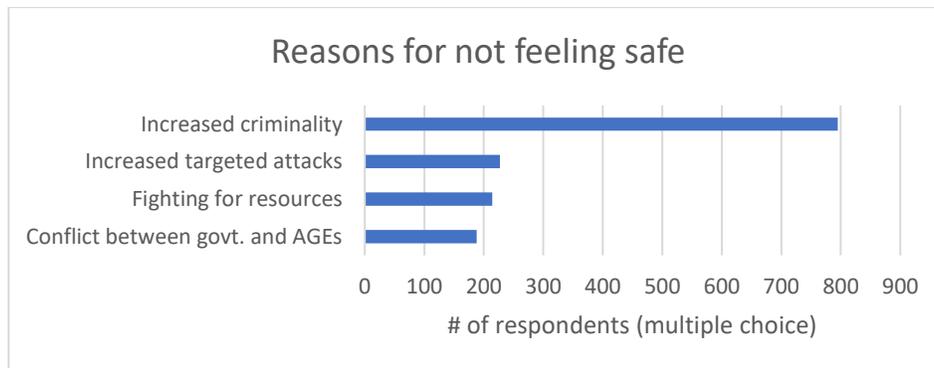
72% of the monitored population felt safe whereas 28% did not. The most frequently cited safety and security concerns were increased criminality (89%), increased targeted attacks (26%), fighting over resources (24%) and conflict between the government and AGEs (21%). Of the 18 provinces monitored, Kandahar had the highest percentage of people who reported not feeling safe (63%) followed by Balkh (34%) and Herat (31%). The percentage of people feeling safe among

<sup>4</sup> Example so of the services already linked to e-Tazkira:

- Government pension scheme,
- the Government cash assistance to families of Martyrs and Disabled,
- getting a service passport (personal passports will be linked to the e-Tazkira soon),
- the collection of revenue generation related to Ministry of Finance, and
- the Tax Information Number (TIN)

the host community (60%) was lower than IDPs (77%) and refugee returnees (68%). No significant difference was found in the perception of safety between males and females.

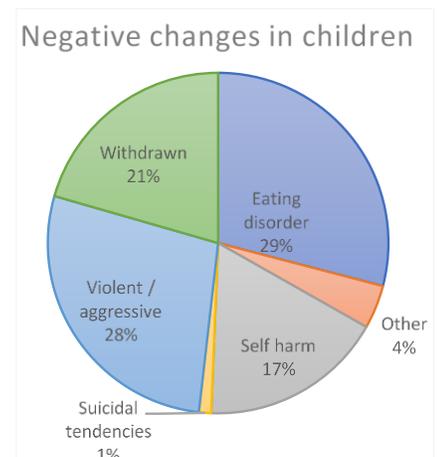
When asked about feeling safe moving within or outside of the community, 85% of males felt safe while only 53% of females felt safe moving within the community and 45% felt safe moving outside of the community. Females cited cultural barriers as the prominent barrier to movement (53%). Returnees are more likely to integrate if it is “safer than where they lived, with the same culture, same language, same religion” as mentioned by undocumented returnee women in Kandahar.



## Child Protection

The economic decline in Afghanistan is adversely impacting on children’s safety and wellbeing. 16% of interviewed households reported child labour in response to loss of income and livelihoods caused by COVID-19. Strained household finances also led to family separation, with participants in FGDs stating economic hardship as the most common reason for children being separated from their usual caregivers. Out of all the FGDs conducted, only seven were aware of places for unaccompanied children to access support and assistance (three in Kandahar province, two in Nimroz province, one in Takhar and one in Herat provinces). This lack of adequate response services and care for UASC likely exacerbates the risks faced by vulnerable children who are forced to resort to harmful coping strategies.

In reference to children’s wellbeing, 8% of households observed negative changes in their children’s behaviour in the last six months, whilst 88% of respondents noticed no changes and 4% were unsure. Of those who noticed negative changes, 29% cited eating disorders, 28% violent and aggressive behaviour, 21% withdrawn behaviour, 17% self-harm and 1% suicidal tendencies, whilst 4% reported other categories of behaviour change such as changes in mental health.



Children continue to bear the brunt of conflict in Afghanistan and are disproportionately affected by its effects. During the first quarter of 2021, 552 child casualties (151 killed, 401 injured) were verified as a result of the armed conflict, with almost half of this figure (49 %) resulting from ground engagements.<sup>5</sup> 41% of children were reported as being unable to play safely and 25% unable to access schools in areas that have been reported as having the presence of mines and other explosives. Out of all surveyed households, 10% reported being aware of the presence of mines or other explosives in their area.

46% of surveyed households reported that family members were unable to access existing services of which 14% reported being unable to access child-focused services such as education, child protection services, and rehabilitation services for children.

## Access to services

### i. Denial of access to services

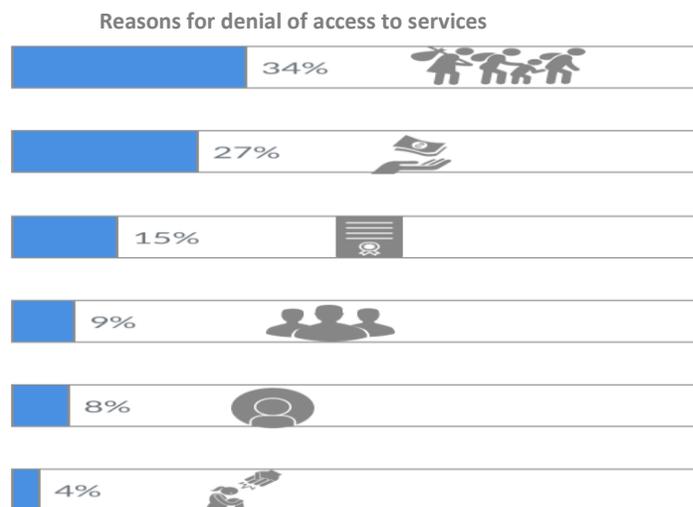
The household survey results show that 31% of respondents reported being denied access to services – with the majority reported by IDPs. Further analysis showed that females reported higher cases of denial by 16%, while household with no disabilities reported more issues related to being denied access to services (28%) than households with disabilities (3%). Similar findings were indicated in key informant interviews with 37% denied access, and 30% from focus group discussions.



The top five services to which households reported being denied are: basic services (17%); livelihood (16%); health (13%); education (9%); psycho-social support and support for persons with specific needs (6% each). KII results differ slightly: health (16%), livelihood (12%), basic services (11%), education (10%), and WASH and documentation at 8% each.

Questions about denial of access to services to HH, FGDs and KII showed that 34% report assistance does not reach people in need. Households also confirmed that assistance is not free (27%) and therefore access is denied, while 15% report that not having the required documentation hinders their access to assistance. Similar results have been observed from KIIs as well as other issues including: movement restrictions due to security concerns and lack of transportation, services not being inclusive, and lack of information about available services. Male IDP returnees and HC in Nimroz stated that services “do discrimination between communities”. This was also mentioned in Herat.

<sup>5</sup> See UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict First Quarter Update: 1 January to 31 March 2021 (hereinafter “UNAMA PoC Q1 Report”). Available at: [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama\\_protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_in\\_armed\\_conflict\\_1st\\_quarter\\_2021\\_2.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_1st_quarter_2021_2.pdf)



## ii. Inability to access services

Household surveys revealed 46% of households have an inability to access existing services. The majority of reports were from by IDPs, host community and women. Key existing services which these groups are unable to access are: health (19%), livelihood support (17%) and basic services (15%). Higher percentages of access issues were reported in KIIs (74%) and FGDs (57%), most of which were raised by host communities and women.

On access barriers, more than a third reported unavailability (35%) or costly (34%) of services, as well as lack of documentation (6%).

The most affected groups among the community members, based on the KII data, are female-headed households, elderly-person headed households, and child-headed households. Undocumented returnees are highlighted as lacking access to services due to their lack of documentation. Returnees and IDPs more generally identified as lacking access, as well as women, children, and persons with disabilities.

## iii. Access to basic services during COVID-19

More than half of all households – majority IDPs and female respondents – reported no access to health facilities and services (56%) during COVID-19. Reasons for challenges in access are due to the cost (52%) and unavailability (45%) of services. A few households reported issues on discrimination, movement restrictions and fear of contracting COVID-19. No differences were observed in terms of reasons from male and female and non-binary respondents.



## Mine Action

Findings showed that 85% lack awareness about mines and other explosives. Yet, in KII 53% of participants confirmed awareness.

Key effects of mines reported by those who had awareness or information are primarily related to access, in particular children not being able to go to school (316 HH), people not being able to access services (169 HH), while others reported concerns on safety for children when playing (510 HH), effects on livelihood (cannot graze livestock), and household chores such as collecting water and wood.

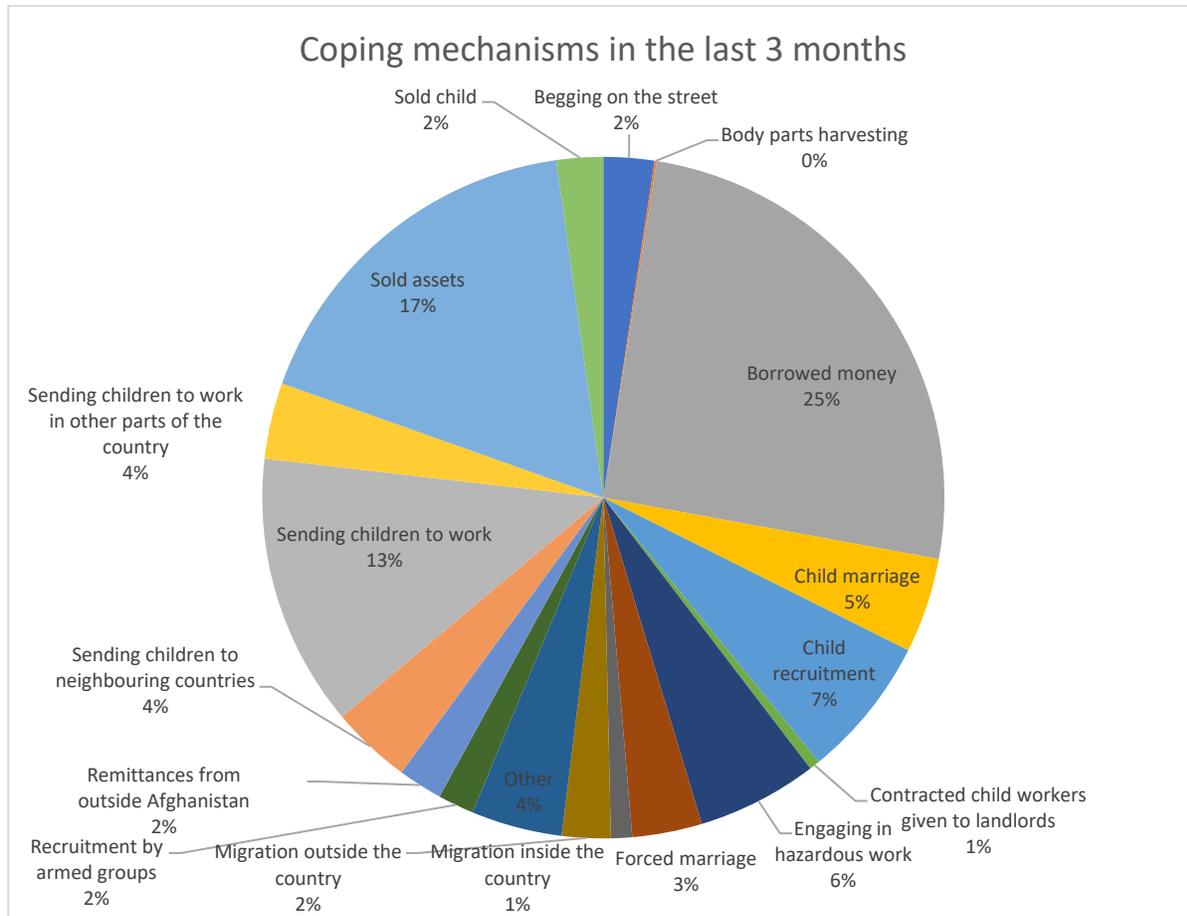
## Housing, Land and Property (HLP)

At least 27% of KIIs reported land-related problems experienced by people within the community. The provinces where HLP issues are most commonly reported from the 19 provinces assessed are Kandahar, Herat and Farah respectively. The three HLP issues overwhelmingly reported by KIIs and FGDs are related to: security of tenure, specifically forced eviction for non-payment of rent; inheritance; and unlawful occupation. Inability to pay rent is the leading HLP issue for the majority of IDPs and returnees living in rental properties. This may lead to evictions.

In Kandahar, inheritance, loss or lack of ownership documentation, secondary and unlawful occupation, and evictions from rented accommodation are the main sources of HLP disputes which are higher than in other provinces. In Herat, the increased likelihood of forced evictions due to non-payment of rent as a result of lack of financial resources is amongst the leading HLP issues. Returnees living in Herat risk of forced eviction as the land occupied belongs to the host community who do not always allow its occupation by returnees. In Faryab IDPs who have built shelter on government-owned lands face forced eviction by the authorities in spite of having been living there for a long time. Reports from Kabul point to land-grabbing by powerful and influential people. In Nimroz respondents, reported the highest prevalence of IDPs and returnees living in partially destroyed houses and shared shelters.

## Coping Mechanisms

Findings show that 28% respondents have borrowed money to cope with their livelihood needs. Other coping mechanisms include selling assets, sending children to work in the city, or outside Afghanistan to neighbouring countries, recruiting children to armed groups, engaging in hazardous work, begging on the streets and child marriage.



#### i. Borrowing money and debt

Borrowing money is reported as the main means of coping with shocks, limited livelihood opportunities and loss of income in all the KIIs across 19 provinces. Selling assets ranked second. Sometimes the sale of assets includes the livestock and tools that are the main sources of generating income for the affected household. Accumulated and unpaid debt leads to individuals or households being forced to resort to other negative coping strategies. Debt-related tension is cited as one of the main reasons for community tension and discrimination in both household-level and KI interviews.

Surprisingly, the findings from Protection Monitoring do not show organ trafficking or body part harvesting as a coping mechanism to survive in the current economic crisis, whereas protection partners had alerted the Protection Cluster in Q1 of such practice in the Western Region. This could be because the practice is illegal in Afghanistan.

#### ii. Child labour and sending children to work outside of Afghanistan

The most prevalent forms of child labour include: collection of garbage to burn as fuel, collection of plastic and scrap metals for resale, fetching wood and water from rivers and far away water points, working on farms, in animal husbandry, and in mechanic shops and brick making factories. Begging on the street is a common forms of child labour in cities. Collecting garbage especially on the roadside, begging on the streets, and working in brick factories are considered the most dangerous and hazardous jobs for children.

13% of KIIs report that children are sent to Iran and Pakistan to work as a way to address economic hardship. The proportion of child labour and child recruitment by armed groups is higher in Kandahar province than other monitored

provinces. This may be explained by the uptick in hostilities which have been taking place in the Southern region since October 2020.<sup>6</sup>

Herat, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Takhar report the highest proportion of children being sent to neighbouring countries to work. The geographical proximity to Iran and Pakistan of most of these provinces to some extent enables families to send children abroad more easily than from central regions of Afghanistan. Sending predominantly adolescent boys and male family members abroad — for work exposes them to risks of human trafficking including of death or serious injury along informal routes use by smugglers.

### iii. Child Marriage and Forced Marriage

The prevalence of child and forced marriage is the highest in Kandahar and Herat, followed by Ghor province. Early marriage is a common practice in the Southern Region. It also exists within the IDP community. It has been reported that some people continue with the practice as a tradition. The majority reported no awareness on the legal age of the marriage under national law. Early marriage was also reported as a negative coping mechanism for households facing financial hardship. Some IDPs marry off their daughters for money with traders who are usually married and looking for a second wife. Exchange marriages that avoid the paying of the bride-price for their sons are also common. Females do not have decision making power, including in relation to their engagement or marriage. IDPs reported that if a woman refuses marriage, “she will face violence within the household (beatings and honour killings reported)”<sup>7</sup>. Lack of economic resources is negatively impacting the dowry system, leading to more forced marriages that are perceived as a way of relieving families of extra mouths to feed. Following field visits and FGDs one protection partner reported that in more isolated areas of the Northern region, women are held hostage by their respective families or families of proposed husbands and imprisoned until an equivalent of dowry or an alternative agreement can be exchanged for the marriage to proceed.

## Social Cohesion

In the majority of locations assessed during the reporting period, inter or intra-communal tensions were not reported among or between displaced and host communities. IDPs and returnees reported living in locations where presence of extended family and/or common ethnic, religious, and cultural ties support positive relations between communities. Host communities are more likely to share information on tensions within communities. Both displaced and host community respondents acknowledge solidarity and social cohesion:

*“Our relationship is very good, we compromise with each other through kindness and sympathy.” – Host community women’s FGD, Badakhshan.*

In Nimroz a key border point with Iran where returns are especially high this quarter, social cohesion seems more fragile.

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<sup>6</sup> From October 2020 insurgent fighters intensified combat. A large number of AGE fighters entered various parts of Arghandab district aiming to overrun the District Administration Centre (DAC). To avoid the district becoming a battleground, ANDSF reinforcements were deployed from Kandahar City and armed clashes erupted in several villages of Arghandab where numerous ANDSF outposts were taken by AGEs. AGE fighters took control of the abandoned ANDSF check points in the south-west parts of Arghandab, and these areas came under AGEs’ complete control. AGE’s dominance grew in adjacent districts and intensified their activities mainly in Maiwand, Zhari and Panjwayi districts).

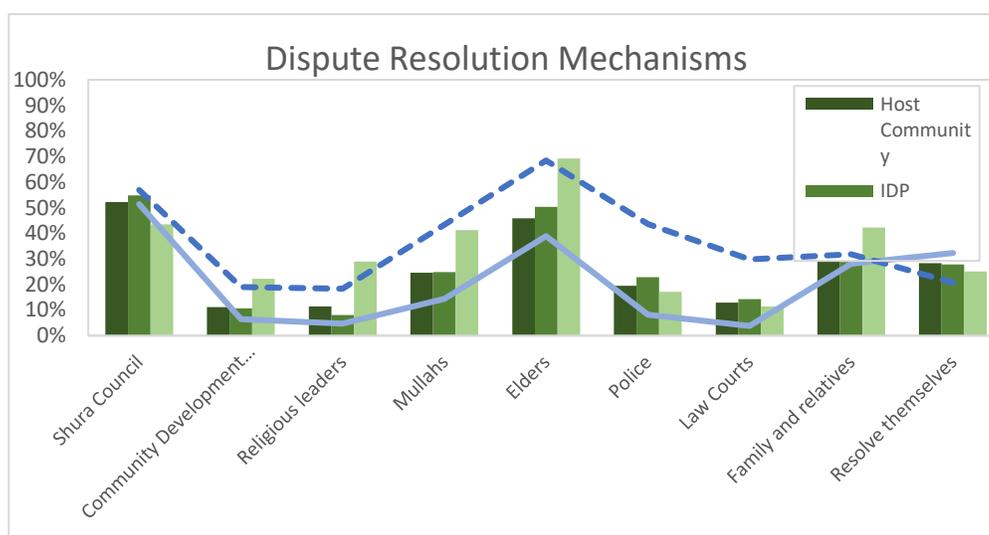
<sup>7</sup> DRC Rapid Protection Assessment, Kandahar, November 2020. Available at: [drc - erm rapid protection assessment report - charso kdh - nov 2020.pdf \(humanitarianresponse.info\)](https://www.drc.org/publications/rapid-protection-assessment-report-charso-kdh-nov-2020.pdf)

The host community considers safe movement as a mandatory trade off to obtain humanitarian assistance and negatively assessed relationships within different communities.

In Balkh some religious tensions between IDPs/returnees and host community were reported. In Faryab a difficulty integrating recently displaced and returnee women was reported. In Herat IDPs face challenges with discrimination and socio-cultural differences and reported high rates of criminality as leading to mistrust within different communities.

Kandahar stands as an exception to other areas. Male and female host community members and IDPs reported that due to armed conflict and the presence of different tribal groups, strains are imposed on local infrastructure, discrimination occurs in accessing services, mental health problems go unaddressed, and that economic hardship and debt-related issues are all contributing to mistrust and friction amongst different communities.

## Dispute resolution mechanisms



There is no major difference on preferred dispute resolution mechanism between host communities and IDPs. All rank Shura Council, Elders, family and relatives as the top three mechanisms, closely followed by resolving disputes themselves. This highlights the high level of trust within community relationships. Returnees had similar answers, with Mullahs and religious leaders coming ahead of resolving matters themselves. Differences are, however, visible between men and women, with men more likely to resort to community development council (CDCs), Police, Law Courts, or Mullahs while women tend to find more localised solutions – Shura Council, Elders, Family and relatives, or resolving matters themselves. This could indicate gender inequalities in gaining access to local authorities, government and the judicial system, the impacts of freedom of movement and various cultural norms that impact on access to justice for women and will require further evaluation.

1 in 7 interviewees across all categories reported experiencing challenges in accessing dispute resolution mechanisms. In Farah and Kunduz, the cost of accessing justice is most cited by all groups. However, whilst costs are the greatest barrier generally, women and IDP/undocumented returnees are the groups worst impacted by discrimination restricting access according to FGDs – almost double men and host communities. Satisfaction with the outcome of resolution mechanisms is positive (90%), yet in Balkh and Herat surveys demonstrate this is not the case for a significant minority including refugee returnees (32%) and IDP returnees (15%).

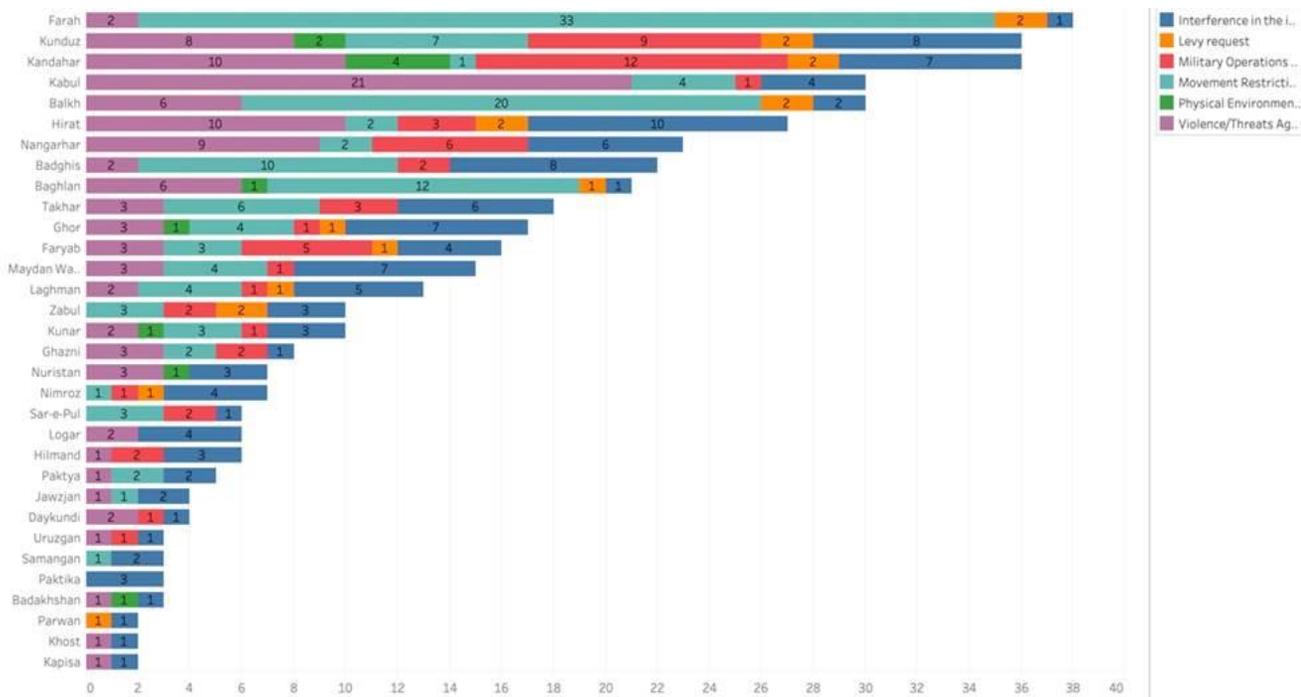
Humanitarian structures such as the NRC Compliance Tents for IDPs in encampments in Herat and Badghis and AGE T Commissions in Kandahar for HC and IDPs) were also mentioned as an avenue for dispute resolution in FGDs.

## 5. RESPONSE ANALYSIS

### 5.1 OPERATIONAL CONTEXT INCLUDING ACCESS ISSUES

The situation for humanitarian actors in terms of access has continued to deteriorate during the first quarter of 2021. This can be observed, in particular, in the number of access constraints illustrated by the data collected by the Humanitarian Access Group (HAG). Overall, the total number of access constraints has increased by roughly 23%, from 336 incidents in Q4 2020 to at least 436 incidents recorded during Q1 2021. On a positive note, the number of access constraints resulting from kinetic activity has significantly decreased from 94 incidents in Q4 2020 to 56 Q1 2021, which is most likely resulting from a seasonal drop in conflict activity attributable to weather conditions. The number of incidents involving violence and threats against humanitarians, as well as interference in their programming, has, however, increased from 71 to 107 and from 88 to 115, respectively.

The most significant increase has been recorded in the number of movement restrictions faced by the humanitarian actors from 53 in Q4 2020 to 128 in Q1 2021. Overall with the expected seasonal increase in the operational capacity of all sides to the conflict, it could be assessed that the number of the access constraints would continue to rise throughout Q2. However, taking into account the month of Ramadan and upcoming Eid celebrations, it is possible the situation would remain relatively unchanged during the first half of Q2 as compared to Q1 2021.



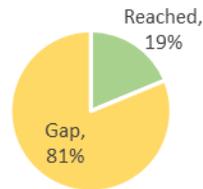
After low winter rainfall and high temperatures associated with a *La Niña* weather event, initial indicators suggest that drought-like conditions are likely over spring and will have a significant impact across all regions of the country. It is anticipated that the situation will have an impact on both rain-fed and irrigated agriculture/livestock, as well as on the availability of water for drinking, washing, and sanitation. Current analysis indicates that 25 provinces, which are home to 27.7 million people, will see 13.2 million people in humanitarian need during the spring planning period. Humanitarians plan to reach 7.4 million of those people with assistance and the funding requirement of USD 390m has

been drafted and publicized. Protection Cluster members plan to reach 670k people with core protection activities with the required amount of USD 27.1m<sup>8</sup>

## 5.2 HRP TARGET AND POPULATION REACHED

**Total 2021 HRP target: 3.9 M**

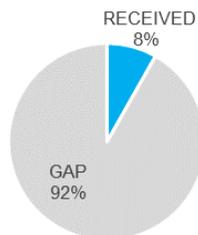
**Reached as of 31 March 2021: 744,863**



## 5.3 FUNDING DATA

**Total 2021 HRP funding requirements: \$ 114.5 M**

**Funding received: \$ 9,370,558**



## 6. ADVOCACY AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 6.1 ADVOCACY MESSAGES

1. Ongoing repetition of key obligations under IHL and IHRL to all parties of the conflict. The humanitarian community must continue its efforts to deliver messaging around the principle of distinction and the use of weapons with wide-area impact, and the protected status of health/medical, education and humanitarian personnel and infrastructure.
2. Strengthened multi-sectoral response that addresses loss of income and livelihoods coupled with the delivery of specialized protection services that support recovery and healing from harm

<sup>8</sup> Afghanistan Spring Disaster Contingency Plan, available at:

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/afg\\_spring\\_disaster\\_contingency\\_plan\\_mar\\_jun\\_2021\\_final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/afg_spring_disaster_contingency_plan_mar_jun_2021_final.pdf)

3. Integrated/multi sectoral programming between food security, livelihoods, protection, education, nutrition and health, more holistically addresses the needs of children and their families, promotes better outcomes and reduces the likelihood of recourse to negative coping mechanisms, while also making implementation more efficient.
4. Promotion of harm reduction strategies as a response to adoption of negative coping mechanisms affecting children, particularly child labour, including the use of campaigns directed at children and communities.
5. Promote interventions that support durable solutions
6. To maintain and promote social cohesion, assistance should be provided based on needs of the individual or household rather than their status (e.g. HC, IDPs, refugees, undocumented returnees), with more effort on communication with communities on selection process.
7. Humanitarian assistance and other services should be de-linked from documentation.
8. Improve IDPs' and undocumented returnees access to civil documentation by removing the barriers such as associated cost and requiring the return to one's area of habitual residence in order to obtain Tazkira and other documents. (Principle 20 - Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement).
9. Improve women's access to civil documentation (especially Tazkira), by developing strategies to enable females, who are experiencing higher constraints in movement, to access to civil documentation (e.g., mobile civil documentation missions to remote areas).
10. The government and humanitarian community to evaluate the cultural barriers affecting females' freedom of movement, and work with communities to devise strategies for its mitigation.
11. Promotion of community-based structures in support of child protection, particularly in the provision of alternative care options for separated and unaccompanied children.
12. Strengthen access to formal and informal justice systems to resolve HLP disputes and problems through awareness raising, counselling and legal assistance, which assist to overcome barriers related to gender and/or status, including reduced mobility and financial capacity.

## 6.2 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS

1. Ahead of the likely intensification of the conflict, there is also the need for renewed efforts to identify and engage potential allies in advocacy who have influence with the parties to the conflict  
Two approaches to this that have shown promise and could be piloted include:
  - Building communities' capacity to advocate with armed actors present in their vicinity to take all feasible measures to minimise harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure/services (e.g. proper attention to distinguishing between civilian and military targets; meeting obligations to ensure adequate warning ahead of military operations and ensuring safe passage where civilians are vacating a combat area; that the protected status of humanitarian operations in support of civilian populations is respected; and that children are not recruited or otherwise allowed to join armed groups or take part in hostilities); and
  - Supporting communities to improve their preparedness for the possibility of armed clashes and displacement (e.g. contingency planning for displacement/evacuation from a combat zone; contingency planning for safer sheltering in place; systems for triggering contingency plans etc).

2. In light of a looming drought, provide urgent funding to enable a timely and effective response based on needs of vulnerable Afghans, not displacement status.
3. Support interventions that consider and promote durable solutions, including by considering a Do No Harm approach that promotes social cohesion, managing expectations and avoiding the creation of push or pull factors, and identifying opportunities to support households that choose to voluntarily return.
4. Ensure that available services and assistance are not arbitrarily denied on the grounds of status, costs, and lack of documentation, and are accessible to all groups especially to women, girls, elderly and child-headed households.
5. The recruitment and use of children remains an existing problem that is only likely to worsen as parties to the conflict seek to maximise their capacity. A strategic advocacy campaign (making use of both public and private channels) that addresses the differing positions of the various parties to the conflict should be developed and implemented as a matter of priority.
6. Access to health services should be prioritized especially in the current pandemic, in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and ensure availability of services.
7. Awareness raising campaigns/information dissemination on Mine Risk Education should be conducted in order to keep communities informed on mines and prevention measures.

### 6.3 PLANNED PROTECTION ACTIONS

1. Continue country-wide Protection Monitoring to identify and analyze risks, incidents, and trends to inform decision making, prioritization, advocacy and programming.
2. Continue advocacy for services expansion, without discrimination, and delink humanitarian assistance from documentation to prevent and/or mitigate access barriers.
3. Support IDPs and returnees access secure land and housing through Presidential Decree 108 and other land allocation mechanisms.
4. NRC (in collaboration with the Field Support Unit and in coordination with the Protection Cluster) is planning to roll out training on key topics related to PoC for organisations conducting community-based programming.
5. Research being undertaken for WHO in relation to attacks on healthcare is expected to produce evidence that will also be useful in guiding Protection of Civilians interventions more broadly.

### 6.4 LINKS TO OTHER KEY REPORTS

Quarter 1 Protection Monitoring Dashboard available at:

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/protection-monitoring>

Afghanistan Protection Cluster operational partners' presence (January to December 2020) available at:

[https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/afg\\_apc\\_operational\\_presence\\_jan-dec\\_2020.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/afg_apc_operational_presence_jan-dec_2020.pdf)