



Comparative analysis of six months of protection monitoring in response to COVID-19 October 2020

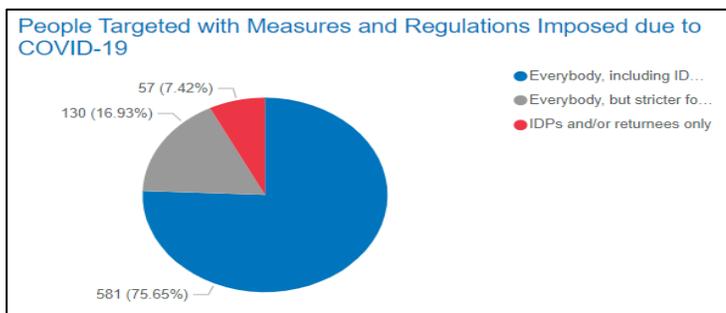
Beginning in April 2020, the National Protection Cluster (NPC) coordinated a **protection monitoring exercise at the community level** through Key Informant (KI) interviews to **measure the protection impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** on conflict-affected and displaced communities in Iraq. Round 6 of data collection took place from **30 August to 20 September 2020**, with **10 organizations** interviewing **3930 respondents** in **18 governorates** and **135 sub-districts**.¹ Interviews were conducted in IDP camps, informal sites and out-of-camp locations. This report analyses the main findings of Round 6 of monitoring, while offering a comparison of findings from Round 1 of monitoring (conducted from 26 April to 10 May) as means of identifying **key trends and patterns over the past six months**.

1. Measures and regulations

Overall, levels of reporting regarding restrictions on freedom of movement reduced significantly between Round 1 and Round 6 of monitoring. The proportion of respondents citing a ban on movements between governorates decreased from 88% to 37%; from 68% to 23% for movements between districts; and from 48% to 16% for movement within districts. This decrease is most likely due to the lifting of lockdowns and easing of COVID-19 related restrictions by authorities.

Levels of reporting regarding camp-specific restrictions on freedom of movement remain significant, though reporting decreased between Round 1 and Round 6 of monitoring: 54% of respondents reported a ban on entry into or exit from camps, but with exceptions being made (compared to 76% for the Round 1). 5% reported a bans being implemented without any exceptions (compared to 15%). A key improvement for Round 6 is that only 1% of respondents in camps report facing restrictions to accessing markets, compared to 17% for Round 1. Reporting for respondents in out-of-camp locations remained much higher at 37%, which was consistent throughout the six months of the monitoring period.

Signs of improvement concerning protection risks associated with the enforcement of COVID-19 related measures and regulations have been noted. In particular, the proportion of respondents citing arrest and detention as a possible consequence for breaching regulations reduced from 36% in Round 1 to 10% in Round 6. Security actors, such as the police and military, were also less often mentioned as being responsible for enforcing regulations, although they remained prominent: 62% of respondents cited the police and 26% cited the military for Round 6, compared to 84% and 42% respectively for Round 1. However, reports about incidents related to the use of force, threat and coercion to enforce the regulations remained stable: 13% of respondents reported these issues involving security actors, compared to 9% reporting incidents involving family members and 5% for community members.



Perception that government-imposed regulations applied either more strictly or solely to IDPs and returnees did not significantly improve during the reporting period and remained very common in camps. 24% of respondents in camps reported this perception for Round 6, in contrast to 3% in out-of-camp locations).

Perception of respondents of how regulations are applied in camps

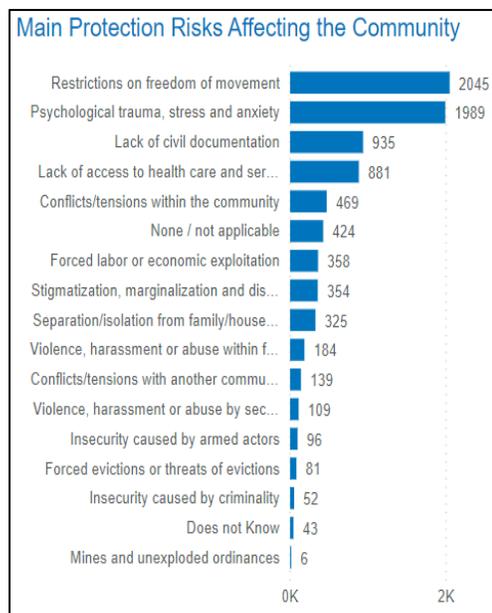
¹ The organizations who participated in the 6th round of data collecting are Harikar, LCN, SWEDO, IRC, HAI, Intersos, DRC, IOM, NP and UNHCR. Organizations who contributed to other rounds of data collection also include Dorcas and Yazda.

2. Protection

2.1. General Protection

As previously stated, **the majority of respondents reported that protection issues affecting communities have significantly or very significantly increased since the pandemic**, with the proportion of respondents slightly decreasing from 72% to 60% between Round 1 and Round 6. This trend applies equally among respondents in both camp and out-of-camp locations. However, the proportion of respondents who reported the deterioration of the protection situation remained higher in camps (73% for Round 6) than in out-of-camp locations (57%).

Governorates with the highest proportion of respondents indicating a serious deterioration of protection issues affecting communities are located in Centre/South Iraq (Anbar 74%, Kirkuk 70%, Salah al-Din 63% and Diyala 60%), followed by Ninewa (60%) and governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) (Erbil 58%, Dohuk 45% and Sulaymaniyah 37%). The proportion of respondents reporting a worsening of the overall protection situation for communities increased in Diyala (from 47% to 60%) between Round 1 and Round 6 of monitoring, whereas it decreased in all other governorates.



Despite a relative loosening of the COVID-19 related regulations (see section 1), **restrictions on freedom of movement remained the most commonly reported protection issue affecting communities**, cited by 52% of respondents overall for Round 6 compared to 67% for Round 1. The level of reporting for out-of-camp locations decreased from 67% to 49% between Round 1 and Round 6. In contrast, it remained stable and comparatively higher at 65% for camps as for Round 6.

Trauma, stress and anxiety remained the second most commonly reported protection issue affecting communities, cited by 51% of respondents overall. In contrast with other protection issues, for which the level of reporting relatively decreased between Rounds 1 and 6 of monitoring, the level of reporting for psychosocial issues in camp actually increased from 49% to 61% during the monitoring period. The level of reporting is also higher for persons with disabilities, for whom 60% of respondents rank it as a main protection issue, compared to 51% for communities in general.

The lack of civil documentation remained the third most commonly reported protection issue, cited by 24% of respondents overall. The level of reporting on this issue did not evolve significantly during the monitoring period. The proportion of respondents reporting lack of civil documentation as a key issue remains double in camps (41% for Round 6) compared to out-of-camps locations (20%).

Despite efforts by government and humanitarian actors to respond to the pandemic, **lack of access to health care remains the fourth most commonly reported protection issue**, cited by 22% of respondents overall. The proportion of respondents reporting this issue in out-of-camp locations decreased from 27% to 19%, while it increased from 23% to 30% in camps. Lack of access to health care is reported at a much higher level in relation to persons with disabilities, with 63% of respondents in camps and 42% of respondents overall citing it as a main protection issue.

Social conflicts and tensions remained the fifth most commonly reported protection issue, cited by 12% of respondents overall. Reports almost double in camps (18%), compared to out-of-camp locations (10%).

A concerning trend is an increase in reporting of issues related to forced labor and economic exploitation, cited by 9% of respondents overall for Round 6 of monitoring compared to 5% for Round 1. This proportion is also much higher in out-of-camp locations (11%) than in camps (4%). Although no conclusion can be drawn with certainty, the trend may indicate that the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic is resulting in households being increasingly compelled to accept exploitative forms of labour as a mean of income.

2.2. Gender-Based Violence

The majority of respondents reported that protection issues affecting women and girls have significantly or very significantly increased since the beginning of the pandemic.

However, the proportion of respondents who reported so slightly decreased from 64% to 57% between Round 1 and Round 6. Out-of-camp locations saw a decrease from 62% to 54%; in contrast, a stable and much higher proportion (70% for Round 6) was reported among respondents in camps.

The governorates with the highest proportion of respondents indicating a deterioration of protection issues affecting women and girls are in Centre-South Iraq, including Anbar (78%), Kirkuk (74%) and Diyala (65%), followed by Ninewa (60%), Salah al-Din (55%) and governorates in the KR-I (Erbil 51%, Sulaymaniyah 46% and Dohuk 38%). Between Round 1 and Round 6, the proportion of respondents reporting a worsening of the protection situation for women and girls only increased in Kirkuk (from 64% to 74%) and Diyala (from 40% to 65%), whereas reports decreased in other governorates.

Issues of trauma, stress and anxiety affecting women and girls also increased during the monitoring period, cited by 62% of respondents for Round 1 and 71% for Round 6. This trend applies to both camp and out-of-camp locations.

The lack of specialized services for women remained the second most commonly reported protection issue affecting women and girls, cited by 41% of respondents overall. The level of reporting for this issue did not evolve significantly throughout the entire monitoring period and remained higher in camps (49%) than in out-of-camp locations (40%). In addition, lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services is reported as the fourth most common protection issue affecting women and girls, cited by 23% of respondents overall. Of particular concern, the proportion of respondents in camps reporting this issue increased from 7% to 34% between Round 1 and Round 6.

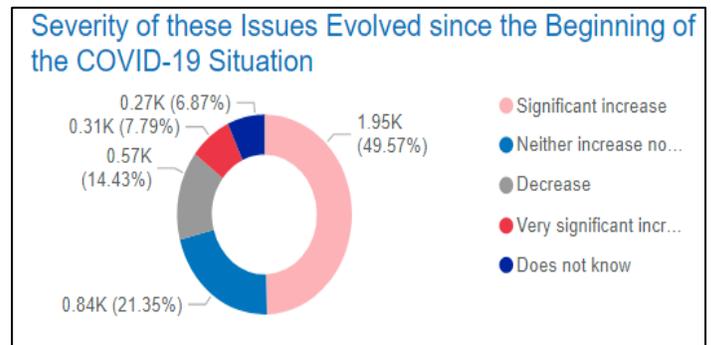
The lack of safe space and privacy remains the third main protection issue affecting women and girls, cited by 38% of respondents overall. This proportion is similar in camp and out-of-camps locations and did not significantly evolve throughout the monitoring period.

Violence and abuse within the household is the fifth most commonly reported issue, cited by 18% of respondents overall and at similar levels in camp and out-of-camp locations. It is worth noting that the level of reporting for Round 6 was lower than for Round 1, where it was cited by 27% of respondents. However, given complexity and sensitivities of domestic violence, as well as various methodological limitations, this trend should not be interpreted as definitive indication that domestic violence has actually reduced.²

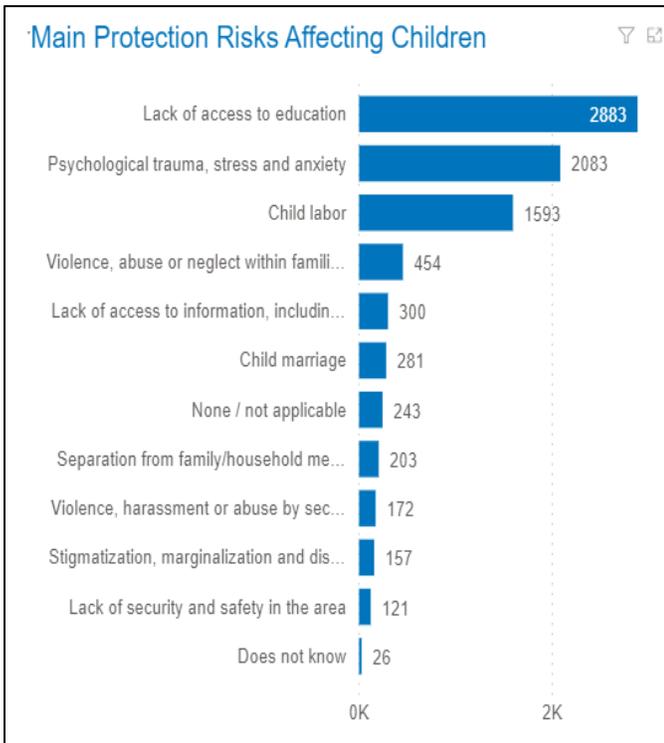
2.3. Child Protection

Similarly, the majority of respondents reported that protection issues affecting children have significantly or very significantly increased since the pandemic. However, the proportion of respondents who reported so slightly decreased from 77% to 64% between Round 1 and Round 6. The proportion of respondents reporting such deterioration remains higher in camps (74%) than in out-of-camp locations (61%).

Governorates with the highest proportion of respondents indicating a deterioration of protection issues affecting children are in Centre-South Iraq including Kirkuk (85%), Anbar (81%) and Salah al-Din, (72%) followed by Ninewa (68%), Diyala (60%) and the governorates in the KR-I (Erbil 58%, Sulaymaniyah 43% and Dohuk 38%). Between Round 1 and Round 6, the proportion of respondents reporting a worsening of the protection situation for children increased only in Kirkuk (from 76% to 85%) and in Diyala (from 33% to 60%), whereas it relatively decreased in all the other governorates.



² Protection monitoring at the community level only collects information about the perceptions and experiences of Key Informants and, unlike other data collection mechanism such as the GBVIMS, does not collect reliable actual incidents of gender-based violence. With only 19% of KIs consisting of women, there is a significant limit to the effective representation of women's experiences in the results of the monitoring.



Lack of access to education remained the most commonly reported protection issue affecting children, cited by 73% of respondents overall compared to 83% for Round 1. The level of reporting is identical in both camp and out-of-camp locations.

Stress, trauma and anxiety remains the second most commonly reported issues affecting children, cited by 53% of respondents overall. The level of reporting is similar in both camps and out-of-camp locations and did not evolve significantly throughout the monitoring period.

Of particular concern is the rise in the proportion of respondents citing child labor, ranked as the third main issue. This proportion increased from 26% to 40% overall, and while it remained the same - at the already high rate of 39% - among respondents in camps, it increased from 24% to 41% among respondents in out-of-camp locations.

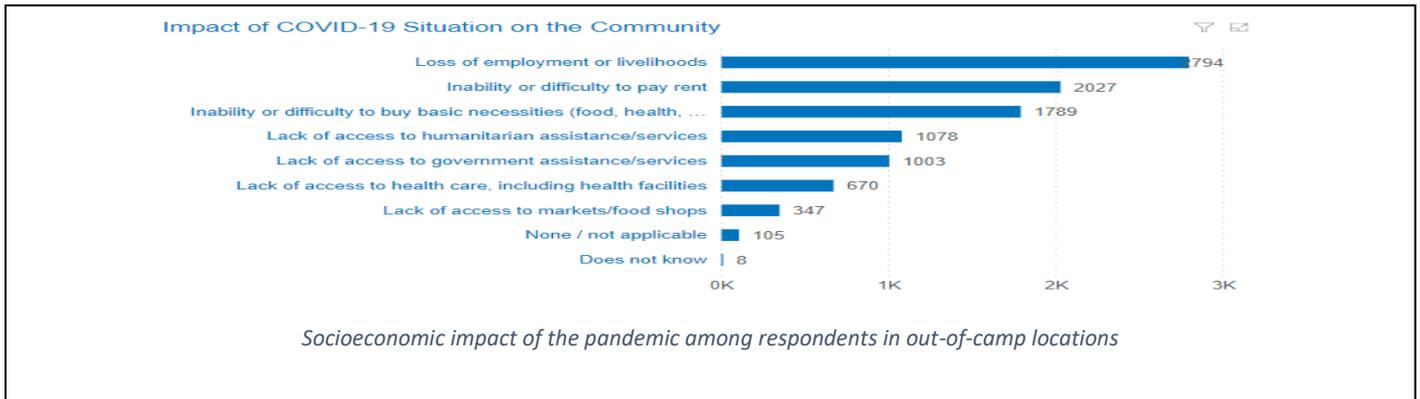
Abuse, violence and neglect within the household remained the fourth most commonly reported protection issue affecting children, cited by 12% of respondents overall. The

level of reporting is slightly higher in camps (16%) than in out-of-camp locations (10%). As for women and girls, the proportion of respondents citing abuse, violence and neglect as a key protection concern for children relatively decreased from 23% to 12% between Round 1 and Round 6. However, no definitive conclusion should be drawn from this statistic regarding the prevalence of actual incidents of abuse, violence and neglect against children.

Lastly, the proportion of respondents citing child marriage as a key concern remained 7% overall. This proportion, which is equal in both camps and out-of-camp locations, did not significantly evolve throughout the monitoring period.

3. Basic needs and access to services

The loss of employment and livelihoods remained the most commonly reported impact of the pandemic, cited by 74% of respondents in camps and 88% of respondents in out-of-camp locations-- proportions which did not significantly evolve throughout the monitoring period. The inability or difficulty to purchase basic necessities ranked as the second main impact overall, and remained at the same level between Round 1 and Round 6 of monitoring, cited by 54% of respondents. This proportion was comparatively higher among respondents in out-of-camp locations (56%) than in among respondents in camps (45%).



For respondents in out-of-camp locations, inability or difficulty to pay rent was cited as the second main socio-economic impact, cited by 64% of respondents. It is a notable increase compared to Round 1 of monitoring, when the issue was reported by 54%. This issue does not appear to result from an increase in the price of rent, since only 5% of respondents in out-of-camp locations report an increase in rent among the measures resulting from the pandemic. The inability or difficulty to pay rent also does not appear to have resulted in widespread evictions from rented housing: only 2% of respondents in out-of-camp locations reported evictions or threats of evictions as a key protection issue affecting communities.³

Low levels of reporting about issues of evictions may be explained by the **various coping mechanisms used by affected households**. Indeed, 19% of respondents in out-of-camp locations cite moving to other accommodation among the main coping strategies in their communities. More broadly, the most commonly cited coping mechanisms are reducing food consumption (69% of respondents overall), spending savings (65%), taking debt (62%) and reducing the purchase of non-food items (59%). **Coping mechanisms associated with protection risks are also reported**, although at a much lower level. In particular, the use of child labor to generate income is reported by 16% of respondents overall. This is an increase compared to 12% for Round 1 of monitoring and is consistent with the findings reported in the child protection section (see 2.3).

Although the majority of respondents indicate that people in their communities have access to health care, 45% report that none or not all their community members do. Of particular concern in the midst of the pandemic, the proportion increased when compared to Round 1 (38%). Levels of reporting are significantly higher in out-of-camp locations (45%) than in camps (30%). Barriers to access health care most commonly cited by respondents are lack of medical facilities and personnel (31%), the cost of care (23%), the distance and lack and/or cost of transportation to health care facilities (17%), lack of information about health care facilities (15%) and the lack of female staff (13%).

³ This statistic should not be interpreted as evidence that evictions are not occurring. Rather, it is simply the indication that, among the respondents, it is not perceived as being a pressing protection issue affecting their communities. However, this could change over time as the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic becomes increasingly difficult to bear for IDPs and returnees.