

Report

# Breaking the glass ceiling: A smarter approach to protection financing



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Cover image: Newly displaced people waiting on the side of the road after they fled attacks in Barsalogo, Burkina Faso.

Tom Peyre-Costa/NRC

# Global Protection Cluster

The Global Protection Cluster is a network of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations and United Nations (UN) agencies, engaged in protection work in humanitarian crises including armed conflict, climate change related and disaster. The GPC is mandated by the IASC, led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), governed by a Strategic Advisory Group, co-chaired by the GPC Coordinator and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and serviced by a multi-partner Operations Cell. The GPC work is supported by an Information and Analysis Working Group, a Donor and Member States Liaison Platform, and thematic Task Teams with time-bound mandates and activities.

The GPC unites members, partners and communities working on the full gamut of protection activities, including in four specialised Areas of Responsibility (AoRs): Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Housing, Land and Property, and Mine Action. The GPC contributes to and benefits from the broader IASC system, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), various human rights treaty bodies and key development and peace building and peacekeeping actors, and through building partnerships with international financial institutions and the private sector.



## Global Protection Cluster Led by UNHCR In Support of National Protection Clusters



# Foreword

Amid the public health and economic crises with which the world has had to contend with in 2020, Covid-19 looms as a long-term, far-reaching global protection emergency. People in nations with pre-existing conflicts and disasters are now grappling with crises on top of crises.

Faced with this extraordinary situation, the Global Protection Cluster's network of 1,000+ protection actors continues to deliver life-saving services for people around the world who need extra support to access their rights and be safe from violence, abuse and exploitation. In some of the hardest possible circumstances, they accompany, assist and advocate for the rights of the millions of people most at risk of violations. Their work takes place amid armed conflict and violence, and often helps to prevent armed conflict and violence. Meanwhile, it unequivocally upholds some of the most fundamental tenets of the humanitarian imperative: saving lives, mitigating suffering and promoting human dignity.

As we learn here, however, more than seven years after the last report on protection financing, we have not put our money where our mouths are. Funding for protection services has – as a proportion of all humanitarian funding – decreased during this period. Even taking into account the inadequacy of humanitarian funding generally, protection remains at the lower end of the scale.

It is not only the amount of money that matters, of course. The systems through which we manage it are also vitally important. Improving protection is a collective responsibility aimed at assessing more effectively, budgeting more accurately, planning more deliberately and reporting more diligently. This study calls upon all of us to reimagine how every cent is prioritised, delivered, tracked and reported against.

It serves as a welcome reminder that we can position protection at the heart of every response if we really want to.

And we do. With this report as a roadmap, the Global Protection Cluster commits to work with all partners across the following, five transformative areas:

First, we will work to develop a minimum protection package with costing methods to be used as a benchmark in all operations, and we will diversify the sources that finance it.

Second, we will work with the Good Humanitarian Donorship Group to translate “centrality of protection” into concrete programmatic benchmarks as a guide for humanitarian financing to ensure the delivery of protection outcomes.

Third, we will mobilise for an annual mid-year “temperature check” conference, that will take stock of protection resources and provide a focus on urgent needs for the remainder of the year.

Fourth, in line with the commitments of the Grand Bargain, we will institutionalise in national protection clusters, where possible, that 25 per cent of all protection funding within humanitarian response plans be directed to local actors.

Fifth, we will initiate dialogue with development actors to define protection policy benchmarks as part of development and peace financing.

People in humanitarian crises have a right to protection, and the global community has a responsibility to provide it. We are committed to taking every step to doing so.

**William Chemaly, Global Protection Cluster Coordinator**

**Cecilia Roselli, Director of NRC Geneva**

# Executive Summary

Humanitarian crises often involve the daily threat of violence, forced displacement and a host of other protection risks that cause immeasurable suffering to civilians. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated these concerns and presented new challenges. The humanitarian community in 2013 took the bold step of committing to the “centrality of protection” within humanitarian action. As a report from the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) that the same year showed, however, the protection sector has perennially been underfunded both in terms of its requirements in humanitarian plans and relative to other sectors.

This study aims to provide an updated analysis of the key protection financing trends since the original 2013 report. It seeks to assess whether the protection sector is still underfunded and, more importantly, why that might be. It also tries to evaluate whether the humanitarian community has lived up to its policy commitments regarding protection and whether this is leading to more resources and tangible results for the most vulnerable. The approach is to view the possible remedy not only in terms of increased levels of funding – given that all humanitarian action is underfunded – but also to identify what changes different stakeholders can make to channel the limited resources that do exist towards the best protection outcomes for those most at risk. Protection financing should be viewed as one part of a holistic approach to delivering protection outcomes, with political engagement, advocacy, programming all vitally important as well. In this regard the key findings from the study are:

## **The protection sector remains chronically underfunded but concerted action can fill the gaps**

The protection sector continues to be underfunded both in relation to its requirements within humanitarian appeals and in relation to other sectors. Between 2013 and 2019, it received only 38 per cent of its requirements compared with 61 per cent overall for humanitarian appeals. In 2020, only 24 per cent of requirements had been met by November. Because of the imprecise tracking of donor contributions,

protection financing is systematically under-reported. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) are being used to correct imbalances in humanitarian funding. This includes the prioritisation of protection, which, particularly after a 2019 initiative by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), has enjoyed greater funding as a result (more than 10 per cent of funding from these mechanisms). More concerted action like this is required to fill funding gaps for protection, something especially important if local actors are to receive greater levels of support.

## **There are entrenched barriers to increasing the levels of protection funding**

Protection is still not viewed as a priority within humanitarian action, or as life-saving in the same way as other sectors. For this reason, it receives less funding. A small number of donors provide the majority of funding to the protection sector, with the top five donors accounting for 68 per cent. Unless these attitudes change and there is a diversification of donors, increased levels of funding for vital protection work will be hard to achieve.

## **The humanitarian community is failing in its commitment to the centrality of protection**

The underfunding of protection in 2019 left an estimated 31.8 million people without urgently needed assistance. Protection financing is intrinsically linked to the policy commitments that shape funding decisions. While there has been progress by all stakeholders within the humanitarian system – donors, UN agencies and NGOs – to make protection a core responsibility within humanitarian response, the commitments made to the centrality of protection are still not being sufficiently implemented. More robust action is required to translate the initiatives on protection of recent years into tangible results for affected populations.

## The protection cluster has improved its performance, helping to attract more funding, but more investments are required

There is a correlation between well-functioning field protection clusters and increased levels of funding and, in turn, results. The protection cluster in recent years has become far better at assessing protection needs, designing and planning interventions to respond to these needs, and measuring the results. It still has a way to go, however, to improve performance that will attract more funding. This includes ensuring that requirements within humanitarian plans are commensurate with needs and are accurately set.

## A holistic approach to protection financing requires looking at complementary funding sources, especially from other sectors, and development and peace actors

The funding of the protection sector represents only a fraction of the resources going towards protection challenges in humanitarian crises. The mainstreaming and integration of protection within the programmes of other sectors also represents a significant contribution, though it is hard to measure. Development and peace actors also play a significant role in addressing protection challenges, illustrating the importance of including protection in the nexus approach.

**Based on these key findings the study makes the following recommendations:**

### All humanitarian actors should:

- Ensure the protection sector receives an equitable proportion of humanitarian funding in 2021 at the same level as the entire Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO).
- Take practical action to implement the commitments made to the centrality of protection and ensure a fixed percentage of their organisational funding goes to protection activities.
- In line with the commitments of the Grand Bargain, ensure that 25 per cent of funding to the protection sector goes to local actors. Provide these actors with institutional support so they can better access humanitarian planning, coordination and resource mobilisation mechanisms.

- Ensure that protection is a core and mandatory element mainstreamed and integrated across all humanitarian programming.

### Donors should:

- Convene, in collaboration with the GPC, an annual donor meeting starting in June 2021 to take stock of protection funding and mobilise funds to fill gaps in underfunded crises and thematic areas.
- Discuss and underline their commitment to the centrality of protection within the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative and outline the steps to operationalise these to deliver protection outcomes.
- Reach out and convene other non-traditional donors to the protection sector to diversify funding for protection.
- Fulfil and publicly report on the funding pledges made at the 2019 Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) conference.
- Continue to improve reporting on protection financing through the Financial Tracking Service (FTS).
- Make the adoption of a protection framework part of development aid in fragile states as part of the nexus approach.

### The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) should:

- Extend the strategic priorities for CERF and CBPF funding and include additional underfunded protection areas.
- Communicate to humanitarian coordinators the importance of addressing the centrality of protection in all humanitarian planning and funding decisions.

### The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), including principals, should:

- Discuss the challenges and bottlenecks in implementing the 2013 Statement on the Centrality of Protection and disseminate concrete benchmarks to measure progress.
- Include measures to address protection underfunding in the review of the IASC policy on protection planned for 2021.
- Develop ways to improve the planning and costing of protection activities for all sectors in humanitarian response plans (HRPs).
- Devise ways to track the protection contribution of funding to other sectors and multi-sector interventions.

## **Humanitarian coordinators and humanitarian country teams (HCTs) must:**

- Ensure that HCT protection strategies include resource mobilisation components and are closely linked and complement the HRPs.
- Ensure that protection requirements in HRPs are accurately set and are commensurate with the assessed needs in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO).

## **The Global Protection Cluster should:**

- Maintain protection funding as a strategic priority in its GPC Advocacy Strategy.
- Develop a monitoring framework for tracking underfunding of the protection sector and report regularly on this in the GPC Centrality of Protection annual report.
- Develop guidelines for a minimum package of protection interventions in HRPs along with the unit costing of different protection interventions.
- Address the issue of protection financing in the GPC guidance being developed on the application of the nexus approach for field protection clusters.
- Initiate a policy dialogue with development actors (e.g. through the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) nexus working group) to ensure that protection financing is addressed within the nexus approach.

# Abbreviations

AoR	Areas of Responsibility
CAR	Central African Republic
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CBPFs	Country-based Pooled Funds
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
DG ECHO	European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GAM	Gender with Age Marker
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GHO	Global Humanitarian Overview
GHRP	Global Humanitarian Response Plan
GPFD	Global Programme on Forced Displacement
GPC	Global Protection Cluster
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
HLP	Housing Land and Property
HRuF	Human Rights up Front
HCTs	Humanitarian Country Teams
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HRPs	Humanitarian Response Plans
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IRC	International Rescue Committee
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NMFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RRPs	Refugee Response Plans
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WFP	World Food Programme

# Table of contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Table of contents</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2 Background</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Increasing protection needs and the Covid-19 pandemic	11
2.2 The centrality of protection in humanitarian action	11
2.3 Humanitarian financing reforms	13
<b>3 Scope and methodology</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>4 Key trends in protection financing</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 OCHA Financial Tracking System (FTS)	17
4.2 Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPFs)	22
4.3 Refugee response plans	26
<b>5 Chronically underfunded: the challenges of funding protection</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>6 A smarter approach to protection financing</b>	<b>32</b>
6.1 Setting accurate requirements on protection in humanitarian appeals	32
6.2 Making protection funding more visible – improving the tracking of funds	33
6.3 Prioritising protection in funding decisions	35
6.4 Diversification of protection funders	36
6.5 Financing protection outcomes through the nexus approach with development and peace actors	38
6.6 Protection mainstreaming and integration as strategies for mobilising resources	40
6.7 Directing more resources to local protection partners	40
<b>7 Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>42</b>
Annex 1 – Methodological note on data analysis	44
Annex 2 – Bibliography	44
Endnotes	46

# 1 Introduction

This study has been commissioned by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) – in conjunction with the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) – to analyse the funding of protection action in humanitarian crises. The last comprehensive study (Murray and Landry, 2013) analysing trends in protection financing, published by the GPC in September 2013, found that the protection sector was “underfunded in relation to the amounts requested in the consolidated appeals, and ‘more underfunded’ relative to most other clusters”. The study was one of the precursors of the “centrality of protection” agenda which in recent years has endeavoured to make protection a core responsibility of the humanitarian system. The current study asks whether humanitarian actors are living up to the various commitments made and if this is leading to tangible results for crisis-affected populations who continue to experience the daily threat of violence and other protection risks.

The Covid-19 pandemic has added a new dimension to the protection challenges within humanitarian crises and to those disproportionately vulnerable to the virus and its long-term secondary consequences. There is concern, however, that protection is being overlooked in the response.

What follows is an updated analysis of protection financing trends since the original 2013 report, including the extent to which the protection sector is still underfunded and the reasons for it. The approach is not to focus only on funding levels for protection – given that all humanitarian action is underfunded – but also to examine the challenges and opportunities to better use available resources. The study proposes a smarter approach to protection financing, involving a range of measures required to improve protection outcomes for crisis-affected populations.



Displaced people who have found refuge in abandoned homes are sometimes exposed to the risk of being evicted and therefore have no guarantee as to the occupation of their new housing.

**Photo: Vincent Tremeau/NRC**

# 2 Background

## 2.1 INCREASING PROTECTION NEEDS AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Tens of thousands of civilians are killed, physically injured or traumatised each year as the result of armed conflict, as belligerents display an increasing disregard for their obligations under international law (UNSG, 2020a). Women and girls have been at particular risk, as they are subject to pervasive gender-based violence (GBV). Children have been separated from their families and face increasing levels of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. Armed conflict and displacement are still the main causes of humanitarian need and protection risks, while climate-related disasters loom as a growing and compounding threat. By the end of 2019, there were 79.5 million people displaced because of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and disturbances to public order, including 26 million refugees and 45.7 million internally displaced people (IDPs), an increase of 28.5 million (or 55 per cent) from the 51.2 million figure reported in 2013 (UNHCR, 2020). Given the scale of protection risks to affected populations, humanitarian emergencies – from Syria, to Yemen and elsewhere – are frequently characterised as “protection crises”.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated protection concerns and exposed vulnerable populations to new threats. Protection clusters are reporting an increase in cases of violence, with attacks on civilians, including IDPs. These have increased by 2.5 per cent since the pandemic began.<sup>1</sup> The UN Secretary-General called for a global ceasefire on 23 March 2020, urging parties to conflicts worldwide to pull back from hostilities. The appeal has been supported by the majority of states and over 20 armed groups. Armed conflicts, however, persist in many corners of the world and are still the main driver of humanitarian needs. A disturbing consequence of Covid-19 has been the “shadow pandemic” of a dramatic rise in GBV cases, with the number of calls to dedicated hotlines increasing just as the provision of GBV services falls.<sup>2</sup>

GBV experts projected in April 2020 that for every three months lockdown measures around the world continued, there would be an additional 15 million women and girls exposed to GBV.<sup>3</sup> Child protection risks have also worsened with increased reports of child marriage and child labour, and children also at risk of recruitment into armed forces. The pandemic is disproportionately affecting people who were already vulnerable because of their gender, age, disability, ethnicity, displacement status, or their membership in marginalised or discriminated groups.

The UN Secretary-General made clear early in the pandemic that Covid-19 is not only a public health emergency but also a crisis with serious human rights consequences (UNSG 2020). The protection challenges associated with Covid-19 have been outlined in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) COVID-19, which was launched by the UN in March and updated in July 2020. Only 38.2 per cent of the \$10.3 billion requested under the GHRP had been received by 15 November, however, and there is still the challenge of ensuring that protection is integrated across the Covid-19 response.

## 2.2 THE CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

With protection risks ever-present in humanitarian crises, there have been efforts in recent years to make protection a key responsibility in humanitarian response. Following past failures to respond to mass atrocities, including in Sri Lanka, the UN Secretary-General launched the Human Rights up Front (HRuF) initiative in 2013 to ensure the UN system takes early and effective action to prevent or respond to large-scale violations of human rights or international humanitarian law. In the same year, the [Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies](#), was launched. This was a multi-stakeholder initiative to drive change and increase accountability within the humanitarian system and strengthen its response to GBV.

Internal reflection about the place of protection within the humanitarian system led the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) principals to adopt a [Statement on the Centrality of Protection](#). This statement attempted to place protection at the core of humanitarian action, establishing the responsibilities and accountability of senior leadership and other actors. In particular, it required Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) to develop and implement a comprehensive protection strategy to address protection risks and to prevent and stop the recurrence of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. While greater funding was not an explicit objective of the IASC statement, it made a specific call to action, declaring that “Resources commensurate to the realisation of these efforts must be mobilised”.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these various commitments, however, an [Independent Whole of System Review of Protection in the Context of Humanitarian Action](#) in 2015 found serious deficiencies in the way protection action was being undertaken in humanitarian crisis. It described the lack of adequate and sustainable funding as a significant impediment to the implementation of protection interventions and programmes.<sup>5</sup> Based on the recommendations of the review, the IASC in 2016 adopted its first ever [Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#). At the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016, organisations in attendance made a series of commitments as part of the [Agenda for Humanity](#) to enhance collective action to ensure greater respect for international humanitarian and human rights law. Annual reporting regarding the commitments made at the WHS have shown how the lack of sufficient and long-term funding has been a major challenge to the achievement of results (OCHA 2019).

The last study on protection financing in 2013 concluded with the “hope that protection can reposition itself nearer the centre of humanitarian response, and that its work can attract more funding by better demonstrating its results.”<sup>6</sup> The current study examines whether this hope has been realised. While several policy commitments have been made in recent years as part of the “centrality of protection” agenda, the lack of predictable funding has been an ongoing challenge.

A key problem is that “centrality of protection” has not been accompanied by a monitoring framework to measure progress. The agenda also has been largely interpreted as HCTs putting in place a protection strategy, although this remains just one of the tools to bring about systemic change (GPC 2020a). There are currently 22 HCT protection strategies in the 29 countries with a humanitarian coordinator. While the adoption of these strategies represents significant progress in making protection a core element of the humanitarian response, the recent GPC review found that implementation is still a challenge (GPC 2020). Most countries with HCT protection strategies have also lacked specific resourcing or capacity for their meaningful implementation.

## 2.3 HUMANITARIAN FINANCING REFORMS

Concurrent with the “centrality of protection” agenda in recent years are reforms to humanitarian financing in the aid system that have implications for protection financing trends. The High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing in 2016 questioned whether funding levels were sufficient and recommended measures to broaden the funding base of humanitarian action. The commitments of the resulting Grand Bargain signed by a number of aid agencies and governments at the WHS, however, focused more narrowly on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. A key Grand Bargain commitment involves enhancing quality funding through reduced earmarking and multi-year planning and funding. It aims for 30 per cent of humanitarian funding to be earmarked by 2020. According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report’s analysis of nine UN agencies, though, the percentage of unearmarked humanitarian funding dropped for the fifth consecutive year in 2019 to 14 per cent of total humanitarian contributions (Development Initiatives, 2020).

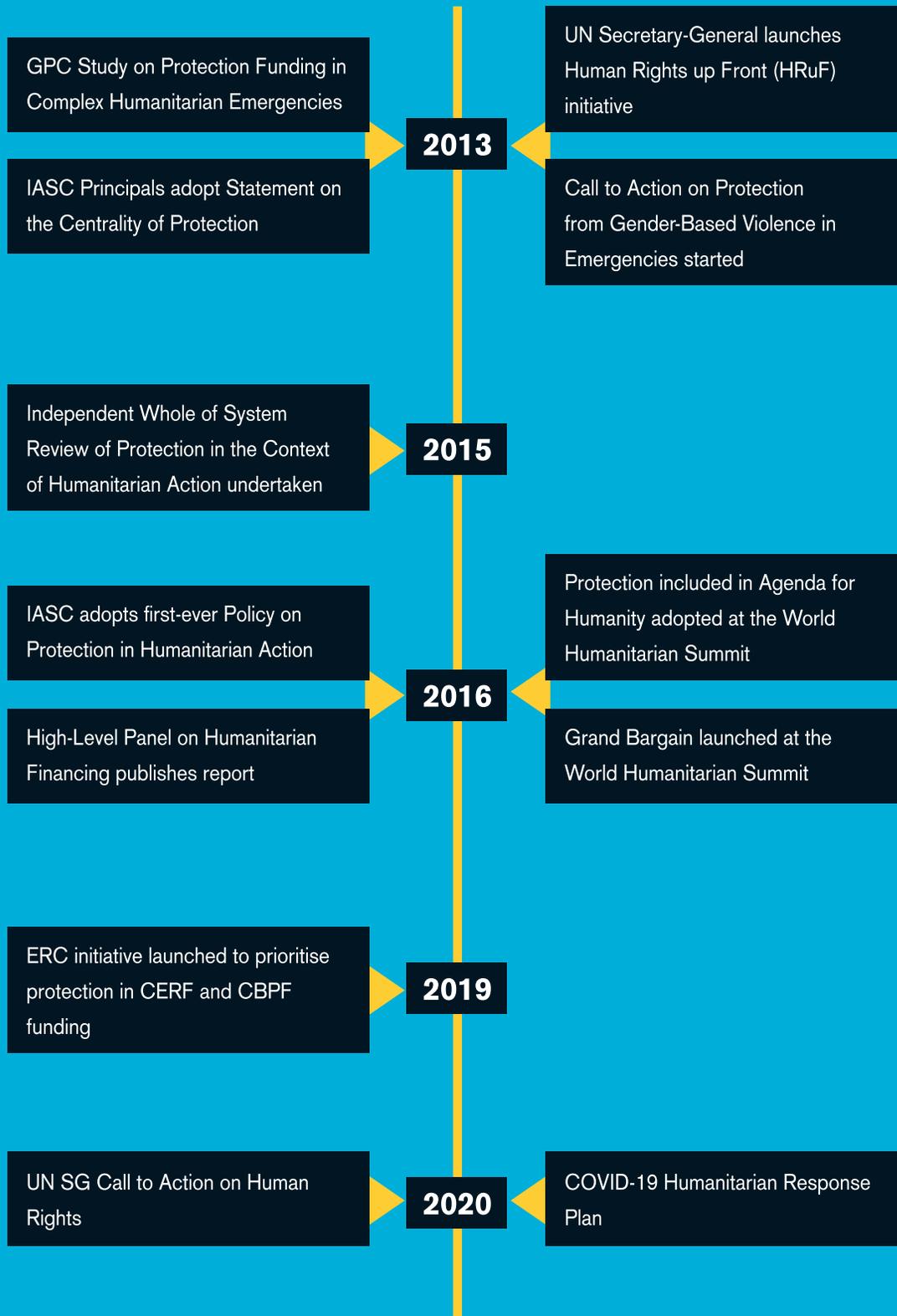
The implications of the push for greater unearmarked funding for protection financing is unclear. On the one hand, it could allow organisations the flexibility to prioritise funding for protection activities that otherwise would not get financed. On the other hand, if protection is not prioritised and other activities are considered more important, a failure to earmark could have a negative impact on support for the protection sector. In the Grand Bargain’s last annual report, some signatories acknowledged the benefits of earmarking funding for certain activities, such as protection, explaining that there was a need for a pragmatic balance (Metcalf et al, 2020). The Covid-19 response has seen a further push for more flexible funding, and the measures introduced by donors have demonstrated the added value of flexible funding in enabling rapid, needs-based interventions with very low transaction costs (NRC, 2020).<sup>7</sup> It is unclear what impact these developments are having for protection financing specifically.



About 120 families who fled an attack against the village of Zaoro Sangou have taken refuge at the local youth centre in Carnot (Central African Republic). Families have complained about the lack of food and privacy. Most of them eat once a day and sleep on mats at night.

**Photo: Hajer Naili/NRC**

## BOX 1: TIMELINE OF KEY PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN FINANCING REFORMS



### 3 Scope and methodology

Against this background of reforms in the way the humanitarian system addresses both protection and financing, this study focuses on the consequences of these developments for the funding of protection activities in crisis situations. The analysis looks at the period from 2013, when the last report was published, to 2019. It also looks at 2020, thus far, to assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It examines humanitarian funding for protection activities in all types of crisis (armed conflicts, climate-induced disasters, and public health emergencies) and also considers complementary funding through development assistance and other forms of aid. Protection activities are considered to be all those stand-alone actions implemented by the protection cluster. These include its respective Areas of Responsibility (AoR), namely, child protection, gender-based violence (GBV), mine action, and housing land and property (HLP), with a breakdown in analysis wherever possible.<sup>8</sup> Funding for protection activities occurring within other sectors through protection mainstreaming and integration is also analysed.

A mixed methods research methodology was used reflecting both quantitative and qualitative data and information collection. As there is no comprehensive, all-encompassing data source for protection financing, a few selected sources were used to provide a snapshot of the key trends. (See Annex 1 for a note on the methodology of data analysis). In addition to the data analysis, 29 interviews were conducted with a range of different stakeholders including UN agencies, NGOs, donors, and research institutes. Focus group discussions were also organised with protection actors working in six crises prioritised by the GPC for Covid-19-related advocacy (Mozambique, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Yemen, Venezuela and those in the Sahel Crisis) to understand better the field level dynamics affecting protection financing. These are reflected in the snapshot boxes provided in the report. An online survey was also conducted to gather data on the viewpoints of different stakeholders on factors that have affected protection financing and actions that could be taken to address funding gaps. There were 283 responses to the survey, and the results are featured in different sections of the report.<sup>9</sup>

People on the move, fleeing violence after recent attacks in Barsalogho (Burkina Faso).

Photo: Tom Peyre-Costa/NRC



A young boy with a somber expression stands in profile, looking towards the right. He is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt. Behind him is a large, rusted metal door with some white chalk-like markings. To the left of the door, a piece of white fabric with a floral pattern in shades of orange and brown hangs down. The overall scene suggests a setting of poverty and conflict.

The scars of war are sitting deep in Brandon who had to flee with his family from fighting in North West Cameroon. His mother is worried for him and his siblings. "When my children hear gunshots, they start to cry and run inside the house. I carry them, I tell them it will be over soon."

**Photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/NRC**

## **BOX 2: CAMEROON – AFRICA'S WORST FUNDED HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**

Cameroon is in the midst of three parallel crises. The Far North region has experienced a sharp upsurge in violence forcing some 560,000 people (OCHA 2020d) to flee their homes. Attacks on civilians have included targeted killings, destruction of property, abductions and the use of children by armed groups. Since 2017, tensions in the North West and South West regions have also turned violent, forcing 409,000 people from their homes with protection risks and dramatic humanitarian consequences. These crises have had a major impact on the economy and led to negative coping mechanisms among the affected population, including child labour, child marriage, survival sex and exploitation. Cameroon is also the home to some 430,000 refugees who have fled conflicts in neighbouring countries. Humanitarian access is hampered by insecurity and operational constraints in in the Far North, North West and South West.

Cameroon, while among the world's most complex humanitarian protection crises, is frequently neglected. In 2019, the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) in the country was the least well-funded in the whole of Africa, receiving only 43.1 per cent of requirements (even after twice receiving CERF grants that were underfunded). Protection was a strategic objective of the HRP, but the protection sector part of the appeal only received 34.5 per cent of the requested amount, despite the strengthening of the protection cluster after its activation in 2018. Funding for protection in 2020 has fallen wildly short of need. Only 13 per cent of requirements have been received so far, just \$3 per beneficiary. This has left more than two million people without assistance.

# 4 Key trends in protection financing

An estimated 168 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance at the beginning of 2020. Global humanitarian requirements were set at \$28.8 billion (OCHA 2020). With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, these requirements have risen to almost \$40 billion, with 405.9 million people in need (OCHA 2020c). Only 43.3 per cent of requirements had been funded by 15 November 2020, however. The gap between the needs of crisis-affected populations and the funding needed to respond to them has never been so great. According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance report, the total volume of international humanitarian assistance in 2019 dropped by \$1.6 billion to \$29.6 billion, the first reduction since 2012 (Development Initiatives, 2020). Whereas UN-coordinated humanitarian appeals were funded to the tune of 72 per cent in 2007, this figure by 2019 had dropped to 63 per cent. An analysis of key trends in protection financing must take as its starting point that all humanitarian action is underfunded, with the squeeze on available funds getting worse. With the economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, aid budgets of key donors are expected to come under increased pressure in 2021.

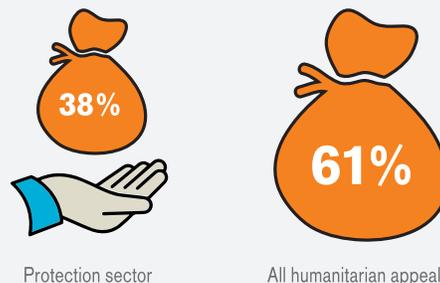
An analysis of protection financing as part of these broader trends is complicated by the fact that protection is at the same time an overall *goal* of humanitarian response, an *approach* that should be mainstreamed in how humanitarian assistance is delivered as well as a discrete *activity* undertaken by different agencies. There are myriad ways that humanitarian funding might contribute to achieving collective protection outcomes. Being able to measure such flows is extremely complex as a result. This study focuses principally on discrete funding to the protection sector,<sup>10</sup> while attempting to shed light on the other potential flows of funding to protection activities that – as will be suggested – are not being reported but are potentially significant. Since there is no comprehensive source of data for protection financing in place, it is hard to arrive at a complete picture of the extent to which protection activities are funded.

This report draws on four specific data sources for protection funding to provide a snapshot of trends between 2013 and 2019: the OCHA Financial Tracking System (FTS), the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPFs), and funding to Refugee Response Plans (RRP).

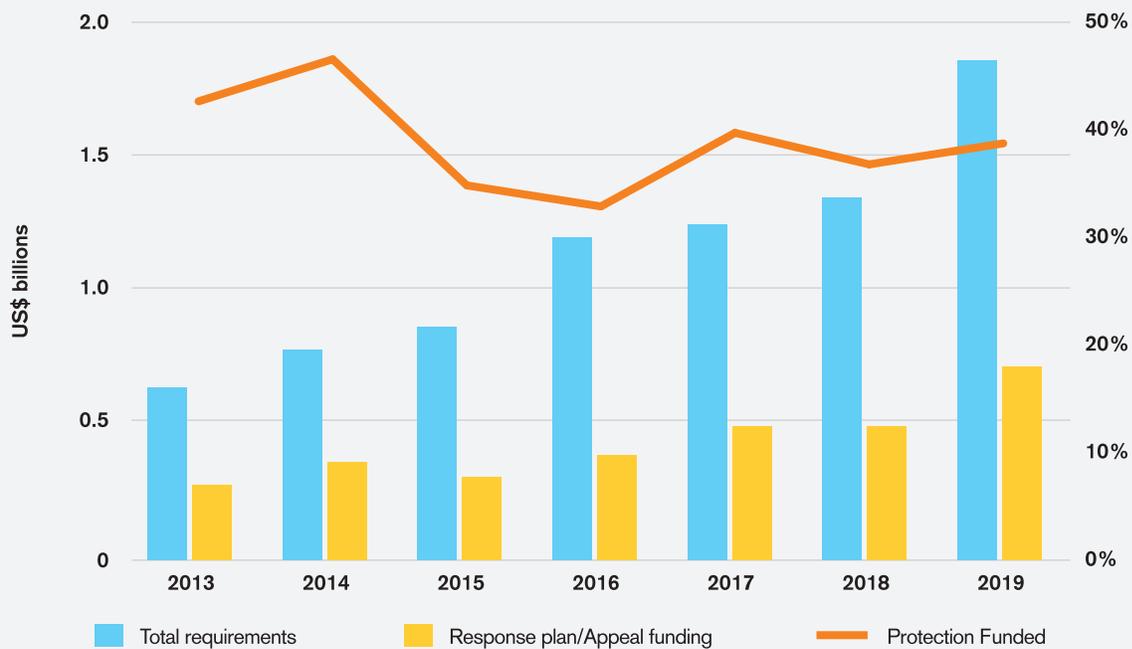
## 4.1 OCHA FINANCIAL TRACKING SERVICE (FTS)

The OCHA FTS is a voluntary online system for tracking donor contributions to UN-coordinated appeals and humanitarian funding more broadly. While there is an appreciable amount of humanitarian financing beyond the scope of the FTS, it is the most comprehensive tracking system available. Seventy-two per cent of the total humanitarian funding reported on the FTS in 2019 was against UN-coordinated humanitarian appeals. This provides a useful proxy for the scale of humanitarian need and underfunding.

**BETWEEN 2013 AND 2019, THE PROTECTION SECTOR RECEIVED ONLY 38% OF ITS REQUIREMENTS AS COMPARED TO 61% OVERALL FOR HUMANITARIAN APPEALS**



**FIGURE 1: PROTECTION SECTOR FUNDING 2013-19 AND COVERAGE**



As figure 1 above shows, the requirements of the protection sector within UN-coordinated humanitarian appeals almost tripled from \$649 million in 2013 to \$1.8 billion in 2019. This amounts to 5.5 per cent of all requirements in the appeals during this time period. The proportion increased from 5.1 per cent in 2013 to 6.8 per cent in 2019, demonstrating the growing importance of protection to humanitarian response, with many emergencies now characterised as “protection crises”. The funding available to the protection sector, though, has not kept pace with these increasing demands. While 43 per cent of protection sector requirements were met in 2013, that fell to 39 per cent in 2019. In 2020, only 24 per cent of requirements had been met by November. The extent to which protection is funded is still significantly lower than the overall appeal, which was 63 per cent funded in 2019. As noted above, however, there has been a downward trajectory with respect to the coverage of the overall appeal’s funding, which received 65 per cent of requirements in 2013. Compared to the analysis in the last study on protection financing in 2013, the situation appears to have gotten worse. Between 2013 and 2019, the protection sector overall received 38 per cent of requirements, as compared with 41 per cent between

2007 and 2012. Between 2013 and 2019, however, all appeals received 61 per cent of requirements, as compared with 68 per cent between 2007 and 2012. All sectors, it appears, have faced increasing funding challenges.

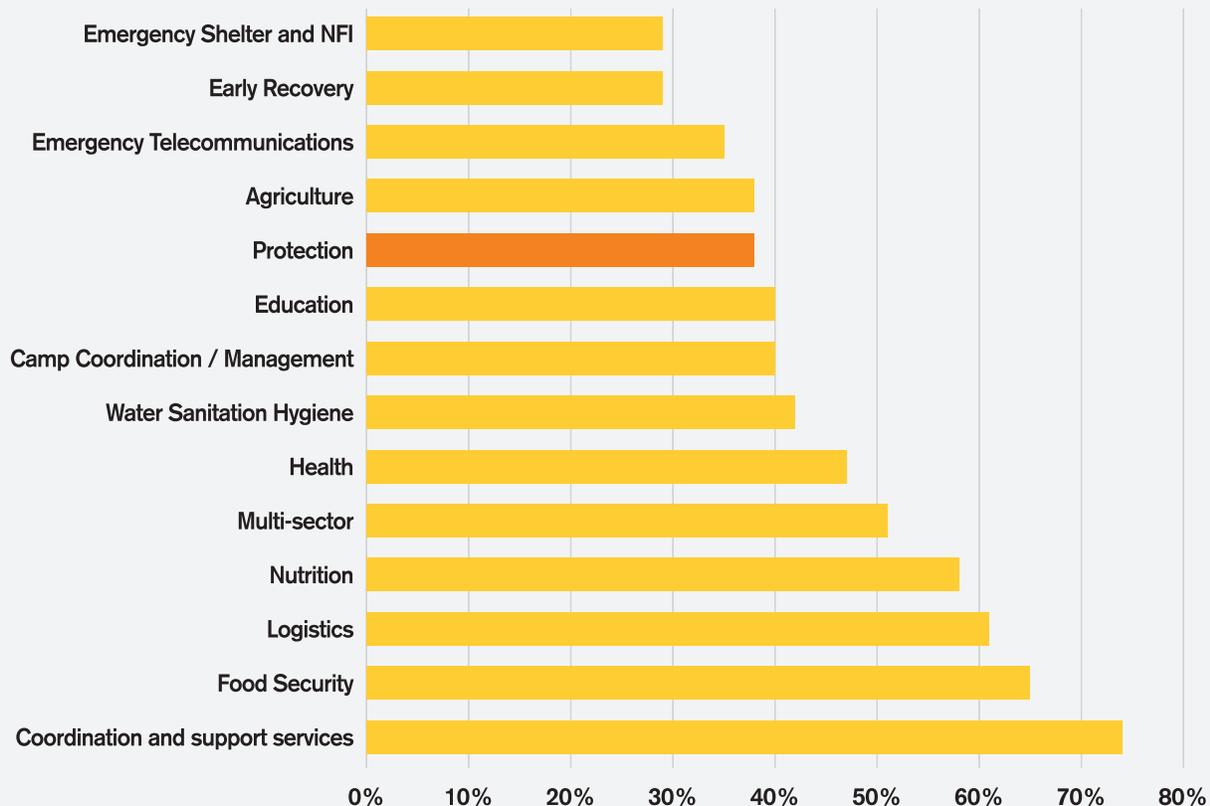
While the data on protection funding from FTS would seem to suggest that the protection sector continues to be chronically underfunded, there are several important caveats. Many of the funding contributions reported in FTS are unspecified – not linked to a specific sector/cluster, or they are reported as being for multi-sectoral activities not linked to individual sectors/clusters. Given the cross-cutting nature of protection, it could be expected that an important part of this funding relates to protection activities but is not specifically reported as such. Analysis conducted of the funding contributions to several different country humanitarian appeals as part of this study revealed that the amounts are potentially significant. At the same time, protection is often a component of other sectors’ projects, including education and health, among others. This is not captured as protection financing in the FTS database, however. It is impossible to put a figure on this “partial” and “indirect” funding for protection activities when

organisations and donors are not in a position to quantify and report it to FTS. It is potentially quite significant, however, and such under-reporting could overemphasise the extent to which protection is underfunded in the humanitarian response. As will be discussed later, improving the tracking of funding to protection activities is key to a smarter approach to protection financing.

Underfunding is both a matter of insufficiency – not enough funding to meet requirements – and of inequity – uneven distribution of limited funds between different sectors. While the funding of the protection sector has fallen below its requirements, it has *also* received proportionately less funding than most other sectors. As figure 2 below shows, the protection sector has fared worse than many other sectors in UN-coordinated humanitarian appeals. A key challenge faced by the protection sector is that it is not always

recognised as life-saving as compared with other forms of assistance such as food security, nutrition, health, water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH). As a result, it is deprioritised in funding decisions. In the survey conducted for this study, respondents offered opinions as to why the protection sector has failed to secure sufficient funding. Sixty-five per cent of them said that other sectors are considered more of a priority, and 61 per cent said that protection is not considered life-saving. These findings are broadly consistent with the survey in the 2013 study. They suggest that attitudes and funding practices have not changed and that protection is being deprioritised because of its perceived importance within humanitarian response. These perspectives, however, must be framed within the broader humanitarian funding context. All sectors face significant challenges, and any corrective measures to prioritise one sector will always be at the expense of another.

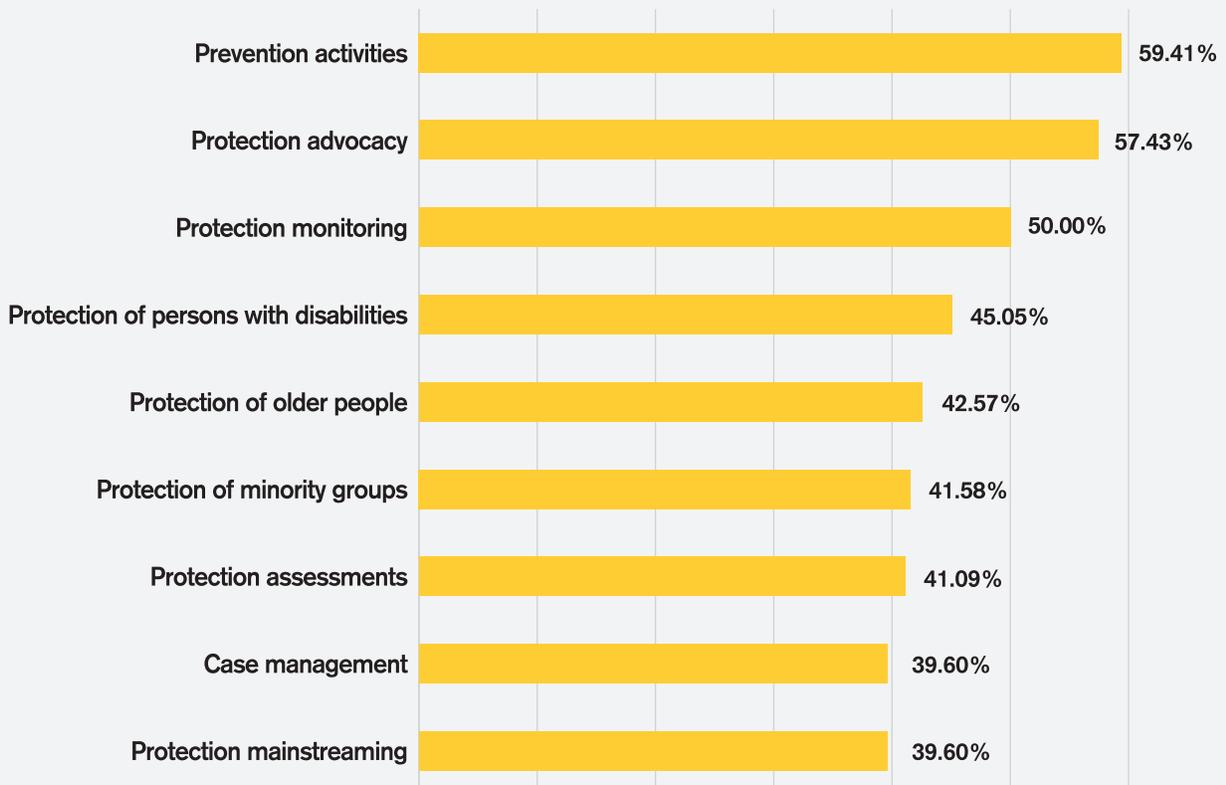
**FIGURE 2: SECTOR COVERAGE OF FUNDING IN UN-COORDINATED APPEALS 2013-19**



It is impossible to know from FTS reporting whether some aspects of the protection sector (i.e. AoRs) face more funding challenges than others. That is because requirements are not disaggregated consistently across all country humanitarian appeals. Funding for GBV has only been tracked since 2016, and there has been limited reporting for HLP. That said, the *Where is the Money* report by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and VOICE in 2019 found that funding allocated to GBV in emergencies between 2016 and 2018 amounted to \$51.7 million, just 0.12 per cent of the \$41.5 billion allocated for humanitarian response over the three-year period. For the same period, funding requests for GBV in emergencies totalled \$155.9 million. This means that two-thirds of these requests went unfunded, leaving a gap of \$104.2 million (IRC 2019). A report published in October 2020 by Save the Children and other child protection partners found that a total of \$252.2 million of humanitarian funding was reported for child

protection sector activities in 2019. Although an increase from previous years, this was only 47 per cent of the requirements in the appeals analysed. Based on FTS figures, mine action has faced a steady decline in funding through humanitarian appeals, falling from \$100 million in 2007 to \$48 million in 2019. It has also fallen as a proportion of appeals. This decline has occurred at a time when casualties from explosive ordnance remain high. Mine action has faced pressure during the elaboration of humanitarian appeals to limit its requirements. This is because mine clearance is costly and can push up the overall ask, with activities such as victim assistance often getting overlooked. Among the protection cluster's AoRs, housing, land, and property (HLP) has arguably faced the greatest challenges. In the survey for this study, HLP was ranked as the AoR for which it is most difficult to secure funding.

**FIGURE 3: PROTECTION ACTIVITIES THAT FACE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES IN SECURING FUNDING**

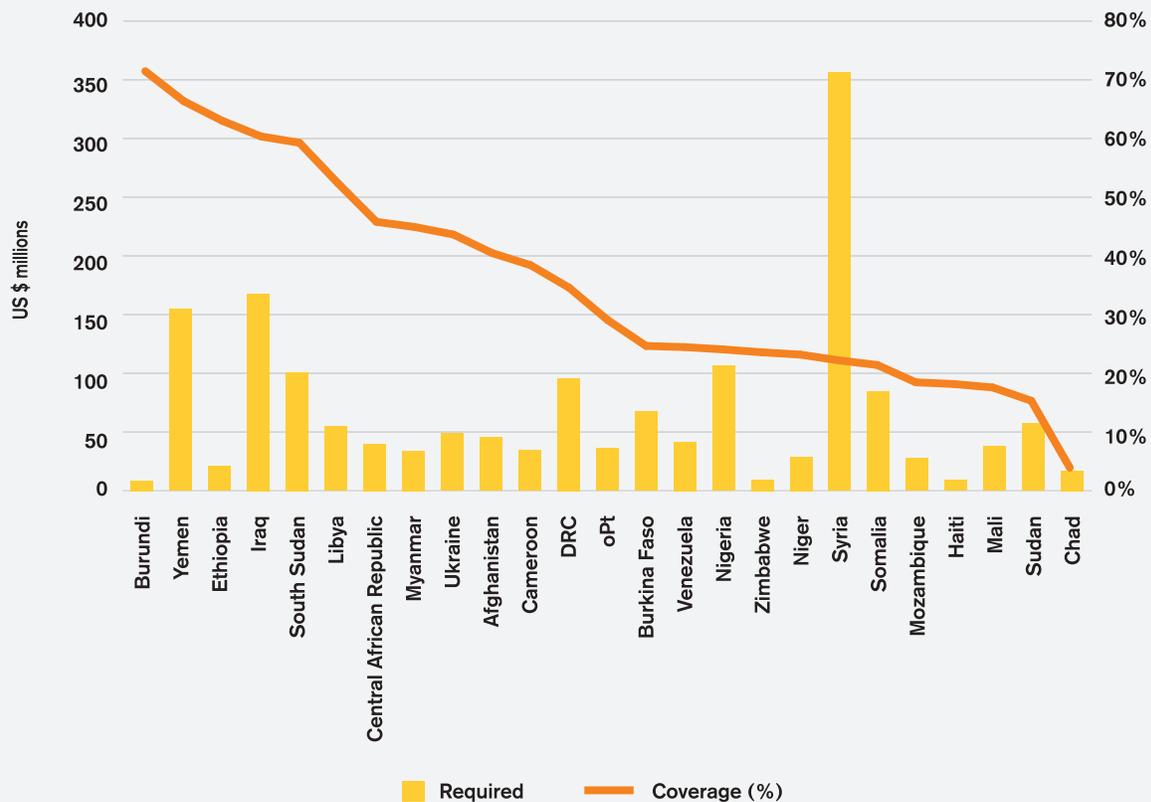


In addition to the AoRs, the survey also showed that some protection activities are more challenging to fund than others. As figure 3 above shows, respondents considered securing funding for prevention activities the most difficult, while response activities, such as case management, were considered easier. This was the case even though response activities must go hand-in-hand with prevention to ensure a comprehensive approach to protection challenges. According to the survey, it is also often difficult to get financial support for protection monitoring and advocacy, given their potential sensitivity and the difficulty in measuring results. They are a key priority, though, for many field protection clusters and the GPC, which is currently developing an advocacy strategy (Lilly and Spencer, 2020).

The study also looked at the extent of protection funding for different humanitarian crises. Twenty-five

countries had both humanitarian appeals and active protection clusters in 2019.<sup>11</sup> Figure 4 below shows the requirements for protection in these different appeals and the funding coverage for the protection sector. Only 36.9 per cent of protection requirements were met, demonstrating the underfunding of the sector once again. In only two contexts, Burundi and Libya, was the coverage of the protection sector greater than that of the overall humanitarian appeal. There was significant variation in both requirements – with some contexts such as Syria, Nigeria, Iraq and Yemen in the hundreds of millions – and also the extent to which the plans were funded. These ranged from the case of Burundi, which stood at 72 per cent, to that of Chad with less than 3.3 per cent coverage. Previous research has shown that there is no predictable or clearly discernible pattern behind funding inequalities in humanitarian appeals.

**FIGURE 4: FIELD PROTECTION CLUSTER FUNDING COVERAGE IN 2019**



There is no consistent correlation with crisis type, geography, or the size of the appeal (Swithern, 2018). The data for the protection sector draws a similar conclusion.

Funding trends related to the Covid-19 pandemic appear to confirm a similar level of underfunding for the protection sector. The updated Covid-19 GHRP had received only 38.2 per cent of requirements by 15 November, whereas the protection component of the appeal had received only \$107.7 million, or 32% of its requirements. Three-quarters of survey respondents for this study felt that Covid-19 had had an impact on protection funding, and, of those, 74 per cent felt that it had been either negative or extremely negative. Despite the serious GBV implications of Covid-19, the first versions of the GHRP released in March 2020 included limited activities to address the problem. This prompted 576 agencies to write to the ERC to ensure that the issue was adequately addressed in the updated version launched in July 2020.<sup>12</sup> While the updated GHRP has been strengthened in relation to GBV, however, only 20 per cent of requirements had been received by October 2020.

**WHILE THE UPDATED GHRP HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED IN RELATION TO GBV, ONLY 20% OF REQUIREMENTS HAD BEEN RECEIVED BY OCTOBER 2020**

Several stakeholders said the understandable prioritisation of the health component of the Covid-19 response was leaving planned protection activities underfunded. There have been particular challenges in mobilising resources for protection activities in the 20 countries that did not have an existing humanitarian appeal prior to Covid-19, but that launched one related to the pandemic. In 14 of these countries, no funding had been received for protection by October 2020.<sup>13</sup> This cannot be explained by the lack of protection-related problems around Covid-19 in these countries. The explanation may lie in the absence of a protection cluster and partners to provide assistance, leaving a key gap in the Covid-19 response.

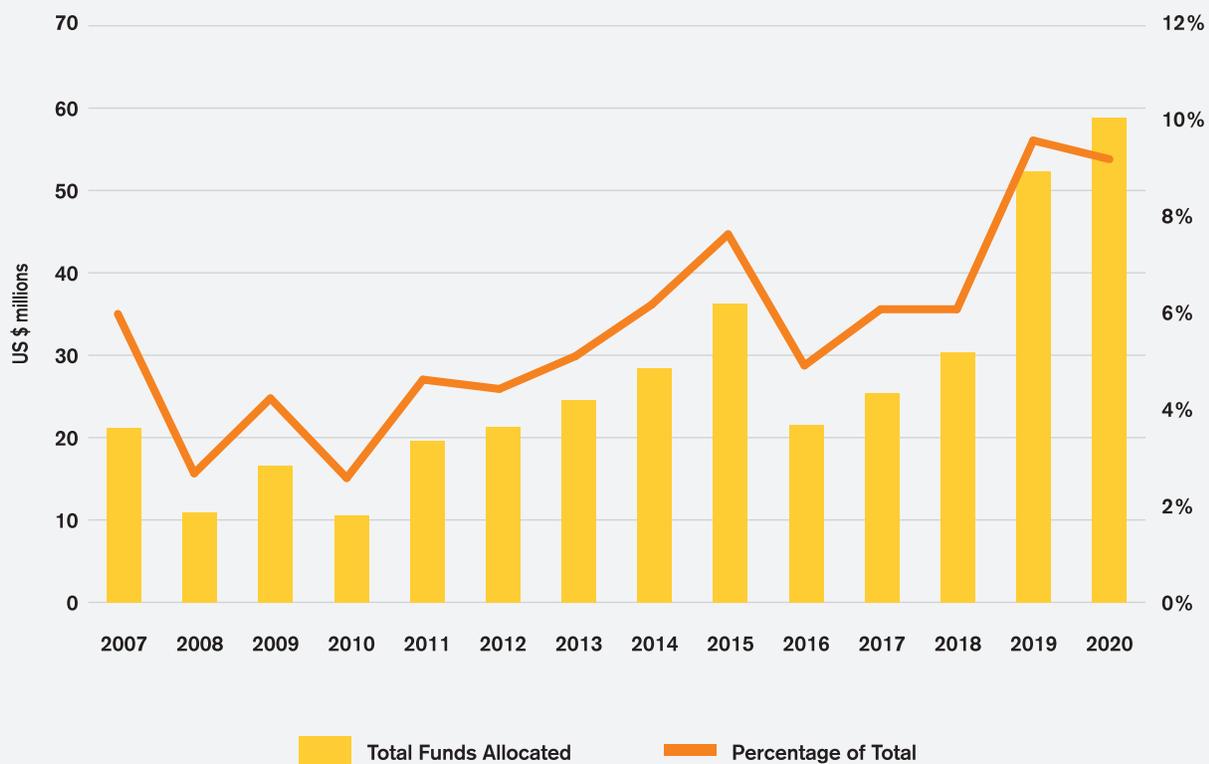
## 4.2 CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND (CERF) AND COUNTRY-BASED POOLED FUNDS (CBPFS)

The second area of financing for the protection sector addressed by the study relates to the CERF and CBPFSs. The CERF was established in 2005 as the UN's global emergency response fund to deliver life-saving assistance whenever and wherever crises strike. It has a rapid response window that allows country teams to kick-start relief efforts when a new crisis emerges. It also has a window for underfunded emergencies to help scale-up and sustain protracted humanitarian operations to prevent critical gaps when no other funding is available. In 2019, CERF provided its highest level of funding: \$538 million for more than 29 million people affected by humanitarian crises in 49 countries and territories (CERF (2020)). As figure 5 below shows, CERF funding to the protection sector has risen consistently since 2007, reaching \$52 million in 2019. That was the highest annual amount ever. It was also the highest proportion of CERF funding in a year, at close to 9.7%, and reached 5.6 million people. Almost half of the people assisted in 2019 by CERF funding, or 13.5 million people, were affected by conflict. CERF also supported people affected by natural disasters (representing 43 per cent of people assisted) and people affected by disease outbreaks (10 per cent of people assisted). Protection activities were also mainstreamed into projects funded through other sectors which cannot be tracked and quantified (OCHA 2020a).

At 9.7 per cent of CERF funding, the protection sector in 2019 received a much higher proportion of funding from the mechanism than the funding flows to the protection sector reported in FTS for humanitarian appeals, which stood at 4.2 per cent. While the CERF does not allocate funds exclusively against the requirements of the humanitarian appeals, it has given a high proportion of its funding to protection as compared with other sectors. Indeed, a key objective of CERF is to prioritise activities that face gaps in the humanitarian response. In January 2019, Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock identified four priority areas that are often underfunded or lack appropriate consideration in humanitarian operations: support for women and girls, including tackling GBV, reproductive health and empowerment; programmes targeting people with disabilities; education in protracted crises; and other aspects of protection. Humanitarian coordinators were asked only to give due consideration to these priority areas. The initiative, however, has clearly led to greater funding for the protection sector from CERF. This jumped

from \$30 million in 2018 to \$59 million so far in 2020 and was welcomed by the stakeholders interviewed as part of this study. The CERF Secretariat recently commissioned an evaluation of this prioritisation and the lessons learned from the initiative. The evaluation is expected to serve as a signal and leverage attention to the underfunded areas beyond the CERF allocations. The CERF life-saving criteria, against which funding decisions are made, have also been recently updated and the protection element strengthened.<sup>14</sup> While CERF has made an important contribution to protection funding, it is important to note that it accounts for less than 5 per cent of overall humanitarian financing. Until recently, it has only been open to UN agencies.<sup>15</sup>

**FIGURE 5: CERF FUNDING FOR PROTECTION 2007-2020**





Effects of Cyclone Idai in Mozambique.

Photo: Saviano Abreu/OCHA

### **BOX 3: MOZAMBIQUE – ONE OF THE WORLD’S FASTEST-GROWING PROTECTION CRISES**

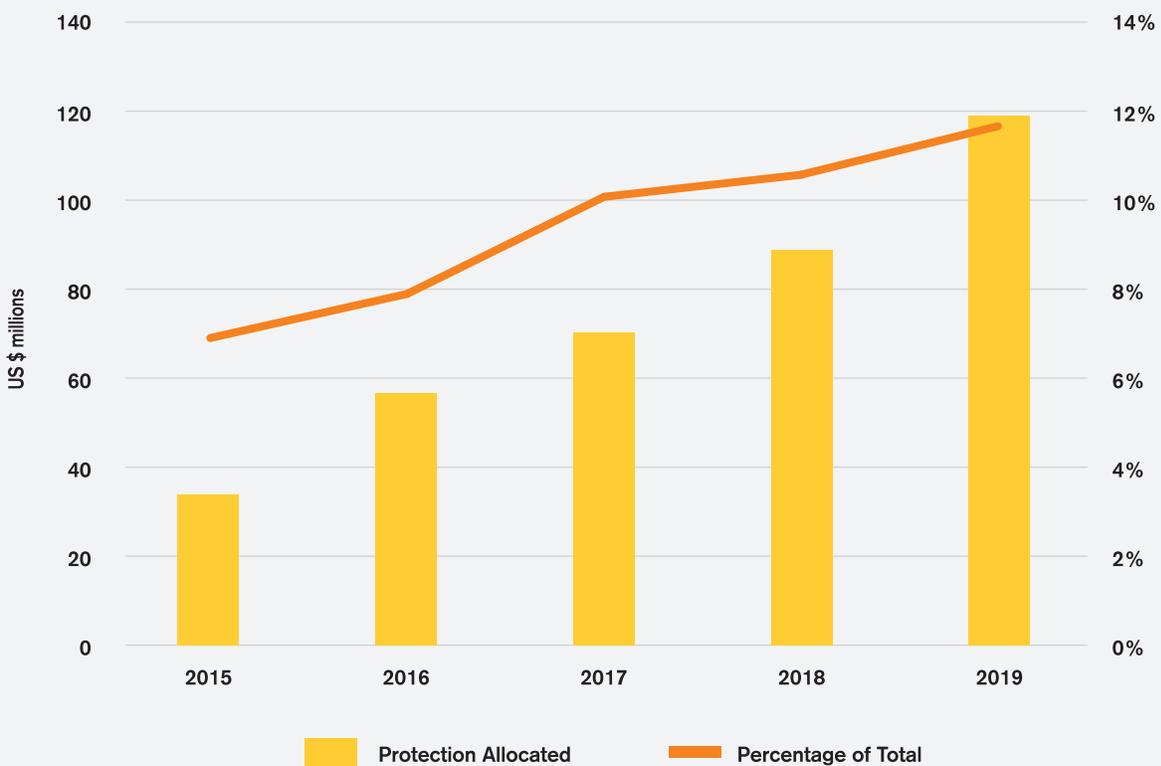
The arrival of Covid-19 has placed immense pressures on systems already struggling to cope with multiple interlocking disasters in Mozambique in recent years. The country experienced one of the worst El Niño events in half a century in 2016, inflicting a drought that has affected many of the 3.2 million smallholder farmers in its southern and central provinces. The country was then hit by cyclones Idai and Kenneth in March 2019. These killed 600 people and displaced hundreds of thousands, while affecting the infrastructure and livelihoods of three million. Mozambique has also experienced more than three years of armed violence in the northern Cabo Delgado province, an area which is also the epicentre of the country’s Covid-19 outbreak. There are now 355,000 IDPs in the country, compared with only 14,000 in 2019 (IDMC, 2020).

While protection was not a central part of the response to the natural disasters, Mozambique is now one of the world’s fastest growing protection crisis. Increased armed attacks are disrupting the humanitarian response and the population’s access to much needed assistance. Many displaced people are trapped or completely cut-off from any form of humanitarian assistance. Many households have exhausted their financial resources, and those who have been able to flee are often stigmatised and discriminated by host communities because of suspicions that they have an allegiance to armed groups. There are reports of destruction to infrastructure, including schools and hospitals. Other protection risks include human trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse, child marriage, abductions and forced recruitment. A surge in violence and attacks in the northern part of the country is anticipated during the upcoming rainy season. It is expected to lead to new waves of displacement and heightened protection risks and needs in the areas most affected by the conflict as well as in those hosting new arrivals of IDPs.

While Mozambique is increasingly seen as a protection crisis, the protection cluster has only recently begun to be strengthened with systems for monitoring protection concerns. The protection sector in 2019 received only 18.1 per cent of requirements, far lower than the overall humanitarian appeal for the country.

The CBPFs allow donors to pool their funding to support local humanitarian operations. They are managed by OCHA, under the leadership of the humanitarian coordinator, in close consultation with the humanitarian community. The goal is to focus resources on the highest-priority projects as set out in the humanitarian response plans. There were 18 CBPFs in 2019. Together, these allocated a record \$1.02 billion, targeting 27.5 million people with life-saving aid. As figure 6 below shows, the CBPFs have shown a similar pattern of protection funding to CERF. They have increased from \$33.9 million in 2015 – when CBPFs started systematically tracking funding by sector – to \$119 million in 2019. The proportion of overall CBPF funding allocated to the protection sector also increased from 6.9 per cent to 11.6 per cent. This, like CERF, is a greater proportion than it received overall against humanitarian appeals. The ERC initiative in 2019 to prioritise CERF funding for four particular underfunded areas has also applied to the CBPFs, contributing to increased protection funding since 2019.

**FIGURE 6: CBPF FUNDING FOR PROTECTION 2015-2019**



### 4.3 REFUGEE RESPONSE PLANS

Protection is a key element of refugee response plans (RRPs) coordinated by UNHCR. They present the inter-agency response strategy and the corresponding financial requirements of all partners for the humanitarian response to refugee situations. There were 15 country and regional RRP managed by UNHCR in 2019 to provide protection and assistance to 20.4 million refugees globally. As the number of

refugees has grown, the funding requirements for the RRP have too, from \$3 billion in 2013 to \$10.4 billion in 2019. As with the humanitarian response in general, however, it has been increasingly difficult to secure funds sufficient to keep pace with the growing needs of refugees. While 63 per cent of requirements were funded in 2013, that dropped to just 34 per cent in 2019.

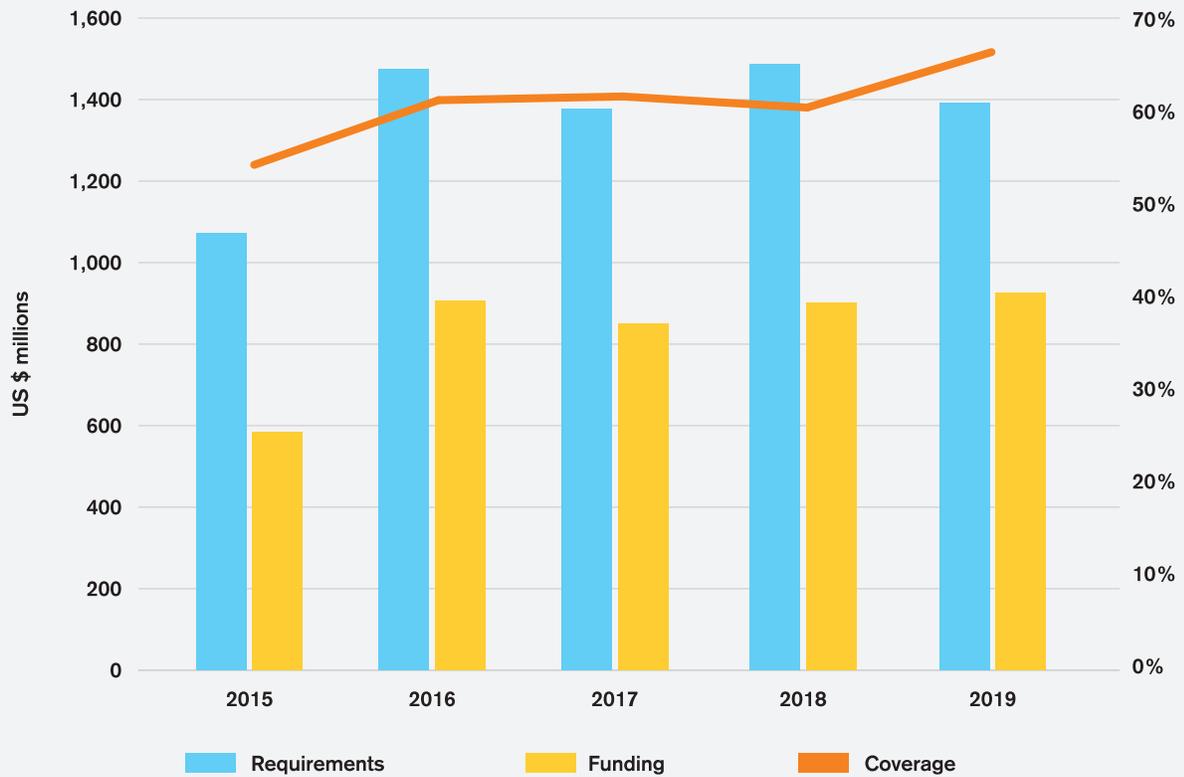
#### **BOX 4: CUTS TO UNRWA'S PROTECTION FUNCTION FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES**

In addition to UNHCR-led refugee responses, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provides protection and assistance to more than 5.7 million Palestine refugees across the Middle East. These refugees have been stuck in a state of protracted displacement since 1948 with no end in sight to their plight. In recent years, UNRWA has significantly strengthened the implementation of its protection mandate. The US government in 2018, however, cut its funding to the agency by more than \$300 million. This led to a significant reduction in the protection function of the agency, with a loss of half of its protection budget and a third of its 120 protection staff. As a result, Palestine refugees were left without urgently needed protection services, such as GBV response. There was also reduced monitoring of protection threats (UNRWA, 2019).

There is no sector-specific funding data for the RRP so it is impossible to say whether the protection component of the plans has fared better or worse. The data available in FTS for the RRP for Syria, Bangladesh and Venezuela for 2019, though, shows that the protection sector for these plans received 54 per cent of requirements compared with 59 per cent for the plans overall. At least from this sample of RRP, it appears that protection activities have been as hard to fund as the humanitarian response in general. A significant proportion (35 per cent) of funding to RRP goes to UNHCR as the lead agency for the plans' implementation.

As figure 7 opposite shows, the funding received for the protection component of UNHCR's protection programme increased from \$584.2 million in 2015 to \$926.3 million in 2019. Significantly, the coverage of requirements has also increased over this timeframe from 54.4 per cent in 2015 to 66.6 per cent in 2019. Over this time period, 61.3 per cent of funding requirements for protection were met. This was greater than the 57 per cent coverage of the overall refugee programme requirements.

**FIGURE 7: UNHCR PROTECTION FUNDING WITHIN THE REFUGEE PROGRAMME 2015-19**



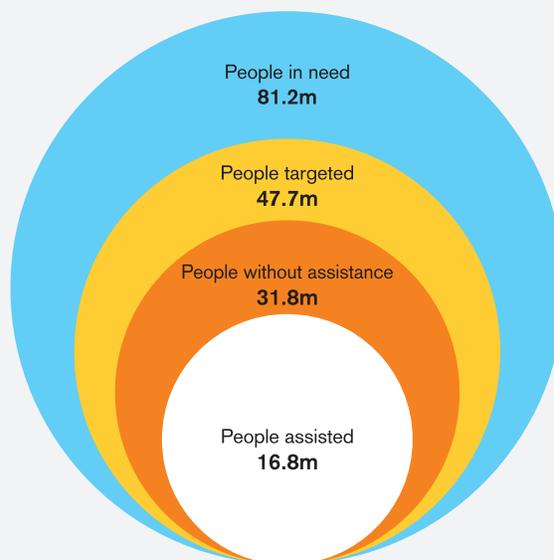
# 5 Chronically underfunded: the challenges of funding protection

From the trends presented above, it is clear that the protection sector continues to face chronic underfunding challenges. The conclusion of the 2013 study, that the protection sector is underfunded in relation to its requirements and as compared with other sectors, appears as relevant today as it was back then. In this study's survey, 78.9 per cent of respondents said that they felt the protection sector was underfunded. This opinion was consistent across all stakeholders taking the survey, including donors. There are, however, encouraging signs that when concerted action is taken to bring about systemic change in the humanitarian response to prioritise protection, increased funding results. In particular, funding for the protection sector by CERF and CBPFs has led to increased flows of funding to the sector. This was especially the case following the ERC initiative of 2019 to prioritise protection-related activities. CERF and CBPFs, however, only account for between five and ten per cent of overall humanitarian funding. They cannot be relied on their own to fill the gap in protection funding with other actions required. From the interviews conducted for this study – and as will be discussed later – there are measures that can address this underfunding of protection.

Understanding the consequences of this lack of funding is critically important. There is no systematic way within the humanitarian system to quantify the consequences of the underfunding of humanitarian action (Swithern, 2018). The most obvious way, however, is to calculate the number of people in need that failed to receive assistance because of funding shortfalls. The 25 field protection clusters identified 81.2 million people in need in 2019. Of those, 47.7 million were targeted for some kind of protection intervention in humanitarian appeals. Given the lack of funding, however, only one in three people targeted, or 16.8 million people, received assistance, leaving 31.8 million people without assistance (see infographic opposite). It is impossible to equate these figures with preventable deaths or increased

vulnerability among those who were not assisted. There are also the qualitative impacts to consider of insufficient funding for implementing protection interventions according to the minimum standards set by protection actors. For example, the Still Unprotected study found that the cost-per-beneficiary ratios for child protection services in many humanitarian operations were very low. In order to provide a minimum coverage of needs, they were only able to fund basic activities such as awareness raising and some community-based psychosocial support. They fell short of funding much-needed, specialised, targeted and intensive activities such as victim assistance, family tracing and reunification, or the reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups (SCI et al, 2020). The country examples in this report provide some examples of the consequences of a lack of funding to protection activities in humanitarian crises. More research, however, is required into underfunding's consequences, with the lessons to be incorporated into the humanitarian programme cycle.

## IN 2019 THE 25 FIELD PROTECTION CLUSTERS IDENTIFIED 81.2 MILLION PEOPLE IN NEED





Carlota Diaz, 63, tells us her husband is sick with fever and malaria. They live on a landfill and access to health care is scarce and very expensive. With hyperinflation and sanctions, findings show that people now die of treatable diseases.

Photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/NRC

## **BOX 5: VENEZUELA – TRAPPED BETWEEN POLITICS AND THE NEED FOR PROTECTION**

The humanitarian crisis in Venezuela is the product of political instability and economic collapse in what has historically been a middle-income country with strong social protection systems. Six years of socio-political instability have crippled systems on which people once depended, prompting a seismic outflow of refugees and migrants seeking basic services, economic opportunity and protection in neighbouring countries. The crisis, however, has received insufficient attention from the international community.

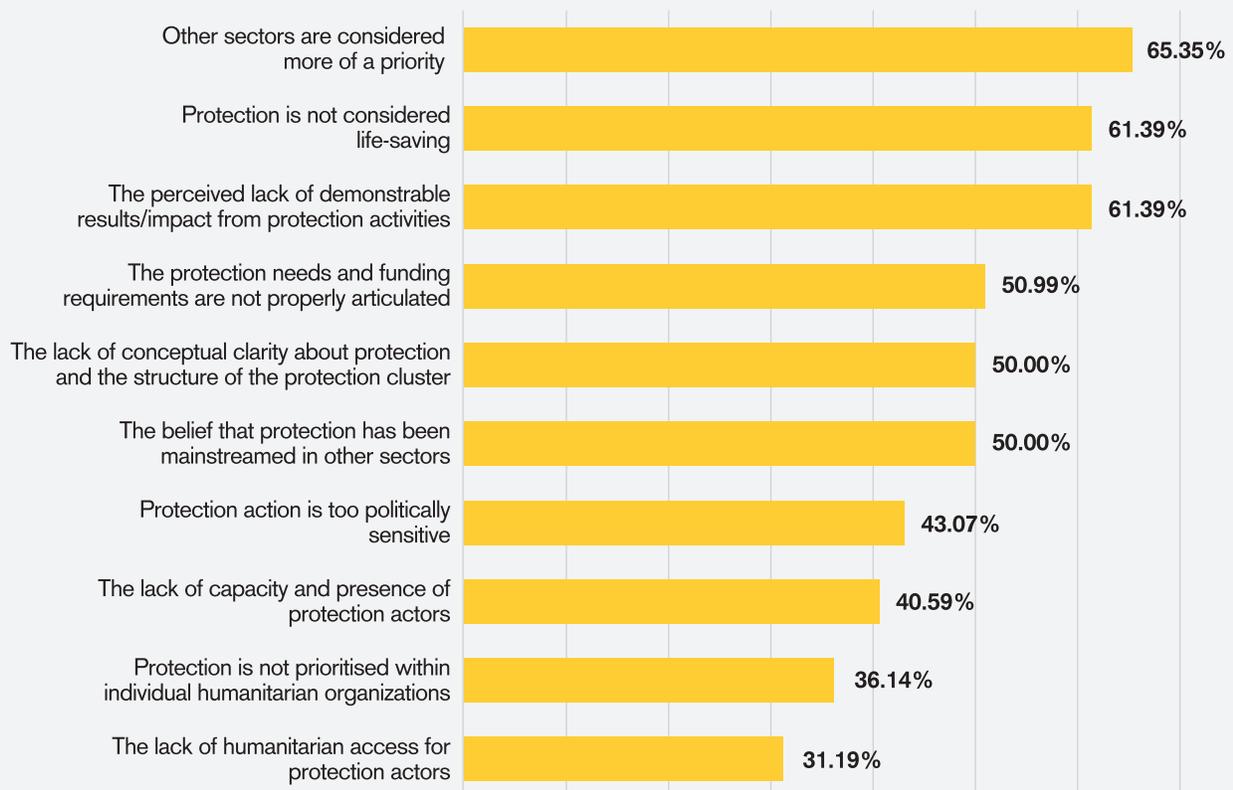
An estimated five million people have left Venezuela, with movements back-and-forth from neighbouring countries. The most vulnerable people on the move face protection risks, including the lack of documentation and the threat of being arrested or denied access to basic services. According to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), 48 per cent of Venezuelan women on the move are travelling alone, putting them at serious risk for human trafficking and all forms of GBV.

The humanitarian response in Venezuela has faced chronic underfunding as the intractability of the political situation leaves millions without adequate protection. The protection cluster was only activated recently and has struggled to mobilise resources, receiving only 24.2 per cent of its requirements in 2019. For 2020, the protection sector has received just six per cent of requirements. At current levels, the lack of funding would require that protection services be stripped back to just \$2 per person. Targets could also be dramatically reduced, causing 1.5 million people to miss out on protection all together.

Identifying practical ways to address the underfunding of protection requires understanding why the protection sector faces challenges in securing sufficient funding, or even funding that is proportionate to that of other sectors. This study attempts to analyse the factors affecting protection financing and explain the data analysis, including through the on-line survey and consultations with different stakeholders. As noted above, and outlined in figure 8 below, the principal reason for underfunding, according to survey respondents, is that the protection sector is not considered as high a priority and as life-saving as other sectors. In food security, health and climate-induced disasters the protection dimension of a crisis is not always immediately apparent, and the issue often gets overlooked. Despite the many policy commitments related to the “centrality of protection” in recent years, it appears that these commitments are not translating into an

increased prioritisation of protection within the humanitarian response. Stakeholders interviewed for the study consistently said that while the commitments made have been welcome for generating greater interest and momentum in protection, they are not being consistently implemented into concrete action on the ground. Many donors, UN agencies, and NGOs have adopted policies and strategies on protection in recent years. While this has prioritised the issue for them, it is not having a broader impact on the place of protection within the humanitarian system.

**FIGURE 8: SURVEY RESPONSES ON WHY THE PROTECTION SECTOR IS UNDERFUNDED**



Some of the factors affecting protection financing are external to the protection sector. They are related to the attitudes and actions of other actors within the humanitarian system. There are, however, relevant issues internal to the protection sector. A key finding of the 2013 protection financing study was that the problem was not so much the quantity of funding available for protection but rather the performance of the protection cluster. (Murray and Landry, 2013). The subsequent Whole of System Review on Protection similarly discovered concerns about the quality of protection projects that failed to demonstrate results and impact. As the results of the survey show in figure 8, the lack of demonstrable results from protection activities, the poorly articulated protection needs and requirements in appeals, and the lack of conceptual clarity regarding protection and the structure of the protection cluster, are all reasons that protection financing is still held back. The protection cluster, however, has taken significant steps in recent years to professionalise its work. This includes the development of key guidelines, tools and approaches that have been adopted by protection partners, along with the better measuring of results. The centrality of protection has been integrated further into humanitarian appeals. Many country operations are making protection an overall strategic objective of their response, and protection sector plans are far more clearly planned and budgeted. Stakeholders, including donors, interviewed for this study, acknowledged the significant improvements in protection action. These improvements make the sector a more compelling, even critical destination for investment in helping to respond to the complex challenges and acute needs of crisis-affected populations. Many stakeholders, however, said that there is still a way to go, with further investments required. As with the previous study, the field consultations for this study confirm that well-functioning protection clusters are vital to attracting increased levels of funding. Well-functioning clusters produce a thorough protection analysis which is translated into clear protection strategies so that humanitarian actors can work towards collective protection outcomes.

In sum, the study has shown that there are multiple reasons why the protection sector continues to face chronic funding challenges. These are both external, relating to attitudes within the wider humanitarian system, and internal, a result of the actions that the protection cluster has taken and can take. Protection financing also should not be seen as isolated from other factors, such as political support, policy commitments, and the well-articulated strategies and technical capacities required to bring about protection outcomes for crisis-affected populations. While vitally important, adequate financing is just one means of helping to better protect affected populations in crises.



# 6 A smarter approach to protection financing

Beyond drawing attention to the challenges and consequences of underfunding protection, this study has tried to identify opportunities. The solution is not only to be found in increasing levels of funding for the protection sector. The entire humanitarian response is underfunded. Greater funding for the protection sector will always be at the expense of another sector. Humanitarian actors, however, have an obligation to channel the limited resources available to where the needs are greatest, and these are frequently associated with protection challenges. There needs to be a reframing of the perceptions about the place of protection within the humanitarian response and the attitudes that persist about its importance. This can bring about systemic change so that a more predictable and sustainable approach to protection financing is adopted. Many good practices were shared and suggestions made during the research for this study. They are presented in the following section to offer a smarter approach to financing.

## 6.1 SETTING ACCURATE REQUIREMENTS ON PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN APPEALS

The starting point is to ensure that the protection sector's financial requirements in humanitarian appeals accurately reflect, and are commensurate with, the actual needs of the affected population. In the study's survey, 52 per cent of respondents said that the protection needs and requirements in appeals are underestimated. Only 35.1 per cent said that they were properly quantified. Donors are frequently sceptical about what the 2016 report of the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing called "appeal inflation" (High Level Panel, 2016). Donors participating in the survey, however, were just as likely to consider the protection requirements as underestimated as other respondents.

There is a large gap in many humanitarian appeals between the number of people assessed as in need of assistance by the protection cluster and the actual number of people targeted for assistance. This suggests that requirements are being underestimated. For example, in 2019, protection partners in Syria planned to assist 91 per cent of the people in need whereas in Haiti the anticipated coverage of needs was just seven per cent. In their report *Still Unprotected*, Save the Children International (SCI) found that in 2019 only 4 per cent of the children in need of child protection services were targeted for assistance in the Central African Republic (CAR), whereas in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the proportion was 8 per cent (SCI, 2020). Similarly and despite a better understanding of the risks to women and girls caught in crises, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) study on GBV funding, *Where is the Money*, found incredibly low requests in many situations (IRC, 2019).

The assessment and analysis of protection risks, and, in turn, the design and costing of the interventions required to address them, is still often weak. Many vulnerable groups continue to get overlooked (see box 3 below). The introduction of new templates in the humanitarian programme cycle has helped articulate protection needs and develop concrete plans and budgets better. For example, templates introduced for GBV have allowed for the proper planning of these interventions. Protection clusters, however, often project their requirements based on the capacity of their protection partners to deliver assistance rather than the actual needs of affected populations. They do so out of fear that they will not be able to fulfil the commitments made, even if this leaves a gap in the response. The budgeting of humanitarian action is a challenge for all sectors, and efforts are underway to improve this part of the humanitarian programme cycle. The protection cluster should develop a standardised approach to accurately quantifying protection requirements in each humanitarian appeal.

## **BOX 6: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND OLDER PEOPLE ARE OVERLOOKED**

While an increasing number of humanitarian appeals include sex-aggregated data that helps account for the specific needs of women and girls, there is rarely data for other vulnerable groups particularly persons with disabilities and older persons whose needs are left overlooked. These groups often suffer disproportionately from crisis and yet are further discriminated against in the response. A recent report by Help Age International showed how older persons in emergencies are systematically being left behind and the humanitarian system not fulfilling its commitments (Help Age International, 2020).

### **6.2 MAKING PROTECTION FUNDING MORE VISIBLE – IMPROVING THE TRACKING OF FUNDS**

The setting of accurate requirements is also the first step towards improving the tracking of funds allocated for protection activities. It is currently impossible to create a comprehensive and accurate picture of relevant funding flows. Protection financing is arguably being systematically under-reported in the mechanisms that exist. Improved tracking of funds would make the protection contribution to the overall humanitarian response more visible and enhance planning and implementation of interventions designed to bring about protection outcomes. As mentioned above, a significant proportion of protection financing is not being accurately recorded through FTS because it is not coded accordingly. FTS is a voluntary system, and the quality of the data that it produces rests on the quality of the data that is inputted. Funding for protection activities is often left unspecified in FTS reporting as there is no way currently to capture the funding for the protection sector in multi-sector contributions. The FTS coding for the protection cluster's AoRs is being inconsistently reported from one humanitarian appeal to the next. An even bigger challenge is trying to track the indirect protection financing through activities associated with other sectors.

While there are no easy technical solutions to these problems, the greater use of tagging and coding of protection activities in FTS and other mechanisms and improved reporting would improve the data available. The IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM) has been used in recent years to track the resources dedicated to gender mainstreaming. According to reporting by implementing partners, an estimated 90 per cent of CBPF funding in 2019 was for projects related to gender equality. There has been over-reporting, however, of actions that are seen as contributing to gender equality, with gender mainstreaming still viewed as chronically underfunded (UNFPA, 2020). Systems similar to GAM could be created to track the resource implications of protection mainstreaming activities both within individual organisations and funding contributions to humanitarian appeals. Technical guidelines are needed to improve the tracking of protection financing used by all actors in the system.



A destroyed school in Amran, Yemen.

Photo: Becky Bakr Abdulla/NRC

## **BOX 7: YEMEN – IMPOSSIBLE CHOICES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Facing extreme levels of violence, economic decline, hunger and disease, Yemen is the world's largest humanitarian crisis. Pre-existing cultural and socio-economic factors have combined with conditions created by five years of violent conflict to generate dire protection risks for Yemen's population.

Yemen is the country with the fourth highest level of displacement in the world. Women and children constitute 75 per cent of its total number of IDPs. Since Covid-19 was first identified in the country, a quarter of vulnerable families have lost their income and half have lost more than 50 per cent (NRC, 2020a). Protection services are urgently needed to help families cope as people without remaining capital or income and very few financial resources face fractured social networks and a society without rule of law, and grasp at options to survive. It is estimated that more than two-thirds of Yemeni girls are now married when they are under 18, compared with 50 per cent before the conflict. This is a coping strategy increasingly used by families with few safe options. As the protection environment has deteriorated, GBV has risen by 63 per cent.

Yemen is repeatedly labelled a protection crisis. Reduced funding and limited access for protection actors and programming, however, have resulted in major gaps in the response to the needs of the population. In 2019, after strong humanitarian leadership and the strengthening of the protection cluster, 66.8 per cent of requirements for protection in the HRP were met. Given the scale of needs, however, this still left more than 1.5 million people without assistance. Despite continuing violence, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic and serious food insecurity needs in 2020, the protection sector has only received 39 per cent of funding requirements.

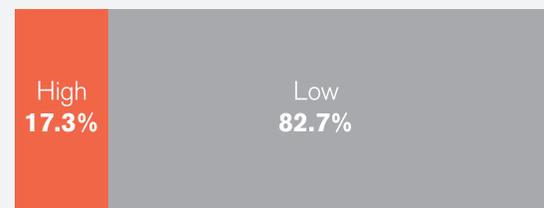
## 6.3 PRIORITISING PROTECTION IN FUNDING DECISIONS

The underfunding of the protection sector clearly stems from a lack of prioritisation by humanitarian actors. Despite the widespread protection risks for civilians in many crises and the centrality of the protection agenda, protection interventions are being overlooked when it comes to decisions about funding. Only 17.3 per cent of survey respondents felt that protection was considered a high priority in funding decisions. While this was considered the most important factor leading to the underfunding of protection activities, the prioritisation of protection by senior humanitarian leadership was considered the strategy that had worked best (58 per cent of survey respondents) in securing funding for protection activities.

The ERC's four priority areas for CERF and CBPF funding mentioned earlier clearly show what can be achieved in terms of prioritising protection in funding

decisions and, most importantly, ensuring that the humanitarian community lives up to commitments with regard to the centrality of protection. The first-ever GBV pledging conference (see box below) organised in May 2019 was another example cited by many stakeholders of how concerted international attention can help galvanise action and mobilise resources towards addressing frequently overlooked protection challenges.

**ONLY 17.3% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS FELT THAT PROTECTION WAS CONSIDERED A HIGH PRIORITY IN FUNDING DECISIONS**



### BOX 8: CONFERENCE ON ENDING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES

In May 2019, in recognition of the need for increased international action and funding to address SGBV, the governments of Iraq, Norway, Somalia and the United Arab Emirates, along with UNFPA, OCHA and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) co-hosted the first-ever SGBV pledging conference. Financial pledges of \$366.6 million for 2019 and beyond were made by 21 donors. The funding was in addition to unearmarked and core funding to humanitarian partners working to prevent and respond to SGBV. Only 15 per cent of the funding was confirmed as new money; i.e., additional to what was already in the pipeline. A total of 86 per cent of pledges were confirmed as disbursed in 2019, amounting to a total of \$195.2 million.<sup>16</sup> The conference has been widely viewed as galvanising increased attention and funding to tackle SGBV while demonstrating what can be achieved through concerted leadership to prioritise a neglected issue.

Several donors interviewed as part of this study said that protection had become a priority in their humanitarian strategies and policies, and that this was being translated into funding decisions. For example, in 2016, the European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO) adopted a policy that updated funding guidelines on protection that were released in 2009 (ECHO, 2016). ECHO funding for protection rose

from €147.6 million in 2013 to €200.3 million in 2019, averaging 10.6 per cent of its overall funding, well above the typical funding for protection through humanitarian appeals.<sup>17</sup> Donors, such as the UK and US governments, have included indicators on protection for their strategic partners who are required to report on such activities for the unearmarked institutional funding given.

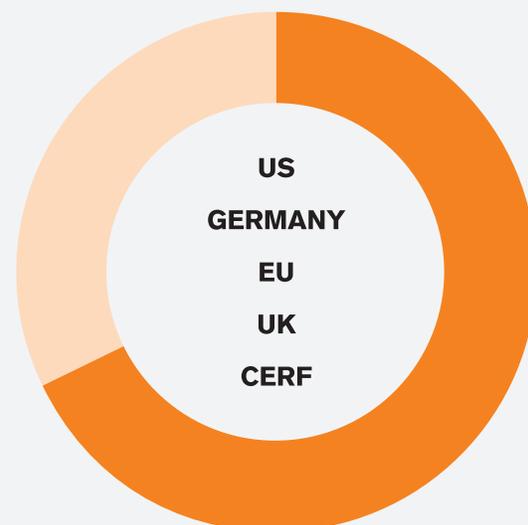
It is not only donors who need to prioritise protection in their funding decisions; this also needs to occur within the recipient agencies, especially when unearmarked funding has been provided. The previous study of 2013 suggested that the most likely source of increased funding for protection would come from the prioritisation of such activities in the allocation of resources within multi-mandated agencies. However, only 36 per cent of survey respondents – see figure 6 – said a lack of prioritisation within individual organisations was a reason why the protection sector is underfunded. Many of the large aid agencies, both the UN and NGOs, have embraced the centrality of protection agenda in recent years and invested in protection activities, but the momentum must be maintained as the squeeze on funding becomes greater.

## 6.4 DIVERSIFICATION OF PROTECTION FUNDERS

A potentially key factor behind the lack of change in the levels of funding for the protection sector since the last study in 2013 is the small group of donors that tend to support this part of the humanitarian response. Unless there is a diversification of funders, it is unlikely that there will be a change in funding flows. Research for this study found that in 2019 five donors accounted for 68 per cent of all funding for the protection sector: the US, Germany, the EU, UK, and CERF. The top ten donors accounted for 81 per cent of what was allocated. Similarly, in 2019, the top five mine action donors contributed 72 per cent of all international funding, for a combined total of \$406.7 million (ICBL, 2020). A similar pattern could be expected for the funding of the other AoRs.<sup>18</sup>

Many of the key protection donors have already prioritised the sector in their funding allocations and are unlikely to be able to provide even more money to address the overall imbalance. The use of pooled funds – including CERF and CBPFs – have clearly been beneficial for the funding of protection, but they are insufficient on their own. They already provide 10 per cent of their funding to the sector and would be unlikely to increase those levels. Other trust funds have also been established to address GBV – the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women – and also violence against children – the End Violence Fund. These, however, have their limitations. Such pool funds are extremely important for protection financing, but there should not be an over-reliance on them. A more effective strategy would be to diversify donors to the protection sector and bring in non-traditional ones, including not only governments but also foundations and the private sector, to begin to make this a priority.

**68% OF ALL FUNDING FOR THE PROTECTION SECTOR IS PROVIDED BY JUST FIVE DONORS:**





Fatoumata, 67, and her family have moved several times within Burkina Faso to escape from armed attacks. "The armed men have chased us away from our homes and killed our loved ones. That's why we fled and came here."

Photo: Tom Peyre-Costa/NRC

## **BOX 9: SAHEL – CONFLICT DRIVEN FOOD INSECURITY RISKING THE LIVES OF MILLIONS**

The Central Sahel border region between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger is now widely recognised as one of the world's fastest-growing humanitarian crises. The intersection between armed conflict, climatic shocks and widespread poverty there is rapidly propelling 14.8 million people into dire humanitarian need (OCHA 2020e). Armed conflict is the most immediate threat to civilians and the main driver of food insecurity.

The region's structural gaps in basic services and the worsening food problem are ultimately the product of an overwhelming protection crisis. The 6,600 fatalities recorded in the 12 months preceding October 2020 make it among the world's deadliest crises, resulting in a twenty-fold increase in displacements over the last two years (OCHA 2020e). The 1.6 million people currently displaced within the region have extremely limited access to services. UNHCR in June 2020 warned of deadly attacks on civilians by armed groups, while Amnesty International has documented extrajudicial killings and disappearances among human rights violations that may amount to war crimes.

Protection partners have recorded 3,040 protection incidents between January and September 2020 in Mali and 2,034 in Niger. A lack of economic opportunity, along with displacement, weak state institutions and the absence of functioning legal systems, expose large populations to abuse and exploitation. Women and girls use the sale or exchange of sex as a survival strategy, while an increasing number of children are at risk of child recruitment, child marriage, and participation in exploitative labour markets. Lacking any civil documentation and legal identity, these children are also at risk of becoming stateless. In several parts of the region, explosive ordinances are a threat to civilians. Family separation also has been reported as whole communities flee armed violence, sometimes multiple times.

The Sahel crisis is characterised as a food insecurity emergency, but has profound protection implications. Funding for the protection sector fell from \$33.4 million in 2013 to less than \$6.4 million in 2019, or only 17 per cent of requirements. In 2020, the protection component of the humanitarian appeals for Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger has received 26 per cent of requested requirements. This is leading to serious gaps in the response, particularly in providing holistic services to victims of violence. For example, 4,411 cases of GBV were reported between January and September in Mali, and yet only 48 per cent of localities have GBV services.

## 6.5 FINANCING PROTECTION OUTCOMES THROUGH THE NEXUS APPROACH WITH DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE ACTORS

Reducing protection risks to crisis-affected populations requires interventions that change behaviours and address the underlying causes of violence over the long term (several years). In many contexts, short-term humanitarian financing (over a few months) is only a fraction of the aid used to address the protection challenges tackled by the protection cluster. Development assistance and other forms of financing play an equally important, and yet under-appreciated, role. For example, donors and affected states contributed about \$561.3 million for mine action in 2019 (ICBL, 2020). Only \$47.9 million of this, however, came from funding to UN-coordinated humanitarian appeals.<sup>19</sup> According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance report for 2019, an increasing number of donors are reporting the use of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the purpose of ending GBV, although this still represents less than one per cent of total ODA allocations (Development Initiatives, 2020). However, while \$45.6 million was provided for GBV activities through UN-coordinated humanitarian appeals in 2018, far more, \$138.6 million, was provided to help end violence to women and girls in fragile states using development aid.

It is impossible to say how much of the development aid tracked by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) responds to protection risks. The amounts that are reported by donors in its fund tracking system for activities such as rule of law, human rights, violence against women, child soldiers, psychosocial support and social protection are significant. They probably surpass the scale of humanitarian funding in many situations. In addition to development assistance, there are also funds for peace actors, such as UN peace operations and special political missions mandated to protect civilians, that should also be considered for a complete picture of the resources dedicated to protection challenges in crisis situations. An examination of protection financing should look not just at the funds flowing to humanitarian protection actors, but also to development and peace actors.

There has been increased attention in recent years to the so-called “nexus approach”. This is intended to enhance collaboration between humanitarian, development, and peace actors in making the shift from delivering aid to ending need. The proposed, collaborative, and new way of working provides important opportunities for taking a long-term approach to tackling protection challenges (Lilly, 2020). For example, the World Bank’s Global Programme on Forced Displacement (GPDF) – IDA18 sub-window – has made significant funds available in recent years to countries hosting refugees so they can address the challenges of protracted displacement. UNHCR estimates that \$6.5 billion has been contributed for development in refugee-hosting countries over and above what they receive in humanitarian funding (Turk, 2018). Interestingly, UNHCR has not taken World Bank funds. Rather, it has played a key technical advisory role, with the disbursement of funds contingent on the recipient government agreeing to a protection framework. For example, in 2019, Ethiopia adopted a new refugee proclamation that accorded refugees the same treatment as Ethiopian nationals with regard to access to key social services, freedom of movement outside of camps, access to labour markets, and the right of children to attend primary school. This refugee proclamation was closely linked to the receipt of significant development funding (Steets, Lehmann, and Reichhold, 2019). Using development assistance in this way can be a useful protection financing strategy to address long-term challenges.

A photograph showing a man lying on a bed in a medical setting. He is wearing a blue t-shirt and shorts. His right arm is heavily bandaged from the shoulder down to the hand. He appears to be in pain or discomfort. The background shows a simple room with a patterned blanket and some medical equipment.

A man injured in an attack against internally displaced people seeking protection in a catholic mission is receiving treatment at a local medical centre.

**Photo: Vincent Tremeau/NRC**

## **BOX 10: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC – MORE THAN HALF THE COUNTRY IN NEED OF PROTECTION**

Sixty per cent of the population of the Central African Republic (CAR) were considered in need of some form of protection services in 2020. Between October 2019 and August 2020, protection actors reported an average of 524 protection incidents per month. This mirrored findings in the 2020 Report of the Independent Expert into Human Rights in the Central African Republic which reported killings, death threats, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, arbitrary deprivations of liberty, abductions, the recruitment of children and conflict-related sexual violence, such as rape, among a long list of widely-experienced violations in the war-torn country.<sup>20</sup>

Even amidst widespread hunger and vast material needs, more people in CAR require protection services than any other form of humanitarian assistance. Protection, however, only accounts for 6 per cent of the CAR HRP. With a quarter of the population displaced and 40 per cent of households facing acute food insecurity, many people are forced to take measures that expose them to additional protection risks. Incidences of forced labour, child marriage and the forced recruitment of children are all reported to have increased this year. Reported incidents of GBV have more than doubled while 37 per cent of people with disabilities say they have been subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence.

Increasing attacks on humanitarian actors is making CAR one of the most dangerous places to operate and severely affecting efforts to reach those desperately in need. The protection cluster is able to reach only 25 per cent to 50 per cent of the affected population. While the protection sector received 45.9 per cent of its requirements in 2019, this is far less than the 71.1 per cent coverage of the entire HRP.

While there has been widespread buy-in for the nexus approach among all stakeholders, many questions remain about how it should be implemented. The multi-dimensional nature of the Covid-19 pandemic has made the nexus approach an imperative. The approach of the aid system, however, has been business-as-usual in most respects (Lilly, 2020a). A recent study on financing the nexus found that funding mechanisms have not adjusted yet to the proposed new ways of working (FAO, NRC and UNDP, 2019). Given the chronic underfunding of the protection sector, it would make far more sense to adopt a holistic approach to financing key protection interventions that taps into humanitarian, development and peace financing rather than just approaching it through the lens of humanitarian financing. It is important that protection be included in the coordination platforms on the nexus established by the IASC and OECD DAC. The Global Protection Cluster has also begun to develop guidelines for field protection clusters on how to engage in the nexus approach. Strategies to increase cooperation with development and peace actors to mobilise resources in the interests of achieving protection outcomes should be part of this.

## **6.6 PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING AND INTEGRATION AS STRATEGIES FOR MOBILISING RESOURCES**

There have been significant efforts in recent years to mainstream protection throughout the humanitarian response, where protection clusters work closely with other clusters to advance key protection principles in other sector interventions.<sup>21</sup> IASC Protection Policy has emphasised that protection is a whole-of-system responsibility. It is not confined to the protection sector and should be integrated into sector plans as well. While changing the way humanitarian actors work, protection mainstreaming and integration may also be a strategy for mobilising resources to achieve collective protection outcomes. Forty-two per cent of survey respondents considered mainstreaming protection in other cluster/sector programmes to be an effective way of securing funding for protection activities. As noted earlier, there is an unknown, but potentially significant amount of indirect protection funding going to other clusters/sectors.

Given the challenges of funding stand-alone protection interventions, this presents an important opportunity to mobilise resources towards protection outcomes. For example, the World Food Programme (WFP) adopted in November 2020 an updated Protection and Accountability Policy and is working to devise a way to commit a fixed percentage of its country programmes funding to protection mainstreaming and integration. Food assistance can help reduce the vulnerability of affected populations to protection risks. The food security sector has consistently been the largest recipient of donor funds. So WFP taking further steps to develop its approach to protection represents a major opportunity to mobilise resources to protection outcomes. This is just one example of the way key humanitarian operations mainstream and integrate protection and the significance of this for protection financing. Joint initiatives between the protection cluster and other clusters is another way. For example, the Child Protection Area of Responsibility recently developed a Collaboration Framework with the Global Education Cluster related to Child Protection-Education in Emergencies (CP-EIE). It has also been working since 2018 with different partners to address how food insecurity can be a driver of child protection concerns.<sup>22</sup> In 2019, the GPC and the Global Health Cluster also launched a Joint Operational Framework to establish clear guidance for an integrated response to health and protection coordination and service delivery.<sup>23</sup>

## **6.7 DIRECTING MORE RESOURCES TO LOCAL PROTECTION PARTNERS**

A key component of humanitarian financing reforms in recent years has been the localisation of aid. The Grand Bargain signatories have committed to achieving by 2020 an aggregated target of at least 25 per cent of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible to improve outcomes for affected people and reduce transactional costs." While there has been some progress towards meeting this target, the funding of local actors still represents a tiny proportion of overall funding flows (Metcalf et al, 2020). According to OCHA FTS, the proportion of funding against

humanitarian appeals that goes to local and national NGOs fell from 3 per cent in 2018 to 2.2 per cent in 2020. The proportion of the total funding for local and national NGOs that is reported against the appeals, however, went up from 22 per cent to 56 per cent. This suggests that local actors are increasingly benefiting from being part of UN-coordinated appeals that they found difficult to access in the past. It was hoped the Covid-19 pandemic would lead to a much-needed acceleration in the localisation of the aid agenda, given the added restrictions on international actors operating in crisis settings. The evidence so far, however, shows that there has not been a significant change in the role of local actors in the humanitarian response (Barbelet et al, 2020).

It is unclear whether local actors working within the protection cluster have fared any better (or worse) than other sectors in accessing funding. The CBPFs provide a significant proportion of their funds to local actors. Between 2013 and 2019, 28.3 per cent of the total CBPF funding went to local actors. This was much higher than the overall funding flows mentioned above. For the protection sector alone, the proportion was 26.4 per cent, marginally less. The START network, which aims to support the localisation of aid, reported that 2.7 per cent of its allocated funding was spent in the protection sector between April 2017 and July 2020. Thirteen per cent of that was given directly or indirectly to national and local NGOs.<sup>24</sup> The SCI *Still Unprotected* report indicates that only 3 per cent of funding for child protection services goes directly to local and national NGOs (SCI, 2020). This figure, however, is not that different from overall flows of humanitarian funding. Protection can be sensitive for local NGOs. They may face a backlash from national authorities for advocating on behalf of protection concerns. Based on the survey results, however, this was not a significant barrier for local actors in accessing funding.

## A SMARTER APPROACH TO PROTECTION FINANCING – THE SEVEN STEPS



**SET ACCURATE REQUIREMENT ON PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN APPEALS**



**IMPROVE THE TRACKING OF FUNDS TO IMPROVE VISIBILITY OF PROTECTION FUNDING**



**PRIORITISE PROTECTION IN FUNDING DECISIONS**



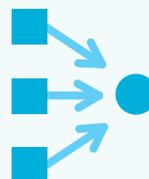
**DIVERSIFY THE DONORS FOR PROTECTION ACTION**



**FINANCE PROTECTION OUTCOMES THROUGH THE NEXUS APPROACH WITH DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE ACTORS**



**PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING AND INTEGRATION AS STRATEGIES FOR MOBILISING RESOURCES**



**DIRECT MORE RESOURCES TO LOCAL PROTECTION PARTNERS**

# 7 Conclusions and recommendations

This study has shown how the protection sector continues to face chronic funding challenges that leave millions of crisis-affected populations without urgently needed protection. Protection services are subject to entrenched misconceptions that set them apart from other life-saving services and result in them being systematically deprioritised in crises. Despite the welcome actions of some donors and aid agencies in prioritising protection, the humanitarian system is still falling short of the commitments it made in 2013 to the centrality of protection. More decisive action is needed to “break the glass ceiling” when it comes to the attitudes and perceptions about the place of protection in humanitarian action and expand the funding base that supports the sector.

As the study has also found, however, there are clear examples of how strong humanitarian leadership can bring about systemic change within the humanitarian system to mobilise resources and provide greater protection to affected populations in crisis. The protection cluster is now far better at demonstrating the results of its actions. It needs more investment to have an even greater impact. While mobilising greater financial resources is essential, it is not the only remedy, especially when all humanitarian action is underfunded and there is increased pressure on aid budgets. For this reason, the study proposes a smarter approach to protection financing. This involves measures that a range of different actors can take. In this regard, the study makes the following recommendations:

## **ALL HUMANITARIAN ACTORS SHOULD:**

- Ensure the protection sector receives an equitable proportion of humanitarian funding in 2021 at the same level as the entire Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO)
- Take practical actions to implement the commitments made to the centrality of protection and ensure a fixed percentage of their organisational funding goes to protection activities.
- In line with the commitments of the Grand Bargain, ensure that 25 per cent of funding to the protection sector goes to local actors. Provide local actors with institutional support to better access humanitarian planning, coordination, and resource mobilisation mechanisms.

- Ensure that protection is a core and mandatory element mainstreamed and integrated across all humanitarian programming.

## **DONORS SHOULD:**

- Convene, in collaboration with the GPC, an annual donor meeting starting in June 2021 to take stock of protection funding and mobilise funds to fill gaps in underfunded crises and thematic areas.
- Discuss and underline their commitment to the centrality of protection within the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) and outline the steps to operationalise these to deliver protection outcomes.
- Reach out and convene other non-traditional donors of the protection sector to diversify funding to protection.
- Fulfil and publicly report on the funding pledges made at the 2019 SGBV conference.
- Continue to improve reporting on protection financing through the FTS.
- As part of the nexus approach, make the adoption of a protection framework part of development aid in fragile states.

## **THE EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR (ERC) SHOULD:**

- Extend the strategic priorities for CERF and CBPF funding and include additional underfunded protection areas.
- Communicate to humanitarian coordinators the importance of the centrality of protection throughout humanitarian planning and funding decisions.

### **IASC (INCLUDING PRINCIPALS) SHOULD:**

- Discuss the challenges and bottlenecks in implementing the 2013 Statement on the Centrality of Protection and disseminate concrete benchmarks to measure progress.
- Include measures to address protection underfunding in the review of the IASC policy on protection planned for 2021.
- Develop ways to improve the planning and costing of protection activities for all sectors in the HRPs.
- Devise ways to track the protection contribution of funding to other sectors and multi-sector interventions.

### **HUMANITARIAN COORDINATORS AND HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAMS MUST:**

- Ensure that HCT protection strategies include resource mobilisation components and are closely linked and complement the HRPs.
- Ensure that protection requirements in HRPs are accurately set and are commensurate with assessed needs in the HNO.

### **THE GLOBAL PROTECTION CLUSTER SHOULD:**

- Maintain protection funding as a strategic priority in its GPC Advocacy Strategy.
- Develop a monitoring framework for tracking underfunding of the protection sector and report regularly on this in the GPC Centrality of Protection annual report.
- Develop guidelines for a minimum package of protection interventions in HRPs along with the unit costing of different protection interventions.
- Address the issue of protection financing in the GPC guidance being developed on the application of the nexus approach for field protection clusters.
- Initiate a policy dialogue with development actors (e.g. through the OECD DAC nexus working group) to ensure that protection financing is addressed within the nexus approach.

## ANNEX 1 – METHODOLOGICAL NOTE ON DATA ANALYSIS

As stated in the scope and methodology section of this report, a range of different data sources were used to conduct the analysis presented in the study. The main source was the OCHA supported Financial Tracking System (FTS) which provides a publicly available database of donor contributions (see <https://fts.unocha.org/>) and can be analysed by destination sector, appeal, year and other variables. When data was available for the protection cluster's respective AoRs, this was totalled to provide a figure for the entire cluster. The CERF data was similarly extracted from the fund's website (<https://cerf.un.org/what-we-do/allocation-data>) as was the data for the CBPFs (<https://pfbf.unocha.org/>). The data sets compiled and analysed from these sources were shared and verified by OCHA. The data on the RRP's was taken in the first instance from FTS and then combined with data provided by UNHCR on the protection component of its refugee programme. The data presented on the use of development cooperation was provided by the OECD according to its reporting codes (<https://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/dacandcrscodelists.htm>).

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 For more details see the satraps in the COVID-19 section of the GPC website at <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/covid-19/>
- 2 In April 2020, the Secretary-General called for an additional global ceasefire to address violence against women and girls in the context of COVID-19. One hundred and forty-six UN member states committed to addressing this as a priority in response efforts.
- 3 See statement by UNFPA at <https://www.unfpa.org/news/millions-more-cases-violence-child-marriage-female-genital-mutilation-unintended-pregnancies>
- 4 IASC Centrality of Protection Statement, p2
- 5 Whole of System Review, 2015, p60
- 6 Murray, J, Landry, J. (2013) Placing Protection at the centre of humanitarian action. Study on Protection Funding in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies', p4
- 7 See for example IASC Results Group 5 on Humanitarian Financing: Proposal for a harmonized approach to funding flexibility in the context of COVID-19 available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/humanitarian-financing/iasc-proposal-harmonized-approach-funding-flexibility-context-covid-19>
- 8 The Child Protection AOR launched a report along with Save the Children, The Alliance on Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, and UNHCR on child protection financing in October 2020 entitled "Still Unprotected: Humanitarian Funding for Child Protection" available at <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/still-unprotected-humanitarian-funding-child-protection>
- 9 The breakdown of respondents was as follows: 37.8 per cent international NGOs, 22.6 per cent UN agencies/entities, 20.5 per cent national NGOs, 7 per cent cluster coordination entities, 5.7 per cent donors, and 1 per cent Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.
- 10 This includes funding of the protection sector as a whole, including that coordinated by the protection cluster and its constituent Areas of Responsibility (AoR) including gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, mine action, and housing, land and property.
- 11 There are 25 active sectors or clusters in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, oPt, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe. There are seven protection working groups supported by the GPC in the Bahamas, Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Pacific and Philippines.
- 12 For a copy of the letter see [https://blog.savethechildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/GBV-Community-Letter-on-the-GHRP-Final\\_7.1-1.pdf](https://blog.savethechildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/GBV-Community-Letter-on-the-GHRP-Final_7.1-1.pdf)
- 13 These counties included Bangladesh, Benin, Congo (Republic of), Djibouti, , Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, North Korea, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia
- 14 The new life-saving criteria can be found on the CERF website at <https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF%20Life-Saving%20Criteria%202020.pdf>
- 15 While CERF is a funding mechanism only open for UN agencies, in June 2020, the ERC allocated \$25m from CERF to NGOs (via IOM) for Covid-19 programming.
- 16 The organisation 'Humanitarian Outcomes' (<https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org>) has been commissioned to track the dispersal of funding following the conference. See Oslo Commitments on Ending Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Crises Summary of 2020 Collective Progress Report
- 17 ECHO is one of the few donors that tracks funding to sectors. It provided this data as part of the consultation for the report on its funding to the protection sector.
- 18 See for example 'Still Unprotected' report of SCI et al, October 2020
- 19 International funding was distributed among the following sectors: clearance and risk education (56 per cent of all funding), victim assistance (eight per cent), capacity-building (one per cent), and advocacy (one per cent)
- 20 See "Human rights situation in the Central African Republic", Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic, Human Rights Council, 24 August 2020
- 21 For more information, see the protection mainstreaming section of the Global Protection Cluster website at <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/themes/protection-mainstreaming/>
- 22 For more information about this initiative, see the CP AoR website at <https://www.cpaor.net/>
- 23 See the communiqué announcing the launch of the Joint Operational Framework available at <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/2019/07/25/communique-on-joint-operational-framework-between-the-global-health-cluster-and-the-global-protection-cluster/>
- 24 Date provided directly from the START network in relation to their funding for local actors





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