

Bridging Information Gaps for Child Protection Needs Analysis in Emergencies

An approach for strategic decision making that saves resources, time, and avoids doing harm by interpreting proxy indicators of child protection risk.

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Introduction

Children displaced because of conflict or natural hazards face a multitude of risks that jeopardize their safety and wellbeing due to the breakdown of community protection mechanisms, separation from caregivers, exposure to violence and neglect, inadequate protective legal and social frameworks, and unmet basic needs forcing children and their caregivers to adopt coping strategies that can result in exploitation and various forms of violence.

When collecting and analysing data to understand humanitarian response needs for strategic decision-making, the protection sectors, which include child protection (CP) & gender-based violence (GBV), face a unique challenge that is not faced by other humanitarian response sectors. That is, sectors that aim to meet basic needs (such as food, water, shelter, education etc.) can collect data to “prove” the “problem” of a lack of availability or access to goods/services; however, the “problem” for the protection-related sectors, and specifically for child protection, is that various forms of exploitation and violence are often hidden and under-reported. Moreover, collecting data to attempt to “prove” the prevalence of exploitative and violent protection-related incidents would not only lead to data that underestimates the scale of the problem, it could also cause harm to enumerators and respondents (including children and adults who have suffered harm or at risk), by requesting that they disclose sensitive information without available response resources to immediately and confidentially refer individuals to assistance.

In 2017, the Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) and IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) launched a joint-initiative called the DTM for Children on the Move project to improve the quality of data and analysis for child protection strategic decision making. This paper will explore how DTM data is being used to bridge information-gaps for child protection needs analysis.

Information Needs for Strategic Decision Making

The UNICEF-led CP AoR is a coordination mechanism within the IASC Cluster Approach, that ensures that child protection humanitarian efforts are coordinated to mitigate child protection risks and respond to incidents in a timely manner that maximizes quality, impact, and geographic coverage.

When assessing response needs, the humanitarian community does not have the resources or capacity to respond in all geographic areas of a country facing a humanitarian crisis, for all of the affected population groups, and with all intervention-types, therefore the strategic planning process is required to focus the

humanitarian response on the locations and people who are most in need. As such, CP AoR partners need to know:

1. Geographic areas at higher risk of CP incidents
2. Whether the geographic areas with high risk of CP incidents have available & accessible CP response services
3. Population groups at higher risk of CP incidents
4. Priority CP issues

This information then allows partners to prioritize locations for the more in-depth location-specific assessments that are required to define program plans, budgets, and operational support requirements.

To meet the above information needs for strategic planning, the CP AoR has developed the Needs Identification and Analysis Framework (NIAF) approach, which helps improve the use of secondary data and reduce the need for implementing costly and time-consuming child protection needs assessments. It focuses on combining available data collected through various data collection methodologies to form a holistic view of the situational factors that increase risks for children in an emergency setting.

Although data can be collected at household level on some child protection risk categories without causing harm, (such as some physical dangers to children in displacement sites and child labour), a significant knowledge gap remains on the more sensitive and under-reported child protection risk categories, such as GBV and physical and emotional maltreatment. If asked, respondents are unlikely to disclose that these incidents have happened or are currently happening to children, which would result in unreliable data and potentially cause harm.

The NIAF approach addresses this challenge by acknowledging that **child protection partners do not need to know how many children are survivors/victims of exploitative and violent child protection incidents for strategic decision-making**. The approach therefore focuses on identifying the locations where children are more at risk due to living conditions and situational factors. This approach is aligned with (and extends the reach of) the IASC Guidelines on Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action (2015), which states that GBV is happening everywhere and is under-reported worldwide, even in non-emergency settings, therefore “all humanitarian personnel have the responsibility to assume that GBV is taking place” and “seeking population-based data on the true magnitude of GBV should not be a priority in an emergency due to safety and ethical challenges in collecting such data”.¹

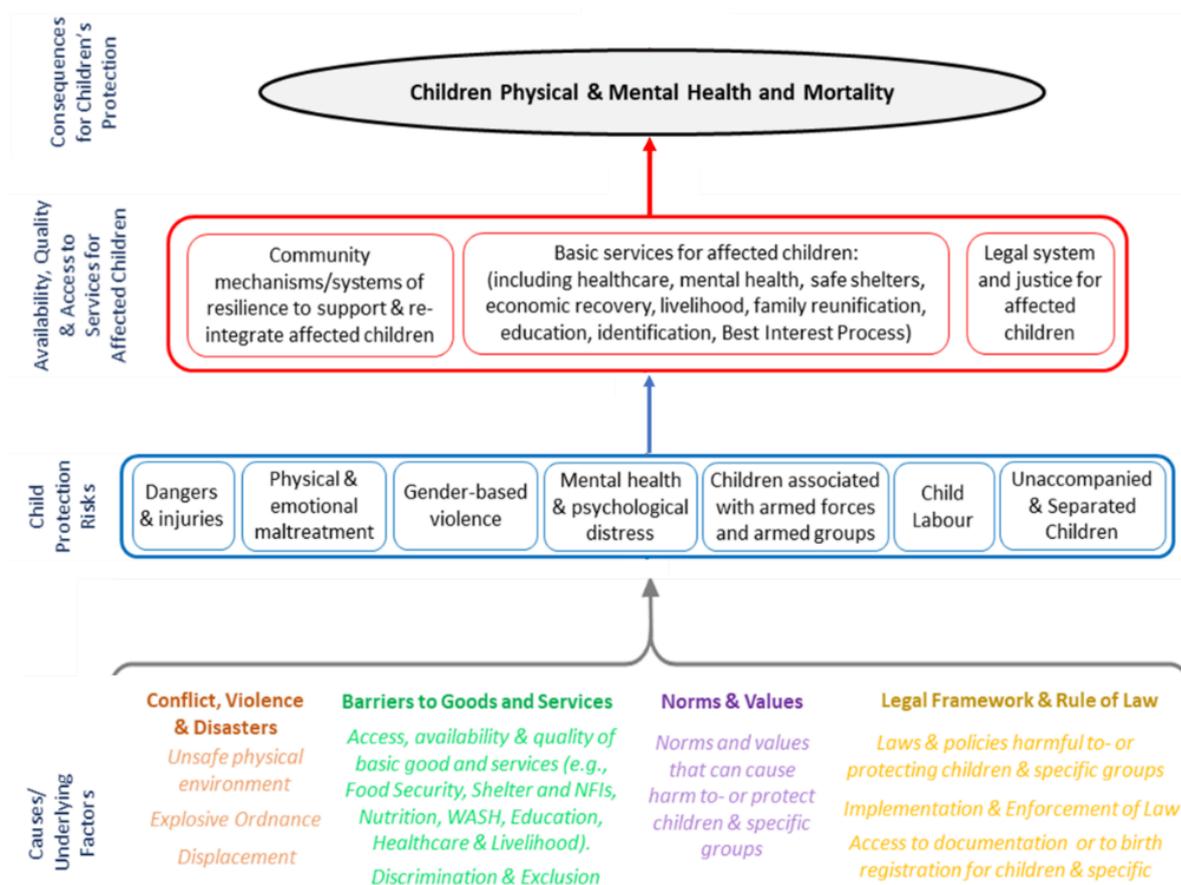
Interpreting Child Protection Risk Using Proxy Indicators

Interpreting the types of risks that children face in emergency settings due to living conditions and situational factors then allows partners to determine what type of response services are required and verify whether these response services already exist in priority locations. Finally, the number of children in need of child protection response services are calculated using a percentage of the affected population for each vulnerable group in priority locations.

The CP AoR Analysis Framework posits that the degree to which a child will mentally and physically recover from a child protection incident is contingent upon the availability, access and quality of child protection response services. The CP AoR Analysis Framework goes a step further by also summarizing the underlying causes/factors that increase child protection risks, which is required to understand where child protection incidents are likely higher in an emergency setting.

¹ IASC, Guidelines on Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action (2015), viewed on Oct 1 2018, https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-IASC-Gender-based-Violence-Guidelines_lo-res.pdf

Figure 1: CP AoR Analysis Framework



To identify child protection response needs, the CP AoR focuses on interpreting data from the causes/underlying factors row (which are proxy indicators² for child protection risks), and the availability/access/quality of CP response services row (which informs on whether response services already exist in locations with high child protection risks). This analysis is complemented with existing data on the prevalence of child protection issues (such as rates of child marriage) and vulnerabilities (such as % of children with disabilities) that are often available in national census data.

² A proxy indicator is an indirect measure of an outcome, that is perceived to be strongly correlated to the outcome.

Example 1: How a proxy indicator may be interpreted for child protection needs analysis

Food Insecurity in Country Y

(Note: this is for illustrative purposes only. In practice, a collection of indicators is assessed. Additionally, the analysis and interpretation of results must be tailored to each context).

Proxy indicator: Food insecurity

Child Protection Risks: To meet food needs, vulnerable households may adopt coping strategies that result in child protection incidents, such as sending children to work in dangerous locations, requiring them to beg, requiring them to migrate elsewhere in search of work/support, or forcing girls into marriage to relieve the food-gap burden on the family. Additionally, parental stress could lead to increased rates of physical and emotional child abuse.

Affected population groups:

- Child marriage: Girls aged 14-17 from a specific ethnic minority
- Child labor: Boys and girls aged 10 – 17
- Child exploitation: Street begging amongst boys and girls as young as 5 years

Required Interventions:

- Advocacy on laws surrounding child marriage.
- Support of government systems aimed at mitigating and responding to child protection incidents.
- Case management for referral of survivors of abuse/exploitation to medical, judicial services and other response services in locations with service gaps.

Mitigation of CP risks by referring vulnerable households for prioritization in food security interventions.

More examples of proxy indicators for assessing CP risk may be found in the [DTM and Partners Toolkit](#).

The Importance of Using Data from a Variety of Data Collection Methodologies

The NIAF approach acknowledges that **different data collection methodologies are required for different purposes**. For example, data collected from key informants provide information about the situation, overall needs, and available services in a community or administrative area. Key informants, however, cannot provide reliable data on the proportion of IDPs/returnees that are experiencing specific challenges/risks/needs (such as the proportion of IDPs adopting specific negative coping strategies to meet food needs, or the proportion of households with a separated child), which would be more suitable for a household assessment.

Likewise, a household assessment is not the most appropriate method to provide information on availability of child protection services in every location, nor living conditions that can increase child protection risks (such as the number of sex-segregated toilets in a displacement site, the distance to water sources, or the number of schools in an administrative area). Additionally, asking heads of households about child protection services, such as those linked to responding to domestic violence, can represent a risk for the enumerators.

Finally, aggregated data from police reports or from organizations providing case management will reflect the number of child protection incidents that have been reported or assisted, but it will not include those that have not been reported. As such, this data is reflective of the number of beneficiaries of services, rather than prevalence of child protection incidents.

Examples of Using DTM Data Proxy Indicators for Child Protection Needs Analysis

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) collects and analyses data to disseminate critical multi-layered information on the mobility, vulnerabilities, and needs of displaced and mobile populations. This information enables decision makers and responders to provide these populations with appropriate context-specific assistance.

The following examples highlight how proxy indicators of child protection risks from DTM data have been used in Mozambique, Ethiopia and Ukraine to better understand child protection risks and response needs for strategic decision making.

Case Study: Mozambique Child Protection Needs Assessment

In 2020, UNICEF Mozambique approached IOM to conduct a joint child protection assessment in conflict-affected Cabo Delgado to better understand the child protection risks and needs for strategic planning. The following information management process was followed to design the needs assessment:

Figure 2: Information management process followed to design CP assessment

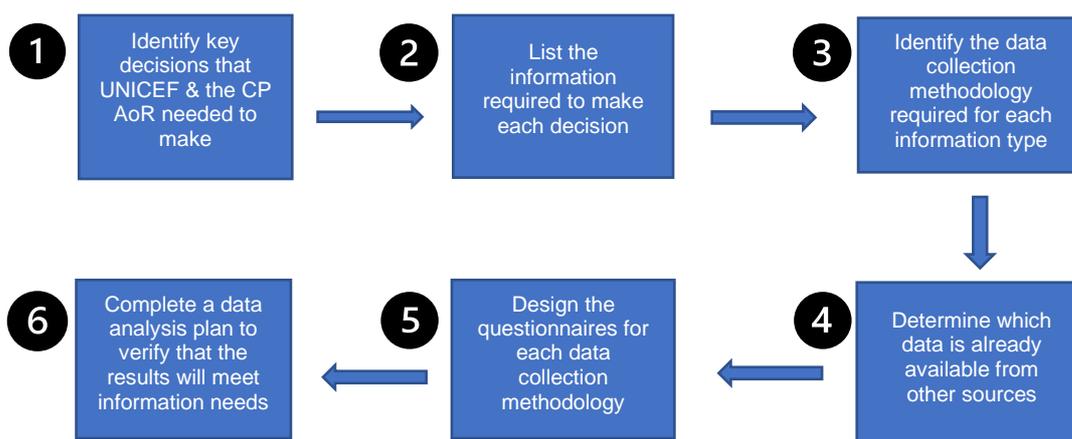


Table 1: Example of the information needs mapping for one of the identified key decisions

Decision	Information Needs	Required Data collection methodology		
		Key informant (not CP specialist)	Key informant (CP specialist)	Household survey
Priority Geographic Areas to Set up Case Management	Estimated # IDPs per location (sex and age disaggregated data)			
	Place of origin of IDPs			
	Secondary displacement dynamics			
	Reason for displacement per location			
	Locations with situations/living conditions that increase CP risks	Only if clusters do not have the information		
	Proportion of IDPs reporting symptoms of child stress/trauma			
	Presence of CP services & service providers per location			
	Barriers to accessing CP services			
	Qualitative information on the drivers of child protection risks (to identify significant proxy indicators), and reported/observed child protection issues.			

Using the data obtained through the assessment, the following severity scale was developed for identifying priority geographic areas to set up case management in Cabo Delgado at the administrative 2 level.

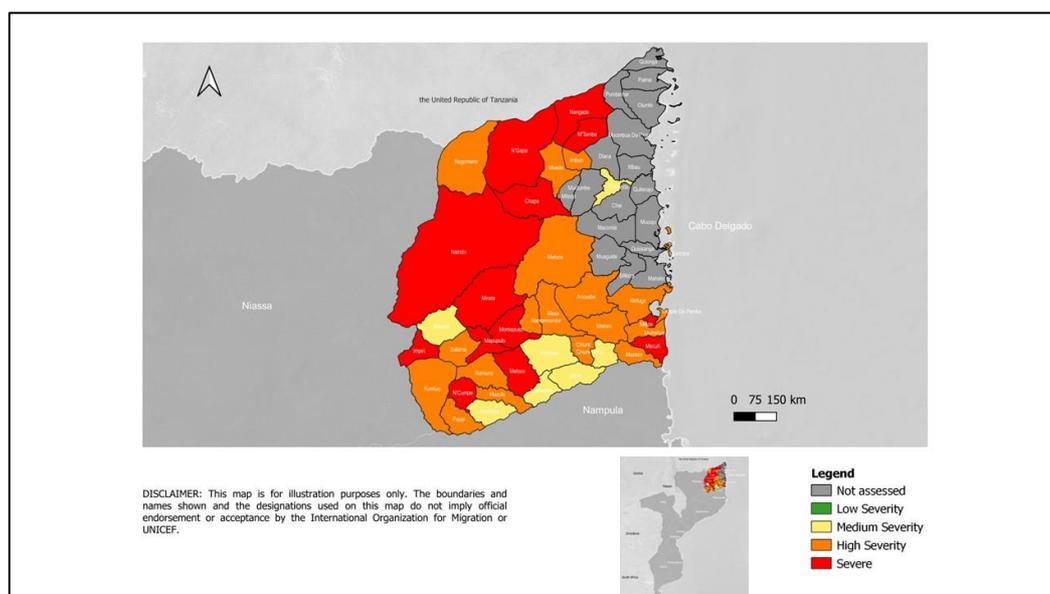
The severity scale was designed to prioritize locations with more IDP children, locations with a significant number of IDPs living in conditions that increase child protection risks, and locations without child protection

services. The severity of case management service availability was calculated separately from the other response services to increase its weight/importance in the final score. A child protection expert first estimated the thresholds based on their knowledge of what would constitute the different levels of severity. The data was then reviewed to confirm that the thresholds ranked the locations across various severity levels (rather than categorizing all locations at the same severity).

Table 2: Severity scale for identifying priority locations for case management services

Severity Thresholds	Data collection methodology	Thresholds				Comment
		Low (1)	Medium (2)	High (3)	Severe (4)	
% of all IDP children per location	Key informant interviews (KII)	0-5%	6-10%	11-15%	Over 15%	
Proxy indicators for living conditions/situations that increase CP risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % HH's with "Severe" food insecurity (as per the reduced coping strategy index) % of HH's with at least one child exhibiting symptoms of stress/trauma % of HH in high-risk shelters % locations with water further than 500m % locations with health further than 30min 	Household survey (HH) HH KII KII KII	0-15%	16-30%	31-45%	Over 45%	Severity score was calculated for each indicator, then averaged
Service Availability: Case Management (% localities with functioning services)	KII	100-75%	75-50%	50-25%	25-0%	
Service Availability: Average severity of all other CP & Medical services	KII	100-75%	75-50%	50-25%	25-0%	

Figure 3: Result of severity scale exercise to identify geographic locations for case management prioritization



The Child Protection Risks and Needs in Cabo Delgado assessment assisted the CP AoR to identify the main risks facing children affected by the armed conflict in Cabo Delgado, and to determine the priority geographic areas, priority population groups, and priority response services for its members.

Case Study: Ethiopia Social Cohesion Index

One of DTM's data collection components is the Multi-Sector Location Assessments (MSLA). Through the MSLA, key informants are interviewed in locations/displacement sites at regular intervals. Data is collected at community-level on: locations of IDPs/returnees, # of IDPs/returnees (sex and age disaggregated), some vulnerable groups, humanitarian needs/gaps, and situational factors that impact on IDP safety and humanitarian access.

Using DTM MSLA data to complement data from other sources is advantageous for the CP AoR:

1. **Geographic coverage**: Collected from key informants in all displacement sites or all affected administrative regions. Unlike assessments that are implemented in a sample of locations only, data from the MSLA's allow the CP AoR to compare the humanitarian situation and living conditions that increase child protection risks between all locations, facilitating strategic decision making on geographic prioritization for response. It also provides a reliable source of information on the number of IDPs/returnees .
2. **Regularity**: MSLA's are collected at regular intervals, allowing CP AoR partners to monitor the humanitarian situation over time. It also allows partners to monitor the humanitarian situation in locations where they are currently not working, enabling them to make decisions about adjusting priority geographic locations for response if needed.
3. **Resource-saving**: The CP AoR does not have the resources to implement large-scale needs assessments required to make strategic decisions about geographic prioritization and needs. Working with DTM to obtain useful data for decision making allows the CP AoR to tap into a resource that already exists. In 2021, DTM employed 6,977 enumerators (4,744 male and 2,233 female) to collect data in 85 countries.

In Ethiopia, the DTM is implementing the MSLA in both displacement sites and villages. With approximately 3,000 locations with IDPs/returnees in the country, it can be difficult for programs to know where to prioritize response or child protection monitoring activities. In 2021, UNICEF was attempting to identify locations with poor social cohesion, which can lead to increased risks to children, so that they could prioritize locations for peacebuilding initiatives. It was found that because of the key informant data-collection methodology, the question on tensions between IDPs and host communities was not providing useful results because respondents were usually in mixed groups.

The UNICEF Peacebuilding Specialist and the DTM for Children on the Move Project Coordinator created a Social Cohesion Index using data from proxy indicators that are indicative of increased tensions. The result was two scores for each of the 3,000 locations indicating the degree of social cohesion for horizontal interactions between IDPs and host communities, and vertical social cohesion between affected populations and the local authorities.

Horizontal interactions focus on the interaction between host and IDP communities (site assessments) and communities and returnees (village assessments). Proxy indicators that reveal the degree of social cohesion between these groups were identified from the MSLA data:

- Whether IDPs are leaving their place of displacement (if not returning home).
- Whether IDPs/returnees have access to markets and livelihoods, and are participating in community social or political organizations (proxy to highlight degree of collaboration and inter-dependence).
- Whether IDPs/returnees face barriers to accessing markets and livelihood activities (such as violence or discrimination).
- Conflict over water or housing, land and property.

- Existence and access to informal/traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.

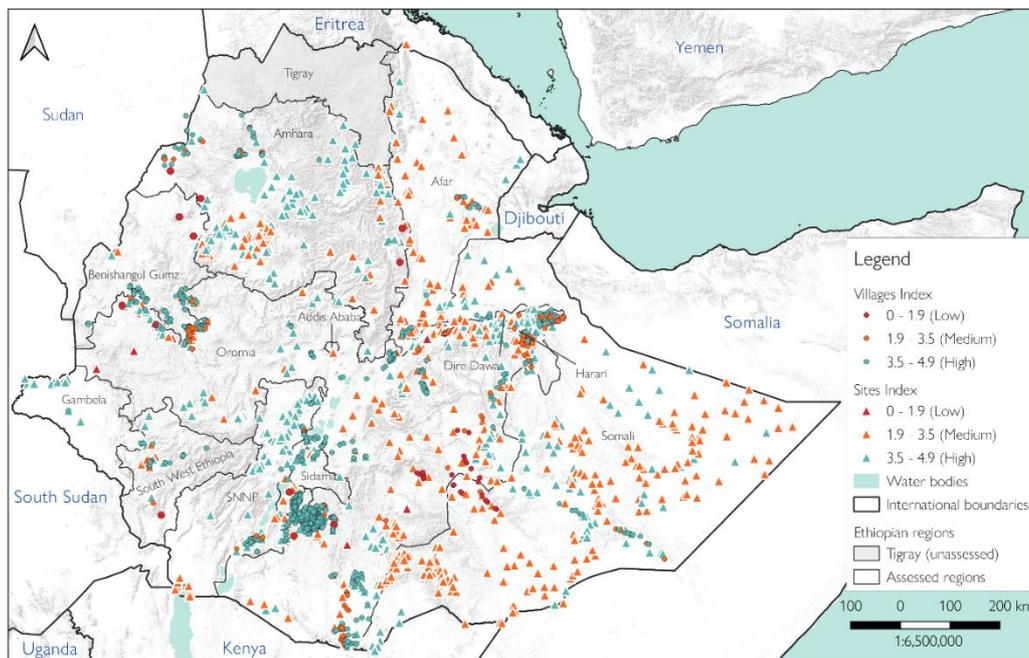
Vertical interactions focus on the interactions between IDP & returnee communities with local authorities and social service providers. Proxy indicators that reveal the degree of social cohesion between these groups were identified from the MSLA data:

- Availability of goods/services.
- Barriers to accessing services (data that can be collected at the community level such as distance, infrastructure, and insecurity).
- Availability of justice mechanisms and dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Availability of complaint/feedback mechanisms.
- Participation in voting.
- Access to land and water.
- Government officials and service providers that IDPs interact with.

Each location was given an index score between 0 (low social cohesion) and 5 (high social cohesion). Sites and villages that were inaccessible for data collection due to conflict were automatically assigned a “0” score for both horizontal and vertical social cohesion results.

With regards to horizontal social cohesion, it was unsurprising that displacement sites on average had lower social cohesion than communities with returnees.

Figure 4: Horizontal cohesion scores in villages and sites



Disclaimer: this map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM. Some sites (Anfillo, Boji Dirmeji, Chinkaisen, Dale Sadi, Galana, Gmbi, Gumil Edele, Haro Limu, Kiltu, Kara, Lalo Asabi, Liben, Mako, Mana sibu, Nejo, Saba Boru, Suro Barqada) and villages (Abaya, Artuma Fursi, Bati, Bule Hora, Dangura, Jami Kemisse, Kerca, Lata Sibu, Limu, Ma), Mandura, Mrija, Odo shakko, Quara and Tulguled) were not possible to map due to missing coordinates during the data collection process. Therefore, they were mapped using the centre of their level three administrative division. Tigray region could not be assessed due to the ongoing conflict.

Case Study: Ukraine Crisis, Interpreting the Impact of War on Children Using Proxy Indicators

Between April 11-17, 2022, DTM conducted their 3rd round of data collection for the [Ukraine Internal Displacement Report](#). Two thousand households were contacted by telephone using the random-digit-dial (RDD) approach and interviewed using the computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) method. The

geographical scope of the assessment covered the entire territory of Ukraine, apart from the Crimean Peninsula.

Using results on needs, risks, and safety perceptions from the report enables the CP AoR to interpret the types of child protection risks faced by children in Ukraine, to facilitate the strategic planning process with partners.

Examples of interpreted child protection risks from proxy indicators include (but are not limited to) the following:

Risk of unaccompanied and separated children

- High numbers of children on the move: 7% of IDP households have at least 1 infant (<1 year), 23% have at least one child (1<5 years), and 52% of IDP households have at least one child (5-17 years).

Risk of dangers and injuries & child stress/trauma

- Returnees are more likely than non-displaced households and IDPs to be feeling unsafe. Of the respondents, 34% of returnees, 31% of non-displaced, and 17% of IDPs reported feeling somewhat or completely unsafe. The majority of IDPs that feel completely unsafe are in the East.
- 4% of IDPs & 2% of non-displaced reported being directly affected (harmed) by current violence.
- 18.9% of all respondents requested the phone number for IOM's free psychological support hotline (which is up from 11% in round 1). IDPs (24.7%) are more likely to request the phone number than other groups.

Risk of GBV/abuse

Conflict and displacement breakdown social protective mechanisms, increasing risk of GBV and abuse.

- IDPs (11%) are more likely than non-IDPs (1%) and returnees (1%) to be sleeping in housing arrangements that could put children at greater risk of GBV, such as in collective centers, bomb shelters, and staying with strangers.
- 3.4% of IDPs reported a lack of safe access to toilets, increasing the risk of GBV.

Risk of exploitation, GBV and abuse

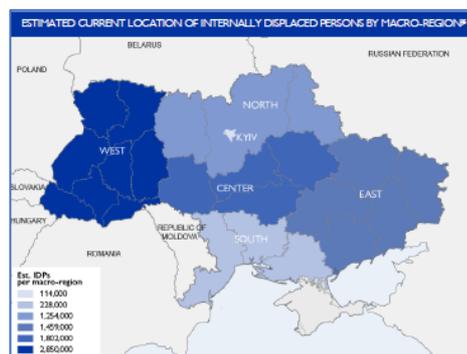
Food insecurity can lead families to adopt coping strategies to meet food needs that can be harmful to children, such as begging, child labour, trafficking, and transactional sex.

- 40.3% of IDPs, and 26.1% of non-displaced reported that access to financial support was their most pressing need. Between rounds 1 and 3, an increasing proportion of IDPs are reporting that they need cash assistance. Round 2 findings collected at the end of March found that income has dropped sharply since the start of the war. 61% of IDP households and 59% of non-displaced are earning less than 5,000 UAH (170 USD) monthly. 33% of IDPs and 20% of non-displaced are earning nothing.
- Food availability is of particular concern in the East and South: 46% of respondents (IDPs, non-IDPs, and returnees) located in the East reported that almost all food products were missing from stores, while 32% of respondents located in the South reported a similar issue.
- 28% of respondents from all geographic regions with at least one child aged 0-5 years reported difficulties with getting enough food for their child.

Geographic prioritization can be determined based on priority groups (such as locations with the most IDPs in Table 3, or based on a combination of proxy indicators that can be used to create a severity scale for the magnitude of child protection risks (as seen in the Mozambique and Ethiopia examples)).

Table 3: Estimated number of IDPs per macro-region

Macro-region	% of IDPs in macro-region	# estimated IDPs per macro-region
Kyiv	1 %	114,000
East	19 %	1,459,000
South	3 %	228,000
Center	23 %	1,802,000
North	16 %	1,254,000
West	37 %	2,850,000
Total estimated displaced within Ukraine		7,707,000



Conclusion

Using proxy indicators for child protection needs analysis enables practitioners to develop strategic plans and take rapid and informed decisions despite not having data on the prevalence of exploitative and violent child protection incidents. Key to this approach is to understand that, with the appropriate analysis, data from different collection methodologies can be used to illustrate diverse humanitarian needs and gaps, which can be interpreted to better understand child protection risks and response needs.

For more information on using proxy indicators for child protection needs analysis, see the [NIAF handbook](#) and the [DTM and Partners Toolkit for Child Protection](#), or contact:

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