Overview

The National Steering Committee (NSC) on COVID-19 has established the Protection Reference Group (PRG), led by the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare and co-led by the Protection Cluster. The aim of creating the PRG is twofold: advocacy on centrality of protection in COVID-19-related plans, response, activities and providing guidance, technical support, coordination to actors in different domains of the COVID-19 response. It is expected that effective coordination and collaboration of all relevant actors at national and sub-national level will ensure that the protection and human rights considerations are taken as priority. The PRG held its first technical level meeting in May to discuss the Terms of Reference and Action Plan.

Key messages for protection actors on HLP rights and evictions, caused by COVID-19 measures and restrictions have been released by the HLP TWG, available here. The Eviction Note provides guidance on identification, referral, advocacy and response to evictions during the COVID-19 emergency. Reasons for evictions are complex and vary on a case by case basis, therefore the HLP TWG continues monitoring the situation and responds accordingly. In the current COVID-19 emergency, activities which are prioritized include awareness raising for affected communities, monitoring of HLP issues, legal assistance (where possible) and advocacy.

The Protection cluster issued two Donor briefings focusing on protection issues, triggered by COVID-19. The briefings highlight the continued protection crisis in South Sudan, recognizing the increased protection risks during COVID-19 pandemic and the need for support of donors to tackle the challenges emerging. Security incidents, human rights violations, inter-communal violence and cattle raiding impact the communities in absence of rule of law mechanisms and regular physical protection mechanisms in place, but also the response, gaps and challenges including possible way forward are included in the briefing.

Inclusion of persons with disability and elder persons

Persons with disabilities and elderlies are facing increased protection risks during COVID-19 pandemic. Limited access to healthcare, education, employment, transport and leisure activities, caused by discontinuation of services and limited access of humanitarian workers to communities add on to the challenges.

Protection Cluster advocates at all levels that the COVID-19 preparedness and response must take into consideration the specific diverse needs of elderlies and persons with disabilities. Protection partners such as Humanity and Inclusion (HI), Coalition for Humanity (CH) and National Relief and Development Corps (NRDC), are advocating for their rights, ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in COVID-19 response, with the principle ‘leave no one behind’ implemented.

COVID-19 response activities, targeting persons with disabilities and elder persons include development and dissemination of adapted messages on COVID-19, awareness raising through radio shows and community mobilizers, identification and referral of persons in extreme vulnerability and ensuring distributions and other services are accessible for these groups. *Coalition for Humanity (CH)* has targeted 15% of persons with disabilities and/or special needs as part of the organization’s projects. To ensure a proper reflection CH has been working on setting the relevant data collection tools in identifying persons with disabilities, their protection risks, ensuring access to programs and services for the persons with disabilities.
**Humanity and Inclusion (HI)** has developed messaging material targeting inclusion of persons with disabilities, including promoting radio shows, and conducted consultations, awareness-raising and capacity building sessions with focal persons from organizations of persons with disabilities on COVID-19 preventive measures and inclusion. In Juba, HI conducted community-based PSS awareness raising sessions on social stigma and coping with phycological distresses.

**Humanitarian and Development Cooperation (HDC)** has been working with community based paralegal volunteers in Juba PoC 1 and 3, to identify and provide legal support to older persons’ inclusion in programs, affecting their wellbeing. Functional referral pathways and strengthened, appropriate follow up actions are the aims for the program implementation. HDC developed a training and messaging addressing older persons inquires on COVID-19 prevention and protection in addition to messaging advocating for the recognition of the needs of older persons in accessing services.

**National Relief and Development Corps (NRDC)** has been conducting door to door outreach in Fashoda and Manyo Counties, Upper Nile, directly reaching a total of 403 individuals, for the identification and registration of persons with disabilities and older persons, ensuring they are included and have access to protection programmes.

**Child Protection Sub Cluster**

**Child Protection Outreach Awareness on COVID 19 Preventions**

The Case Management Taskforce and the Child Associated with Armed Forces and Groups (CAAFAG) Working group developed a Case Management Guidance Note for CAAFAG. The Guidance Note recommends key Case Management steps that should be considered by Child Protection partners when dealing with CAAFAG, ensuring the best interest of the child in line with the Child Protection Minimum Standards.

10 (9 boys, 1 girl) former Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups (CAAFAG) were released from Lologo Training Centre and have been placed in interim care facility through the collaborative effort of National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (NDDRC, UNICEF, UNMISS (CPU). Registration for case management services will commence in the coming weeks.

Child Protection Partner, Hold the Child Organization, carried out Child Protection and COVID-19 prevention outreach awareness activities targeting IDP camps, areas hosting returnee population and at the Juvenile Wau town. In addition, HCO, facilitated the
distribution of hygienic kits such as soaps, hand washing facilities and facemasks with the help of the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare and the UNICEF Wau office to the Juvenile Centre in Wau town. These hygiene kits are part of efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the Juvenile facility.

**COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement in a hard to reach location without radio station coverage: Panyijiar, Unity State**

International Rescue Committee (IRC) reached 3,733 persons with risk communication on prevention of COVID-19 and key child protection messages in Panyijiar County, Unity State. The County has no radio program coverage for wider message dissemination. IRC engages communities through Caseworkers and CBCPN members who pass appropriate child protection (including how to support children during this period, stressbuster PSS messages, and case reporting) and COVID-19 prevention awareness messages through megaphones. The IRC teams targeted public spaces such markets and water collection points across 7 Payams of Panyijiar county in Unity State.

**GBV Sub Cluster**

GBV sub cluster conducted a meeting with partners to streamline the use of GBV Hotline in Juba town and other surrounding villages to better respond to the increasing incidences of GBV in communities associated with Covid-19 preventative measures.

TOCH represented the GBV sub cluster in an Inter-agency assessment in Tonj East and South counties of Warrap State from 12 to 15 May 2020 following inter communal violence that displaced several people. There are currently no protection and GBV partners with active projects in Tonj East and South. Required follow up action included the provision of psychosocial first aid and psychosocial support to facilitate the healing after experiencing traumatic incidents and shocks as well as other GBV response services such as distribution of dignity kits to displaced women and girls.

**Mine Action Sub Cluster**

**Explosive Remnant of War (ERW)-Related Accidents and Incidents**

During the month of May, three verified ERW-related accidents and one incident have been registered, all are with children and teenagers participation, who got an access to explosives within their homes or playgrounds. UNMAS investigated all the three accidents and will conduct further explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) in the respective areas once the COVID-19 situation allows.

A total of 2,055 people (614 boys, 605 girls, 474 men, and 362 women) received EORE by mine action partners in May 2020. The number of people reached was limited due to the suspension of face-to-face EORE activities through group gatherings as preventive measures to COVID-19.

**EORE practice amid the COVID-19 pandemic**

Community in Need Aid (CINA), a national MA partner implementing EORE activities in Duk and Pibor Counties, Jonglei. managed to continue its explosive risk awareness raising activities for the members of host communities, IDPs, and returnees, despite multiple challenges related to COVID-19. During the month of May, CINA reached 82 people (4 men; 3 women; and 75 boys) in Duk County and 101 people (14 men; 21 women; 36 boys; and 30 girls) in Pibor County through one-on-one meetings, strictly observing the health protocols instructed by the national and local authorities. In addition, CINA used megaphones to communicate with communities to deliver explosive risk awareness messaging with COVID-19 preventive messages while avoiding COVID-19 infections.

Challenges involving the delivery of EORE were not limited to COVID-19 only, but also included insecurity, flooding, inaccessibility to some areas, and limited communication channels and resources, amongst others. CINA will continue to sensitize the conflict-affected populations and inform the humanitarian response and advocacy in South Sudan.
The current explosive contamination and MASC response to COVID-19

Mine action partners continued providing response to emergency calls and explosive ordnance disposal; as well as providing support for the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance and facilitating the voluntary return, relocation and resettlement of the population across the country. While regular EORE activities, conducted through gatherings of personnel, were suspended as a measure to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, when deemed necessary, mine action partners provided emergency EORE door-to-door strictly observing the protocols instructed by health authorities.

In South Sudan, to-date, 352 distinct areas covering approximately 19.5 sqkm of land are thought to be contaminated by landmines, cluster munitions, and other explosive hazards. For details, please see the maps.

To report a suspicious object, please contact UNMAS at its 24-hour hotline: 092 000 1055 or via email at report@unmas.org