

Assessing increased protection risks and vulnerabilities after the earthquakes

KEY MESSAGES

The February 2023 earthquakes affected populations already dealing with years of conflict, which had resulted in dire socioeconomic conditions and limited access to assistance in Northwest Syria (NWS), aggravating protection concerns:

- Children, especially unaccompanied and separated minors, are among the most exposed to protection risks. The earthquakes led to the loss of people's homes and financial resources, increasing the occurrence of child labour as a coping mechanism.
- The impact of the earthquakes has significantly increased unintentional family separations in Syria, primarily as a result of the loss of lives and displacement. Family reunification processes have been difficult, with the loss of civil documentation worsening the situation.
- Protracted and multiple displacements, the breakdown of social structures, and limited access to essential services increase the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) for women and girls. Overcrowding and a lack of privacy in collective centres and other types of shelters contribute to this increased risk.
- The intersection of gender, displacement status, disability, and marital status aggravates the needs of women and girls and increases their exposure to protection risks.
- Despite people with disabilities (PWDs) and older people being identified as some of the most at-risk groups, the response to their specific needs has been lacking or very limited.
- The loss of civil documentation, especially related to housing, land, and property (HLP) and identity (such as birth certificates), prevent people from accessing services and recovering their belongings.
- Mental health and psychosocial support needs are extremely high following the earthquakes' impact on a population already exposed to significant levels of conflict-related trauma.
- Some people are using child labour, forced and early marriages, and substance abuse as coping strategies. With their potential negative impact and the risks related to exploitation and abuse, these issues are also highlighted as protection threats.
- Peer and community support has been identified as one of the main capacities of the affected population in facing the impact of the earthquakes, while it remains difficult

to assess the capacity and ability of local authorities to provide protection services. A differentiation between the two major areas of control in NWS has not been possible based on the information available.

Methodology and limitations

This analysis is based on a secondary data review of humanitarian situation reports and updates. This information is complemented by five key informant interviews with experts in the following areas: general protection, child protection, GBV, mine action, and PWDs.

The structure of the report follows the Protection Analytical Framework developed by the Global Protection Cluster, which enables the identification and monitoring of protection risks. This framework requires consideration of four broad areas:

- current factors that influence the protection context, whether positively and negatively
- violations and abuse across geographic locations and population groups
- the priority effects on the population (affecting the dignity, safety, and wellbeing of the population) arising from specific violations and abuses for each population group and geographic location
- the current combination of individual capacity, local mechanisms, national institutional capacity, and humanitarian response capacity to address violations and abuses (Global Protection Cluster 10/03/2021).

About this report

The report provides an overview of the main protection threats in NWS that the February earthquakes have worsened. It is not a comprehensive list of all protection threats in the region. The analysis includes the differentiated impact on the population and the most at-risk groups.



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CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Impact and drivers of humanitarian needs

Before the earthquakes, 4.1 million of the 4.5 million people in NWS relied on humanitarian aid to meet their basic needs. This population included 1.1 million boys, 1 million women, 1 million girls, and 900,000 men (OCHA 05/05/2023 and 22/05/2023). 2.8 million were displaced, including 1.9 million living in 1,420 camps and informal sites. The majority of displaced people came from other areas in Syria, and more than two-thirds of the population in need were forcibly displaced to NWS (Protection Sector 24/06/2022).

After 12 years of war, humanitarian needs in NWS, particularly for food and healthcare, have exceeded what humanitarian organisations could supply. Over three million people need healthcare where there's a lack of doctors, medicine, and hospitals. As at the end of 2022, 3.3 million people were food-insecure (ECHO 01/06/2023; OCHA 22/12/2022). The economic crisis, insecurity, and reduced humanitarian funding have contributed to increased needs and a weakened capacity to meet those needs (MSF 21/12/2022).

As at the end of April, 74,000 people living across 97 newly established reception centres were in need of a coordinated multisectoral response (UNCHR 01/06/2023).

Conflict, violence, and insecurity

A complex and volatile landscape involving various parties characterises the conflict and political situation in NWS. A March 2020 ceasefire agreement ended some of the more large-scale military operations in the region, but near-daily instances of shelling, air strikes, and bombardments continue to harm civilians and damage key civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and water points. Insecurity and violence remain widespread, and so do high levels of criminality and an absence of the rule of law (Protection Sector 24/06/2022).

The Islamist militia Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which established the Syrian Salvation Government, controls Idlib province. Despite this group fighting against other extremist groups, there remain concerns about the presence of remnants of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other jihadist factions, who take advantage of displacement in the province, continue to pose a threat, and contribute to instability in the region (ICG 07/03/2023). Other parts of the region, including Aleppo's countryside from Afrin to al-Bab and Jarabulus, are under the control of the Türkiye-backed Syrian National Army (TIMEP 20/02/2023).

Parties to the conflict have committed human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including forced disappearances, the killing of civilians, the destruction of critical infrastructure, and cases of torture, including of children (AI accessed 04/06/2023; OHCHR 13/03/2023). In 2022, over 1,000 civilian casualties were documented throughout Syria. These included 250 children, over 130 people who died from torture, and over 2,220 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, sparking serious protection concerns (SNHR 24/01/2023).

Socioeconomic conditions

Years of protracted conflict and political turmoil in Syria have damaged the national economy. Currency depreciation and inflation have weakened purchasing power, leaving households unable to cover their most basic needs (OCHA 18/01/2023). Fuel price increases and frequent electricity cuts also affect socioeconomic conditions. The most basic goods in NWS are imported from Türkiye, leading some parts of NWS to adopt the Turkish lira as an alternative to the Syrian pound in 2020. By effect, the devaluation of the lira has translated into higher prices of basic commodities in NWS (TNH 06/06/2023; OCHA 22/12/2022).

All households surveyed during an International Rescue Committee assessment carried out in the governorates of Idlib and Aleppo stated that following the earthquakes, their ability to generate an income worsened. A lack of economic resources was reported as the main barrier to meeting basic needs, including food (IRC 20/02/2023).

The World Bank estimates Syria's losses from the earthquakes to be about USD 5.2 billion. The country's GDP is also expected to shrink by 5.5% in 2023. The most affected regions of Syria have seen significant disruptions in trade and employment, with heightened displacement and the destruction of homes and key infrastructure worsening socioeconomic conditions. The most affected populations face increased vulnerabilities, resulting in major economic limitations and an increased need for humanitarian assistance (GDFRR/WB 18/03/2023).



The February 2023 earthquakes

The 7.8 and 7.7 magnitude earthquakes that hit both Syria and Türkiye on 6 February 2023 – and the subsequent two on 20 February – left 4,500 people dead and over 10,400 people injured in NWS, compounding a complex humanitarian crisis. The districts with the highest number of casualties were Harim and Afrin. The quakes damaged at least 10,600 buildings, with 1,870 destroyed (OCHA 28/04/2023).

Thousands of families have become homeless, with most left to find shelter in temporary settlements. The reliance on informal settlements has increased the need for humanitarian assistance to meet basic needs. Given limited shelter availability and the use of collective shelters, overcrowding has emerged as a serious concern (Protection Sector 21/02/2023). A lack of privacy and exposure to sexual harassment and GBV have also become concerning issues in formal and informal camps (UNICEF 01/04/2023). Sheltering in tents and other inadequate facilities has resulted in exposure to health risks, with unsanitary conditions leading to scabies outbreaks (IMC 10/05/2023). Intense rainfall in March worsened these shelter conditions, causing flooding in 30 earthquake-displacement sites (OCHA 23/03/2023). The earthquakes also damaged water infrastructure, increasing the risk of water contamination. NWS was already facing a cholera outbreak before this crisis (Global Shelter Cluster 03/2023).

The health sector was already fragile before the earthquakes, and the crisis has further impeded healthcare access. The quakes damaged 67 health facilities in NWS, posing a major concern for people in need of critical health services (IMC 10/05/2023; UNICEF 01/04/2023). Pregnant and lactating women need obstetrics and maternal care. People with injuries or disabilities have mobility concerns that further limit their access to medical care (PHR 14/03/2023; UNICEF 01/04/2023). More people are also in need of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) (MedGlobal 08/05/2023). The affected population has experienced multiple traumatic events, with the quakes and pre-existing crises leading to high levels of distress, anxiety, panic attacks, sleep disorders, depression, and post-earthquake syndrome (Protection Sector 21/02/2023).

Substance abuse was already a concern before the earthquakes. In the wake of the disaster and after twelve years of war, the use of substances as a negative coping mechanism has increased among vulnerable populations in Syria, particularly among the youth, who does it as an escape from reality and the traumas of the prolonged conflict (TWI 25/04/2023; ACU 04/2022). Before the earthquake, 10–20% of the NWS population was using narcotics in the form of amphetamine, tramadol, and cannabis. Users were majorly illiterate and uneducated people, the demographic most vulnerable to drug use (OCHA 19/09/2022). Post-earthquake, such vulnerabilities are highly likely to have continued and expanded, although there is little verified information on the topic. Anecdotal evidence from informants for this report raised concerns about drug abuse in NWS – significantly, the lack of available treatment with limited specialised care options. There is an increased need to create awareness campaigns

surrounding substance abuse, educate healthcare workers on withdrawal and intoxication symptoms, create a substance use training programme to educate local psychosocial support staff, and establish more substance abuse recovery programmes (MedGlobal 08/05/2023).

Humanitarian access constraints

After the earthquakes, it took the UN three days to facilitate an aid convoy to NWS through the Bab Al Hawa border crossing between Syria and Türkiye (IOM 09/02/2023). Beyond the logistical constraints caused by damaged and blocked roads, access and delivery of international humanitarian assistance to NWS were already difficult since before the earthquakes.

A 2014 UNSC resolution established the cross-border delivery of aid through four recognised crossings on the Türkiye-Syria border. That said, since 2021, Russia and China have used their veto power to reduce the number of crossings from four to one (CNN 10/02/2023). The current mandate for the Bal Al Hawa crossing to remain open will expire on 10 July 2023 following a six-month extension signed in January (UN 09/01/2023). The closure of the border crossing would complicate funding mechanisms for many humanitarian organisations in the area, essentially resulting in reduced assistance being delivered to NWS (MSF 21/12/2022). Following the earthquakes, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad allowed the use of two more crossings, Bab Al Salam and Al Raee, for an initial period of three months (Reuters 15/02/2023). The permission to use these two border crossings was extended in May for a period of three months until August 2023 (Al Jazeera 13/05/2023).

As at the end of May, 2,397 trucks had crossed the border to deliver aid – mostly through the Bab al-Hawa crossing, since the majority of the 4.1 million people in need in NWS are in Idlib governorate (OCHA accessed 06/06/2023).

PROTECTION THREATS

Child labour

The economic situation and the lack of resources have made families more reliant on child labour (KII 01/06/2023). The issue was already very common before the earthquakes, with many adolescent boys involved in some form of income-generating activity (CARE 15/09/2022; EUAA accessed 06/06/2023; STC 12/07/2022). Girls are also vulnerable to child labour (KII 01/06/2023). Reduced access to education is another push factor for the issue. Aside from damaging 434 schools in NWS, the earthquakes also necessitated the use of 20 schools as shelter for affected people as at the end of March, further reducing children's access to education. The Education Cluster estimated that one million children in NWS were out of school as at 1 April (UNICEF 01/04/2023).



Following the earthquakes, reported cases of child labour have increased with the rise in familial needs. According to UNICEF, there are children working in rubble removal sites without due consideration of the risk of unexploded ordnance (UNICEF 13/03/2023).

There are reports that in NWS, numerous children likely below the age of 13 have resorted to scavenging and selling scrap metal from damaged and destroyed buildings to support their families (KII 01/06/2023).

Family separation

The sudden displacement of families and loss of life resulting from the earthquakes have significantly increased cases of unintentional family separation. The issue further exposes affected individuals to mental and psychological distress (UNICEF 01/04/2023). According to a key informant, the fear and trauma of family separation have been so severe that some parents and children have declined school activities after the disaster (KII 29/05/2023). The lack of coordination and the absence of any database for displaced people are making it difficult to reunite children with their families, worsening family separation cases. Prior to the earthquakes, a lack of civil documentation and unawareness of its importance were already making reunification processes more difficult and time-consuming, as many children were not registered anywhere (KII 01/06/2023). Children particularly faced the pre-existing vulnerabilities of separation cases, with conflict resulting in displacement or the loss of life of a caregiver even before the earthquakes. As at 11 April, there were at least 800 unaccompanied and separated children in NWS (OCHA accessed 29/05/2023).

Gender-based violence

Overcrowding and a lack of privacy in collective and reception centres especially following the earthquakes have increased GBV concerns for women and girls. The lack of segregated WASH facilities and adequate lighting in shelters and bathrooms has also been reported as a main concern for GBV risks (UNFPA 16/03/2023; KII 22/05/2023). The closure of temporary shelters without a clear plan for relocation also increases these risks.

High levels of tension, stress, and depression, especially for those who have lost family members, have also led to increased exposure to GBV within households (KII 01/06/2023).

Women and girls in NWS are especially vulnerable to GBV, sexual exploitation, and abuse – risks born out of the conflict and compounded by the earthquakes (UNFPA 20/04/2023; IRC 14/03/2023; PHR 14/03/2023).

Sexual exploitation and abuse

Risks of sexual exploitation and abuse are also high in NWS, heightened by the impact of the earthquakes on access to services. Aid distribution modalities can also increase the exposure of women and girls to these risks (UNFPA 16/03/2023).

HLP rights

The main challenges related to housing are the collapse or damage of houses, evacuation from buildings at risk of collapse, and lost HLP documentation (Protection Sector 21/02/2023). Some people were already lacking their HLP documentation before the earthquake (Protection Sector 31/03/2023).

The loss of documentation limits certain HLP rights including repair and reconstruction permits, compensation, and bank loans among others (Protection Sector 31/03/2023). Women-headed households without the relevant HLP documents are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse in temporary shelters (Protection Sector 17/05/2023).

Protracted and multiple displacement

The region has experienced multiple waves of displacement, with a large number of displaced people seeking refuge in Idlib. Living conditions for the population in Idlib have been challenging, with inadequate shelter and limited access to basic services, including healthcare, water, and food.

Multiple displacement has deepened shelter needs for affected individuals (UNHCR 27/04/2023; OCHA 08/03/2023). Before the earthquake, NWS was already grappling with high shelter needs given sustained military activity in the region (OCHA 13/04/2023; HRW 06/02/2020). Reports indicate that among displaced people in IDP camps, the majority has been displaced multiple times: 65% of surveyed IDP households have been displaced between three and seven times, 23% eight or more times, and only 12% once or twice (Action for Humanity 04/05/2023). The earthquakes further displaced almost all the individuals living in IDP camps in NWS (Action for Humanity 04/05/2023; UNHCR 27/04/2023).

More than 120,000 displacements took place in NWS between February–March. Most people have lost their belongings, including crucial documents and household items. Displaced families have found refuge in emergency reception and collective centres and IDP camps. Some displaced families are taking shelter with friends or relatives (Global Shelter Cluster 03/2023).



AFFECTED POPULATION AND CONSEQUENCES OF THREATS

After the earthquakes, the highlighted protection threats above have been identified to disproportionately affect the following groups: people with chronic illnesses, older people, women and girls (particularly women-headed households, widowed and divorced women, pregnant and lactating women), people and children with disabilities, and unaccompanied and separated children (Protection Sector 21/02/2023).

Identity factors, including gender, age, disability, ethnicity, displacement status, and any corresponding discrimination, intersect to affect people and households in different ways. The intersection of more than one of these factors leads to increased vulnerability to protection risks.

Women and girls

Displacement, the breakdown of social structures, and limited access to essential services contribute to an environment where women and girls are at a higher risk of experiencing GBV, including rape, domestic violence, and forced (early) marriage.

In the Syrian context, there is a widely held perception that women need a male partner to ensure their protection, resulting in high rates of remarriage. To reduce their vulnerability to some protection risks and gain a degree of freedom of movement, women and girls gravitate towards forced early marriages. Widows may also be forced or decide to remarry on the pretext of protecting her children; usually the first choice for the new husband would be her brother-in-law. Widows and separated or divorced women and girls may also be at risk of serial temporary marriages. Early marriage for women exposes them to the risk of domestic and sexual violence, as well as psychological and health-related risks, reducing girls' autonomy and resilience in the long term (CCCM Cluster/Protection Cluster 28/02/2019).

Women and girls in temporary shelters

GBV disproportionately affects displaced women and girls, especially those living in sites and informal settlements (UNFPA 28/03/2023). The intersection of gender, displacement status, and marital status aggravates this population group's needs and exposure to protection threats. Overcrowding is reported as the main issue in relation to the increased risks of GBV in temporary shelters.

Pregnant and lactating women

Following the earthquakes, pregnant women have become of particular concern given the high level of stress they have been exposed to with the consequent risk of complications, such as first-trimester loss (IMC 10/05/2023). Disruptions to life-saving sexual and reproductive health services, damage to health infrastructure, and inadequate shelter conditions aggravate the issue.

On 20 April, UNFPA estimated that there were 140,000 pregnant women in the earthquake-affected areas throughout Syria, with 15,000 births occurring per month (UNFPA 20/04/2023).

Women and girls in widow camps

Among women and girls, those widowed or divorced face heightened risks of GBV, including sexual violence, emotional and verbal abuse, forced marriage, polygamy and serial temporary marriages, movement restrictions, economic violence, and exploitation (CCCM Cluster/Protection Cluster 28/02/2019).

The first reports of the existence of widow camps emerged in 2014. Among the 1,400 estimated IDP camps in NWS, 46 sites exclusively host widowed, divorced, or single women and their children (WVI 11/04/2022).

Residents of widow camps have limited access to humanitarian assistance. Services inside the site are limited, with little to no delivery of psychosocial support, education, and healthcare. They also face significant movement restrictions that limit their access to services and job opportunities. The separation of widowed and divorced women and girls from other members of the community heightens their exposure to gender and age-specific violence, including sexual violence, forced marriage, and economic exploitation (CCCM Cluster/Protection Cluster 28/02/2019).

Divorced and widowed wives of foreign and ISIS combatants are not allowed to access the women-exclusive sites and face worse discrimination and restrictions. Protection threats are also high, especially for those living in informal settings. Even in more formal settings, no outside organisation has access to these sites.

Although updated information on the impact of the earthquakes is lacking, protection risks are likely worse in widow camps given further displacement, limited access to services, the stretching of resources, and other similar constraints.



Children and adolescents

About 2.4 million children are in need of child protection services in NWS (OCHA 28/04/2023). They are exposed to the risks of violence (including armed group recruitment), forced displacement, and exploitation. Limited or lacking access to education increases children's vulnerability to further protection risks. Protection risks such as early forced marriages, child labour, and armed group recruitment have become a wide concern in Syria given the deterioration of school-going conditions (Protection Sector 21/02/2023). The earthquakes have further disrupted education, with many schools damaged or used as shelters, depriving children of access to quality education and putting their prospects at risk. Some children also set aside school to seek livelihoods for their families, further constraining their education (STC 17/05/2023). More than one million school-aged children need education support (OCHA 28/04/2023).

Programming for the youth and adolescents continues to face gaps, affecting their access to secondary education. Adolescents are among the groups most vulnerable to the impact of the earthquakes, with many living alone in the streets. Many resort to committing crimes to deliberately get arrested and have a place to sleep and be provided with food (KII 04/05/2023). Partners of the Child Protection Area of Responsibility have highlighted the need to implement intercluster and gender-disaggregated interventions focused on adolescents to address issues related to child labour and child marriage (OCHA 28/04/2023).

Following the earthquakes, children also face risks such as neglect and emotional distress (UNHCR 01/06/2023). MHPSS is a severe need among children, with the earthquakes causing high levels of anxiety, trauma, and crush syndrome. Panic attacks and other forms of distress make it challenging for children to concentrate on anything (KII 01/06/2023).

Child recruitment into armed groups was one of the main protection risks related to children during the conflict. Key informants have reported anecdotal information that this may have increased after the earthquakes; the scale of the issue remains unclear (KII 29/05/2023; KII 30/05/2023). Separated and unaccompanied children are the most vulnerable group facing higher risks of exploitation (KII 01/06/2023).

Children with disabilities in NWS face heightened child protection risks, including barriers in accessing services, mostly education, healthcare, and rehabilitation. Some of the obstacles include inadequate school facilities and a lack of specialised teaching skills to accommodate their learning needs. Following the earthquakes, damage to school infrastructure and overstretched resources worsen these barriers (Action for Humanity/WVI 01/06/2023). Children with disabilities need specialised devices to facilitate their access to health and education services (KII 22/05/2023).

While boys and adolescent men with disabilities face the risks of child labour, girls and adolescent women face the risk of early and forced marriage. Girls and young women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to early marriage, as their families may be more likely to accept any immediately available marriage proposal (Action for Humanity/WVI 01/06/2023).

Approximately one-third of families with disabled boys have them engaged in income-generation. Restricted access to education for children with disabilities and a lack of economic opportunities for caregivers increase the likelihood of boys and adolescent men forgoing their education in pursuit of employment. Pressure on boys and adolescent men to be breadwinners is an unrecognised form of structural GBV (Action for Humanity/WVI 01/06/2023).

This information is based on a study conducted before the earthquakes, but these protection threats for children with disabilities have likely continued or worsened after the disaster.

Adults with disabilities

PWDs have been identified as one of the most at-risk groups following the earthquakes and among those facing the most significant challenges (Protection Sector 21/02/2023).

There has been a significant increase in the number of PWDs since the disaster, stretching available resources, and international humanitarian responders can only prioritise life-saving cases. There is a significant need for assisting devices, such as hearing aids, glasses, crutches, walkers, and wheelchairs, as well as dedicated services, including mental health support. Difficulties in accessing services, including assistance, and income-generating opportunities leave PWDs potentially vulnerable, as they need to rely on others to meet their needs (KII 22/05/2023).

Older people

Older people are among the groups facing significant challenges after the earthquakes. Older people experience difficulties in accessing services, including finding suitable shelter arrangements, and with freedom of movement. Destitute older people and older people with chronic illnesses have been identified as the most vulnerable groups facing the most obstacles to accessing services after the earthquake (Protection Sector 21/02/2023). Key informants also reported that especially in the early stages of the response, there was a lack of a tailored response to the specific needs of older people, and that they were often deprioritised by their own families as well (KII 22/05/2023).



AFFECTED POPULATION'S CAPACITIES AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE MECHANISMS

Local capacities

Local organisations were the first responders after the earthquakes, and communities continue to count on peer support for accommodation and other services. People have also started to exchange experiences and best practices to support each other (KII 01/06/2023; KII 30/05/2023). That said, repeated displacement and the scale of the crisis have disrupted support networks, aggravating the situation especially for many people in NWS experiencing multiple displacement and already facing pre-existing social cohesion challenges (KII 29/05/2023).

International humanitarian response

The nature of the disaster and pre-existing vulnerabilities keep the level of need very high. The level of destruction, compounded by the lack of preparation for the scale of the impact, has resulted in an inadequate level of immediate response to people in need. Lack of coordination was reported as one of the main limitations to provide a more effective response. Lack of coordination was reported as one of the main limitations to a more effective response. The fact that humanitarian responders both in Syria and cross-border in Türkiye were affected by the earthquakes was another contributing factor (KII 22/05/2023).

Protection responders have identified four main priorities for the delivery of assistance:

- addressing family separation and providing protection assistance
- providing legal assistance and guidance to address civil documentation and HLP-related issues
- providing tailored protection services to most affected groups
- mitigating protection risks through the mapping and strengthening of community-based protection mechanisms (OCHA 28/04/2023).

As at the end of April, protection interventions in NWS had reached over 100,000 affected individuals. These interventions include psychological first aid, psychosocial support, awareness-raising activities on GBV prevention, case management and referrals, child protection activities, and legal counselling and awareness-raising activities on civil status documentation and HLP rights (UNHCR 01/06/2023).

INFORMATION GAPS AND NEEDS

- There remain gaps in relation to the needs of individuals and households who have left or have been evacuated from collective shelters.
- Specific information about Syrian refugees who have returned from Türkiye is also lacking.
- There is a lack of data, in publicly available sources at least, of population movements, particularly covering from/to where people have been displaced following the earthquake.
- Updated information on the impact of the earthquakes and consequent needs for women and girls in widow camps is lacking. It is also unclear whether women and girls who have remained widowed following the earthquakes have been forced to move to women-exclusive camps.
- Information about household and community level capacities is challenging to identify.
- It is difficult to assess the capacity and ability of local authorities to provide protection services. A differentiation between the two major areas of control in NWS was not possible based on the information available.