



PROTECTION MONITORING
JANUARY-JUNE 2026

UKRAINE PROTECTION MONITORING BRIEF

MYKOLAIVSKA | SUMSKA | KHARKIVSKA |
ZAPORIZKA | DNIPROPETROVSKA OBLASTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first half of 2026 was marked by intensified hostilities, continued disruptions to essential services and the cumulative effects of prolonged displacement on affected populations. Protection monitoring in the monitored oblasts identified multiple and interconnected protection risks, including civilian harm, displacement, legal and administrative barriers, economic vulnerability, gender-based violence and psychosocial distress.

The findings indicate that protection needs are becoming increasingly protracted, requiring integrated and longer-term responses that address overlapping vulnerabilities and structural barriers to recovery.

FIVE KEY MESSAGES FOR DECISION MAKERS

- 1 Civilian harm reached its highest level since 2022.** Casualties rose 40 per cent year on year, and June 2026 was the deadliest month since April 2022.
- 2 Displacement is increasingly protracted.** Some 83 per cent of IDPs have been displaced for over one year, while new movement is concentrating in frontline-adjacent oblasts.
- 3 Economic vulnerability is now a protection driver.** Financial erosion links displacement, return decisions, informal work, GBV risks, distress and unsafe livelihood practices.
- 4 Humanitarian access and assistance are contracting.** Some communities reported no distributions for over two years, while insecurity limits access to the most exposed communities.
- 5 Integrated responses are required.** Legal aid, GBV, MHPSS, health, housing, livelihoods and community-based protection need to work as one response architecture.

HEADLINE FIGURES

1,565

killed | 8,861 injured
+40% year on year

83%

of IDPs | 3,2M people
displaced over a year

85%

Gap in 2026 funding
\$354M received vs \$4.1bn required

70.5%

IRC PM respondents in Kharkivska
cite insecurity as a barrier to return

90,7%

IRC PM respondents in Mykolaivska
cited financial assistance as an urgent need

57,4%

IRC PM respondents in Sumska
prioritised health services and medicines

Protection risks are worsening across multiple dimensions while humanitarian assistance and coping capacity are eroding.

DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

Civilian casualties	RISING
Geographic spread of attacks	WIDENING
Protracted displacement	INCREASING
Household economic capacity	ERODING
Humanitarian assistance coverage	CONTRACTING
Access to health services	DETERIORATING
GBV reporting and help-seeking	SUPPRESSED
Returns	LOW & CONDITIONAL

This is not a set of isolated risks - it is a **single cascading chain** running through every oblast

ATTACKS ► DISPLACEMENT ► LOST HOUSING ► LEGAL BARRIERS ► ECONOMIC STRESS ► GBV & DISTRESS

PRIORITY PROTECTION RISKS

DIRECT HARM TO CIVILIANS

Attacks and explosive contamination

Attacks on civilians and civilian objects: Attacks were the first-ranked safety concern. Expanding drone range is widening the unsafe area, while some rural districts still lack alerts and shelters.

Explosive ordnance: Explosive ordnance contamination remains a casualty-producing risk for men farming contaminated land. Economic necessity, not lack of awareness, drives exposure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen evacuation preparedness and responder safety in areas with expanding drone range.

Invest in civil-defense preparedness and protective infrastructure for schools and kindergartens.

Pair explosive-ordnance risk education with livelihood support and needs-responsive clearance prioritisation.

DISPLACEMENT AND LEGAL BARRIERS

Housing, land, property and mobility

Forced displacement and adverse returns: Displacement is protracted, but continued movement is feeding the same eastern oblasts. Staying often reflects blocked return rather than successful integration.

Legal identity, remedies and HLP: The largest volume of findings: of 4,694 recorded legal issues, 68% concerned housing, land and property (HLP).

Theft, looting and eviction: Looting of evacuated properties and informal rental-eviction strip households of the assets needed to return, recover or integrate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen displacement responses through preparedness, durable solutions, accurate data, and child protection safeguards during evacuation.

Scale legal accompaniment for compensation, inheritance, identity proceedings, and property documentation.

Support property-protection mechanisms in evacuated areas and stabilise rental arrangements via practical solutions.

ACCESS & WELLBEING

Services, support and dignity

Gender-based violence (GBV): GBV is rising while help-seeking remains suppressed by fear, stigma, economic dependence and limited confidential services. Rural districts lack specialised support.

Psychosocial distress: Recorded in every oblast, especially among children, caregivers managing households alone and families of returned military personnel.

Denial of access to assistance and services: Assistance contraction was the most consistent change, driven by perceived unfairness in targeting and exclusion from assistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fund rural GBV outreach via mobile and remote modalities, with confidential entry points independent of police involvement.

Fund integrated health and MHPSS, child-focused services, caregiver support and specialised responses for returned personnel and families.

Use transparent eligibility criteria, area-based targeting, and feedback and appeals mechanisms to ensure equitable coverage.



GROUPS MOST AFFECTED*

Older persons and persons with disabilities: heightened exposure to attacks, service barriers, documents problems and isolation.

IDPs from occupied areas: higher disability, chronic illness and older household-member rates.

Women and caregivers: economic pressure, childcare barriers, GBV risks and psychosocial strain.

Children: alerts, lack of shelters, disrupted learning, MHPSS gaps, economic pressure

Rural and frontline-adjacent communities: highest threat and the weakest service coverage.



INVESTMENT PRIORITIES



Legal aid and HLP accompaniment: through compensation, inheritance and identity proceedings.



Integrated health and MHPSS: including children, caregivers and support for families of returned military personnel.



Rural GBV services: fund mobile and remote modalities with confidential entry and safe referrals.



Community-based protection: resource actors closest to frontline populations.



Protection-oriented cash: linked to safe livelihoods in mine-affected area.



Shelter, alert and evacuation preparedness: for communities in expanding-risk areas.

WHAT WORKS: EMERGING GOOD PRACTICES

Relocated military-civil administrations

Maintain trusted links with communities; support community-based protection.

Community hubs and closed information channels

Distribute assistance and information securely in frontline-adjacent locations.

Mobile and remote GBV outreach

Extends specialised support in rural areas while protecting confidentiality.

Underground and shelter-equipped schools

Restore in-person learning and reduce the protection impact of a degraded education.

METHODOLOGY NOTE:

Based on IRC protection monitoring, January-June 2026, across five oblasts, using household surveys, key informant interviews, direct observation, secondary data and programme data. Findings are indicative of observed trends, not statistically representative of the population; where sample sizes were limited, findings should be interpreted with caution.

* Monitoring did not generate sufficient data for dedicated analysis of Roma communities, LGBTIQ+ persons and other minority groups. This should not be interpreted as absence of risk.

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