



Save the Children

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT and CHILDREN

*Submission to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement by Save the Children
May 2020*

Introduction

At the end of 2019, it is estimated that 45.7 million people were internally displaced people by conflict and violence¹. Close to 20 million of the people internally displaced by conflict and violence are children. A significant number of children are also displaced by disasters. In many internal displacement contexts, children represent more than half of the displaced populations.

Save the Children believes that children must be at core of the work of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. Children’s voices and their opinions should inform the analyses of the problems displaced populations face and their recommendations should guide the search for durable solutions. **Investing in internally displaced children and upholding their rights is critical to prevent, respond to and drive forward solutions to internal displacement.**

In this written submission, Save the Children has decided to focus on three core issues related to the internal displacement of children: **education, child protection and child-centred durable solutions** (including addressing the mental health issues faced by many internally displaced children who fled violence).

Save the Children has also endorsed the joint submission “Leaving No One Behind: Ensuring an Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) Inclusive Approach to Internal Displacement”, as we strongly believe that age, gender, and diversity (including disability) are essential considerations for the development of policies and interventions targeting internally displaced people.

EDUCATION

Provide internally displaced children and youth with safe, inclusive quality education

The vast majority of internally displaced children are deprived of a safe, inclusive and quality education and the multitude of short- and long-term advantages it affords. Barriers such as a lack of good teaching capacity, limited funding, ongoing insecurity, social tensions and discrimination compound with education systems in low-income and fragile contexts which are already overstretched.

During displacement, schools that remain open may become further overcrowded, while other schools may be occupied by armed groups and displaced communities. Teachers may leave conflict-affected areas or change professions. The lack of education services can increase children’s vulnerability to abuse, child marriage, child labour and recruitment into armed groups. Furthermore, most of these children and adolescents have experienced a high level of stress, necessitating psychosocial support.

A child’s right to education does not end in times of displacement. In these circumstances, **education plays a critical role as a building block of recovery, resilience and long-term development.** While refugee girls and boys are protected by international agreements – the Refugee Convention and the

¹ IDMC and NRC: Global report on internal displacement (2020)

Global Compact on Refugees – refugee returnees and IDPs are subject to national laws. However, if their national governments are not willing to provide social services and as IDPs are not as visible to the international community, frequently their right to quality education is not realised.

Save the Children responds to the education needs of internally displaced children through our role as co-lead of the Global Education Cluster² which works towards a predictable, equitable and well-coordinated education response by reinforcing capacities of cluster staff and partners, providing timely remote and direct field support, strengthening robust assessment, analysis and advocacy. As well as our role in the cluster, we also deliver education programming directly or with partners in many countries with internally displaced populations.

- National governments must meet their obligations to provide equal access to education for internally displaced children alongside greater effort and investment support from the international community – ensuring that other vital support services for displaced students is provided including school-feeding and psychosocial support.

Internally displaced children demand their education

Our research reveals that children in emergencies and protracted crises are more than twice as likely to rank going to school as their top concern, compared with immediate needs like food, water, shelter or money³. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), education emerged as the number one priority for internally displaced children in 112 of the 205 focus group discussions. Missing out on formal learning generated anxiety among children of all ages, who were concerned about the impact on their future and employability⁴.

“We want to learn, we need...good schools in our community.”

– a girl from Bor, South Sudan

“Since the cyclone, so many things have changed. My school has been destroyed.

My house was destroyed and now we’re sleeping outside. I just want to get back to studying and going to school. School is important for me because it’s a way to get a job.”

– Renaldo, Mozambique

- National governments and the international community must respect the right of all children, including internally displaced children to an education – and match their resolve to realise it.
- Internally displaced boys and girls must be engaged in decision-making processes on issues that affect their lives.

Include IDPs in national education systems and strengthen education systems

Inclusive policies and practices are vital so that internally displaced children and young people can benefit from the formal education system when possible and accredited non-formal education when not. The international community must support governments to overcome political and operational challenges so that they can enact policy changes and allocate funding to ensure all displaced children are included in national education systems.

The commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4 should be a key driver of progress to ensure that all children have access to quality learning opportunities. Integrating internally displaced children’s

² <https://www.educationcluster.net>

³ Save the Children: Education Against the Odds (2019) - <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/education-against-odds-meeting-marginalised-childrens-demands-quality-education>

⁴ Save the Children: Voicing the need and priorities of children living in conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Save the Children (2019) - <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/voicing-needs-and-priorities-children-living-conflict-democratic-republic-congo>

needs and efforts to meet them in the monitoring and reporting processes associated with SDG 4 offers an important way for member states and civil society to develop inclusive SDG 4 plans and ensure that marginalised children are not left behind.

Where governments have not provided education to internally displaced children and youth, NGOs, such as Save the Children, with technical knowledge of how to deliver education in these contexts have often stepped in to provide learning opportunities and/or strengthened the capacity of education systems. In Baidoa and Hiran in Somalia, Save the Children strengthened the capacity of 119, (54 female and 65 male) Community Engagement Committee (CEC) members and 11 Ministry of Education staff (2 female) over five days. The participants were given sessions on school management and resource mobilisation to improve schools' functionality. School improvement plans were developed and are implemented by CECs in 17 schools. These has increased CEC involvement in school management and the collaboration of internally displaced teachers and parents at school level⁵.

Governments need to help returnee children to re-engage in the education system by recognising qualifications and documentation gained in their IDP location, and by providing protective, appropriate learning opportunities. Recent repatriations of refugees from Thailand to Myanmar showed that returning children during school holidays avoids further disruption to learning cycles, and that it is vital for governments to recognise certification, even from temporary settings.

- National governments should remove policy and practical barriers that exclude internally displaced children from the formal education system, for example by establishing an inclusive, flexible registration system that allows students to enrol in school even if they lack the usual documentation.
- Deliver annual Back to School campaigns to encourage all children, but particularly internally displaced children, girls and those from the most marginalised communities to enrol in school.
- The UN Secretary General and UNESCO should convene a consultative process to develop guidance for member states so that reporting on SDG4 in relation to internally displaced communities is of high quality and as standardised as possible.

Protect education facilities from attack and use by armed actors

Around the world, girls and boys in regions affected by conflict and violence experience attacks on their education, through bombing, torching and the military use of schools. Military groups routinely kill, maim, rape, recruit, abduct and traumatise schoolchildren and teachers with impunity. Those fleeing hostilities may find themselves in new conflict zones as factions and frontlines shift.

Between April 2017 and June 2019, the countries of the central Sahel – Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger – witnessed a six-fold increase in school closures due to violence, from 512 to 3,005. This affected the learning of over 610,000 children and 15,000 teachers – many of whom have been internally displaced as a result of insecurity.⁶

Save the Children delivers '**safe schools programming**', which aims to address the impact on children of conflict and of attacks on schools and which is informed by our experience of promoting schools as zones of peace in conflict. Safe schools programming brings together different interventions that support the psychosocial and physical protection of children through building resilience and strengthening referral mechanisms. With effective advocacy from Save the Children and its partners, the governments of the DRC, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have all endorsed the Safe Schools

⁵ Save the Children: Final report, Somalia Education in Emergency in Hiran and Baidoa (2018)

⁶ Save the Children: 2 Million Children Will Not Go Back to School Due to Insecurity: West and Central Africa (2019) <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/2-million-children-will-not-go-back-school-due-to-insecurity-west-and-central-africa>

Declaration. Significant efforts need to be made to ensure implementation of the Declaration and provide continuity of education despite the difficult security situation. Governments, armed forces, non-state armed groups need to take action to establish schools as ‘zones of peace’ and stop attacks and threats against schools, students, teachers and other school personnel to allow them to get access to quality learning for every child.

“Now we cannot play as we used to do due to fear of insecurity and abduction”.

– a boy from Juba, South Sudan

“We used to be able to go to school, have fun with your classmates, and go to the market.

Now all this is almost impossible, and we are very often afraid”

- Sidonie, 15, from Burkina Faso.

- Endorse, implement and support the Safe Schools Declaration to ensure that all students and educators, male and female, can learn and teach in safety.
- Avoid using schools and universities for military purposes, including by implementing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict⁷
- Strengthen monitoring and reporting of attacks on education, systematically investigate them and ensure perpetrators are prosecuted.

Increase support for teachers

Teachers are the most important school-based factor in determining the quality of education. The pivotal role that teachers play in both student learning and student well-being is even more pronounced in displacement contexts. **Despite the complex needs of displaced students, their teachers rarely receive adequate training, remuneration, language assistance or support for the important and challenging work they do.** Overall, there is often a significant shortage of qualified teachers in internally displaced communities. Better data is needed so that Ministries of Education and partners can plan and prepare budgets to ensure enough teachers are available along with adequate funds to pay, train and support them.

Where training is available, it is generally short and piecemeal – frequently a one-off workshop rather than a sustained capacity development model. In Kismayo, Somalia, our research found that ongoing teacher training created classroom environments that proved more child-friendly and conducive for learning⁸. Teachers in IDPs settings face a wide range of specific displacement related challenges, including teacher/pupil ratios, language and culture issues, wide range of educational levels and ages in their classroom, high stress levels. All these factors have significant impact on availability and quality of the teaching. Children who face poor quality teaching are far less likely to prosper in the long-term. The salaries and incentives given to teachers may be less than other employment opportunities, resulting in teachers leaving their profession and large teaching gaps. In many displacement contexts the number of female teachers is considerably less than male teachers. Promoting the hiring of female teachers can be a useful way of meeting the needs of female students.

“Our schools were not functioning because of the war across the state. The rebels displaced people in our villages which made some teachers to look for new jobs since their teaching profession has been stopped by the war”.

⁷ Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_en.pdf

⁸ Save the Children: End of Project Evaluation for Kismayo FFO SOM - Child Protection and Re-Integration into the Somali Education System for Refugee Children from Dadaab, Save the Children (2019)

– a boy from Juba, South Sudan

- Governments should develop or strengthen regional frameworks to include internally displaced teachers in national education workforces and support their professional development and certification. This could include:
 - facilitating teacher accreditation and certification
 - progressively aligning internally displaced teachers' pay and conditions of service with those of local community teachers, in line with experience and qualifications.
 - supporting pre-service and in-service professional development of teachers, recognising the additional knowledge and skills required to support displaced learners.
 - promoting gender parity in the teaching workforce and equalising career progression opportunities among teachers in displaced contexts.

Address the different education needs of internally displaced girls

The education challenges facing girls are often exacerbated by displacement. Increased insecurity and poverty can reduce the educational opportunities available to girls and increase negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage. Families can fall back on social and cultural norms that limit girls' education. The benefits of secondary education for girls are vast and well documented and include increased economic opportunities and planning for smaller and healthier families.

In Kismayo, Somalia, our research found that girls from returnee communities performed poorly compared to boys in early grade reading and numeracy⁹. In Hiran, teachers reported increased attendance in lesson time by 10% over previous attendance since the returnee girls from Kenya were able to continue learning through the distribution of menstrual hygiene kits¹⁰

“Before, girls were taken to school and taught culture, during the war in IDP camps they had no school so girls of 15 years and above willingly got married and others were forced to get married”.

– a parent in Juba

- Ministries of Education, donor governments, multilateral institutions and NGOs should:
 - strengthen psycho-social support and social emotional learning for girls who have experienced gender-based violence, to build their resilience and help them prepare to re-enter education. Special measures should be taken to reintegrate girls who have been excluded from school, such as married girls and child mothers.
 - ensure all learning services have adequate, gender segregated sanitation facilities and access to menstrual hygiene products.
 - ensure girls' safety in transit to school and at school by mainstreaming protection measures into all policies and initiatives related to education.

Deliver non-formal programmes, including language support to enable displaced children to catch up

Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) are flexible, age-appropriate interventions that promote a rapid re-entry to education for disadvantaged groups and over-age out-of-school children and youth who missed out or had their education interrupted due to conflict or displacement. AEPs offer certified knowledge and skills equivalent to primary education, enabling students to return to formal education at appropriate grades, to enter skills based technical and vocational education, or to join the workforce

⁹ Save the Children: Early Grade Reading Assessment Baseline Study for the FFO Project (2020)

¹⁰ Save the Children: Final report, Somalia Education in Emergency in Hiran and Baidoa, Somalia (2018)

directly. AEP structures differ in their speeds of acceleration, the age they target and their approach to teaching and learning.

Ethiopia has a well-established AEP which was developed by the Ministry of Education in 1997, originally for rural communities but later extended to other parts of the country including areas with internal displacement. The programme targets children aged 11 to 14 and uses a condensed version of the Ethiopian curriculum, shortening the time of schooling and allowing an easy transition into formal primary school.

Given that displacement affects minorities and indigenous groups disproportionately, many internally displaced children are unlikely to be able to speak the local language of instruction.

- Governments should enact policies that provide access to accredited, quality, innovative non-formal learning opportunities to internally displaced children and youth – with clear pathways into the formal system. Non-government and community-based organisations should be supported to provide these learning opportunities to fill the gaps in public provision.
- Promote alternative learning opportunities in areas where schools cannot re-open due to insecurity such as community-based education, distance learning and accelerated education.
- Ensure the integration of children’s psychosocial well-being into teaching methodologies, to help children overcome the shocks and stresses caused by insecurity.
- Language bridging programmes should be provided to displaced children and youth switching to a new language of instruction.

Integrate child protection and education services

IDPs’ financial struggles and their increased vulnerability affect the safety of internally displaced children, contributing to an increase in child labour, early marriage and pregnancy. At the same time, displaced children and their families may find it difficult to access basic services, including housing, protection and education. The problem stems from discrimination and stigmatisation, lack of documentation, financial barriers, inadequate information about available services and difficulty navigating the systems.

In some displacement areas in the DRC schools are functioning, but families struggle with earning enough to pay for school fees (and other expenditures, like uniforms and school supplies), mainly because of the loss of income brought by the conflict and displacement. Displaced and recently returned children told us they skipped meals¹¹

Within our education programme in Kismayo, Somalia, children, teachers and Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) all concurred that the number of child protection cases reported by community structures declined. This has been attributed to increased community awareness on child rights, child protection, and available child protection services in their communities, as well as case management support offered by Save the Children. Schools that had good working relationships with CWCs improved their engagement with teachers and learners; and hence increased children’s enrolment and attendance.

In Somalia, evaluation findings show that working collaboratively with key government ministries like the Ministry of Education and Department for Internal Refugee Affairs have greatly helped internalise the acceptance of processes and outcomes of the education and child protection departments¹²

¹¹ Save the Children: Voicing the need & priorities of Children living in conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2019) - <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/voicing-needs-and-priorities-children-living-conflict-democratic-republic-congo>

¹² Save the Children: End of Project Evaluation for Kismayo FFO SOM Child Protection and Re-Integration into the Somali Education System for Refugee Children from Dadaab, Save the Children (2019)

In Mali, Save the Children provides psychosocial and protection support to conflict-affected children through a child resilience approach, with an emphasis on learning and education. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the programme successfully integrated 255 children, including 111 girls, into the formal education system.

“It was early morning; I went out and saw our house collapsed. In all, I lost my father and two of my brothers and sisters. I do not know what I'm going to do now, my mother took me out of school because she could not afford to pay for cattle. I like school and I would like to go back because my friends continue to go to school and school helps to move forward in life”.

Pierre, a 15-year-old boy from Mali

- Local investment and policies on protection and education should explicitly include internally displaced children and families in local and national plans and budgets for services.
- Increase integration of education and child protection programmes.
- Strengthen social safety nets and expand opportunities for family income and youth employment, including for IDPs. Promote social cohesion and facilitate peaceful conflict resolution at the city and community level.
- Invest in and train community workers, teachers and school staff in child rights and child protection to equip them to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse, including trafficking – and to understand how displacement can impact children’s safety and access to rights and services
- Efforts to expand educational opportunity need to be accompanied by wider measures to provide livelihood opportunities and child-sensitive social protection interventions for displaced families and youth, including scaling up of cash transfer programmes.

Commit to more and better funding for education

While children caught up in humanitarian crises prioritise their education, donor support for education in emergencies continues to lag behind, making it the poor cousin of an overstretched and underfunded humanitarian system. Educational interventions receive just 2-3% of humanitarian funding.

The nature of internal displacement crises frequently means they receive little international attention or funding. The conflict and displacement in Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Myanmar and Venezuela to name just a few, have become forgotten crises.

- Low- and middle-income countries should allocate an average of 6% of GDP and/or at least 15–20% of public expenditure to education through growth and improved resource mobilisation.
- Donors should increase education’s share of development aid to 15% and its share of humanitarian funding to 4–10%, and should ensure more of this funding is channelled through multilateral mechanisms in multi-year increments to ensure maximum impact.
- Governments, private-sector companies and foundations should urgently increase funding for multilateral organisations, including Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education.

Youth education and livelihoods

Due to economic realities, many displaced youth look for livelihood opportunities to contribute to their household’s income. However, such opportunities are often extremely limited or not available to them at all. The opportunities are especially limited for aspiring entrepreneurs – and especially girls. Displaced youth often have either lost or never had access to “assets” essential to building new enterprises – e.g., savings or wages that could serve as seed capital, mentorship or social networks

who offer guidance and connections to resources, etc. Many have also had their primary or secondary education interrupted for significant lengths and lack basic numeracy or finance skills needed as an entrepreneur. The failure to target youth with appropriate programming is likely to be a factor in recurrent conflict and displacement. Pushing livelihood options for youth, alongside Technical and Vocational Education and Training

- **Technical and Vocational Education and Training should be scaled up alongside mechanisms providing access to capital for young entrepreneurs and schemes for mentorship of young entrepreneurs**

The impact of COVID19 on education for internally displaced children

As of early April 2020, most countries have introduced nation-wide early childhood care, school and university closures as a result of COVID19. Education can play a critical role in protecting public health, keeping children safe, ensuring continuity of learning and promoting mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. Outbreaks of COVID-19 in internal displacement settings could be catastrophic and require specific attention.

- **Governments and donors, in collaboration with national and international partners must urgently ensure safe, inclusive access to emergency distance learning, with psychosocial support and social emotional learning components during and after the COVID-19 crisis.**
- **Internally displaced people should be included in all government-led responses to ensure the continuity of education during the COVID-19 response. This should recognise that internally displaced and host communities may have limited access to technology, and connectivity can be prohibitively expensive.**

CHILD PROTECTION

A child's right to safety and protection does not change because they are displaced. States have obligations to protect them regardless of their status. However, legal, policy and practical barriers alongside discrimination often result in girls and boys who are displaced lacking access to child protection and other critical services.

National governments must meet their obligations to protect children who are internally displaced, to ensure their access to critical prevention and response services, and to support their recovery and well-being for future peace and security. Donors and the international community must mobilise greater investment and support to national governments in protecting children.

Strengthen Child Protection Systems to Meet the Needs of Displaced Children

Strengthening national systems to protect all children – including girls and boys who are displaced – is the best method to address complex challenges to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children. A systems approach helps overcome the limitations of fragmented responses to specific child protection issues and supports states to meet effectively their responsibility to protect all children. For displaced children and families, the national child protection system is often out of reach – whether because policies exclude them explicitly, because services are not available in areas of displacement or discriminatory practices on the ground.

- **National governments should remove policy and practical barriers that exclude displaced children from child protection systems, including by extending services to areas of displacement and appropriately resourcing the social service workforce.**
- **National governments, together with donors and the international community, should invest in appropriately planning, resourcing and developing the social service workforce, including with emergency preparedness planning to adapt services to meet the needs of displaced children and families.**

- Efforts to strengthen the child protection systems should reach from the national to the community level and work collaboratively with displaced children, youth and families

Protect displaced children in conflict-affected areas

In the past three decades, there has been a more than 75% increase in the number of children living in conflict zones¹³. There has also been a sharp increase in the verified cases of killing and maiming children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access to children. Despite strengthening of international laws and norms to protect children, children and their families are often exposed to repeated cycles of displacement and violence.

- Governments and non-state armed groups around the world must consistently uphold international laws and standards to protect children in conflict, both in their own practice and in their relations with other states and non-state groups.
- Together with support and investment from the international community, national governments must strengthen monitoring and reporting of grave violations of children's rights in areas of displacement, systematically investigate them, and ensure perpetrators are prosecuted.

Invest in the protection and recovery of internally displaced children and families

All children have a fundamental right to protection, but the needs of internally displaced children are not being met. Child protection programming is essential to prevent and respond to violence against children, to facilitate family tracing and reunification, and to ensure individual children and families are supported through case management and multi-sectoral referrals. However, Save the Children's Unprotected Report¹⁴ found that only 0.5% of total humanitarian funding is dedicated to child protection. Child protection is often under-funded and starkly so when considering the increasing number of children in need of protection. In 2018, only US\$3 on average was spent per child in need of protection for the whole year.

- National governments, donors and multilateral institutions must adopt and resource a child-centered recovery framework for conflict -affected and post-conflict contexts. This should include investment in mental health and psychosocial support for children and caregivers, particularly those who are displaced, to help them recover.
- Donors should commit to increased multi-year funding to better meet the protection needs of displaced children, with the aim of increasing the proportion of global humanitarian funding for child protection from 0.5% to at least 4%.
- Donors should also improve reporting for child protection funding on the UN OCHA-hosted Financial Tracking Service (FTS) so that child protection funding is clearly identifiable and trackable within the protection sector.

Ensure the Centrality of Protection and adopt integrated, multi-sectoral approaches

Over the past decade, the humanitarian sector has increasingly recognized that protection is the main purpose and intended outcome of all humanitarian action and goes beyond sector-specific mandates. The principle of Centrality of Protection recognises that all sectors have the obligation to contribute to multi-sectoral protection activities and take all measures possible to ensure the safety and protection of affected populations. Adopting multi-sectoral integrated approaches is particularly essential to meet the needs of children who are internally displaced and face new and repeated risks to their protection and well-being. Sectoral programming that is blind to child protection risks can lead to

¹³ Save the Children: Stop the War on Children (2019)

https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/gb/reports/stop_the_war_on_children_report_2019.pdf

¹⁴ Save the Children: Unprotected: Crisis in humanitarian funding for child protection (2019).

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/unprotected-crisis-humanitarian-funding-child-protection>

additional harm or increased risks as well as reduced results for children. In contrast, multi-sectoral programming that reflects child protection concerns contributes to higher quality impacts.

- Governments, humanitarian actors, and child protection practitioners at the local and global level must strengthen the integration of child protection outcomes across sectors in line with the principle of Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action, while also supporting stand-alone child protection interventions that are essential to alleviate suffering and save the lives of displaced children.

The Impact of COVID-19 on the protection and well-being of internally displaced children

All over the world COVID-19 is disrupting the environments in which children grow and develop. For displaced children, COVID-19 has meant an even further reduction in the protection and support they need to recover. Schools and early childhood care have been closed for the majority of the world's countries. Critical psychosocial programming for children and caregivers has been suspended due to government lockdowns and restrictions on movement. Critically, the social service workforce has more limited access to identify and respond to cases of violence against children. With protection services limited and children and families isolated, rates of violence against children and women increasing, displaced children are being left unprotected.

- Governments and international agencies must treat the social service workforce and humanitarian actors as essential workers and support the continuation of child protection services which are essential to keep children safe and alleviate their suffering.
- Cash transfers and social safety nets must be extended to displaced children and families to help them meet their basic needs and prevent negative coping strategies that could lead to increases in child labor, child marriage and other child protection harms.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS

The three durable solutions options to internal displacement (voluntary return, local integration or relocation) are processes and should not constitute solutions on their own. The ultimate goal for all durable solutions is sustainable reintegration as recognised by the Sustainable Development Goals.

Internal displacement cannot be only addressed through humanitarian interventions alone. Durable solutions require contributions from other critical sectors (development, public policy, human rights, peace-building...) in creating conducive conditions for durable solutions. **The process for durable solutions must be led by national, regional and local authorities, as they have the primary responsibility for protecting the human rights of their citizens and, it is essential to strengthen their capacity and support the integration of protracted displacement and durable solutions in peace processes, national development frameworks and relevant policy reforms.**

Establishing the ground for durable solutions for children requires a multi-stakeholder and sectoral, rights and needs based programming approach. In this context, Save the Children has chosen to strengthen its focus on durable solutions for internally displaced children considering the high incidence of protracted displacement and the increasing occurrences of return movements lacking minimum child safeguarding. Save the Children considers that a solution for a displaced child has been achieved when all rights have been fully reinstated, and when specific vulnerabilities and risks for the child, including discrimination, are meaningfully minimised.

Save the Children believes that durable solutions go beyond solely restoring to conditions prior to displacement and should profit to the whole community in bringing both displaced and non-displaced at equal level of recovery to benefit from integration within national development action plans and strategies as well as key institutional reforms to instore a sustainable protective environment for children and their families. Localised approach and area-based durable solutions for children has

shown significant results and requires specific recovery and development programmes to be integrated into solution planning.

Save the Children recently developed set of innovative approaches that includes a prototype tool for [Predictive Analytics](#) that forecasts the duration and scale of forced displacement and provides insights that can help governments, donors, and partners to make decisions and plan appropriately from the onset toward the end of a displacement crisis.

In addition and given the growing scale of the problem and to address data, advocacy and programmatic gaps, [Save the Children Migration and Displacement Initiative](#) developed in 2019 a new set of child-specific indicators to complete existing tools - such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) [Framework for Durable Solutions for IDPs](#), to which a new dimension on Mental, Health and Psychosocial Support was added. These indicators were then translated into a "[Durable Solutions for Children Toolkit](#)" - a guidance package establishing clear standards for advocacy and programming, to ensure that children are associated to durable solutions processes. The toolkit paves the way for ensuring a process which includes:

- The assessment and determination of the best interest for displaced children with regards to their solution.
- Advocating for solutions to influence public opinion, policy and mobilising resources for solutions.
- Programming durable solutions for displaced children addressing jointly immediate needs through targeted humanitarian and protection actions together with long-term recovery through development and governance.

Save the Children conducted a research in 2018/2019 providing a comparative analysis of child return conditions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia, drawing on data generated by the Durable Solutions toolkit indicator framework. The key findings of the study "[Achieving durable solutions for returnee children: what do we know?](#)" underlined:

- The general lack of data and standards guiding rights-based return and reintegration for children impact on children safety and security during and upon return,
- Durable Solutions indicators suggests that returnees and non-displaced children share many similar conditions of material and physical safety,
- Returnee children and their families face a number of distinct difficulties specific to their displacement compared to host communities, including higher levels of separation from families or guardians, access to legal identity, freedom of movement, access to house, land and property rights, water and sanitation as well as qualitative education service
- Psychosocial and mental health safety remains undocumented at present and generally lack supportive social care.

Recommendations to implement child sensitive durable solutions to displacement are:

- National governments to ensure that children should not return until the standards for safety and dignity can be met.
- National governments to ensure that durable solutions are been addressed through an informed and objective decision for children and their guardians.
- National governments to ensure that mechanisms are in place when solutions have been identified to set standards to implement and measure progress toward reintegration, to guarantee that children and their families are achieving sustainable recovery.
- National governments and their partners to ensure that durable solutions are discussed during peace talks and that recovery for displaced children constitutes a specific objective of peace agreement and transitional justice as well as addresses the specific needs of displaced children with regard to: Safety and security; house, land and property; reconciliation and

peacebuilding; remedies and reparation from violation and abuses; rehabilitation and recovery; and post conflict reconstruction

- National governments must ensure that comprehensive solutions are inclusive and engage communities and children from both displaced and non-displaced, to inform analysis of efforts that support IDPs and achieve national development goals, such as poverty reduction, social stability and development.
- National governments and their international partners must establish child focuses disaster risks reduction and preparedness constitute an important element to sustain solution as it may prevent the impact of future crisis or the loss of recovery benefit

Save the Children's surveys in countries like Iraq¹⁵ and Syria¹⁶ documented a **high prevalence of mental health issues amongst internally displaced children who fled violence and conflict**. Children who have recently fled talked of "monsters", "dead bodies in the streets," bloodied faces, and bombs falling on their homes. They spoke of their extreme sorrow of losing loved ones – experiences that are being felt by the whole community in a collective trauma. Of those who have spent years displaced, the family unit has provided a protective shield for children, although concerningly, experts believe that the findings show a normalization of violence and insecurity and parents are overwhelmingly worried about their children's mental health.

If the right support is provided, children may be able to recover. **Programmes offering mental health and psychosocial support have shown remarkable results**. Addressing mental health problems is certainly keep to find durable solutions.

- Significantly increase funding to age and gender appropriate mental health and psychosocial programming in internal displacement contexts that supplements the provision of child-friendly spaces, and ensure that this programming becomes a core intervention as part of the humanitarian responses and recovery/ stabilization.
- Provide children and their families with an opportunity to express and reflect on their fears and losses by providing high quality training to frontline staff on how to successfully facilitate psychosocial support via group and individual sessions using a psychological first aid approach and mind-body techniques that provide a safe space to explore and share their experiences.
- Provide family group sessions that offer caregivers not only the opportunity to improve their own reactions to and coping with traumatic experiences, but also learn how to effectively support members of their family by becoming more aware of potentially unsupportive family behaviours such as excessive criticism, giving unsolicited advice, and conveying discomfort during attempts to communicate about trauma.
- Provide children and young people with meaningful ways to participate in post-conflict planning and response, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations

¹⁵ Save the Children: An Unbearable Reality: The impact of war and displacement on children's mental health in Iraq (2017) - <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/unbearable-reality-impact-war-and-displacement-childrens-mental-health-iraq>

¹⁶ Save the Children: Invisible Wounds: The impact of six years of war on the mental health of Syria's children (2017) - <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/invisible-wounds-impact-six-years-war-mental-health-syrias-children>

Resources

Protecting Children on the Move: A guide to programming for children affected by migration and displacement (2018)

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/protecting-children-move-guide-programming-children-affected-migration-and-displacement>

A Child is a Child: Protecting children on the move from violence, abuse and exploitation (2017)

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/child-child-protecting-children-move-violence-abuse-and-exploitation>

Durable Solutions for Children Toolkit (2019)

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/durable-solutions-children-toolkit>

Displaced Children and Emerging Technologies (2019)

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/displaced-children-and-emerging-technologies-save-childrens-opportunities-investment-and>

Why Children Stay (2019)

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/why-children-stay>

Predicting Displacement: Using predictive analytics to build a better future for displaced children (2019)

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/predicting-displacement-using-predictive-analytics-build-better-future-displaced-children>