unite for children

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UNICEF's Submission to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

UNICEF calls on the Panel to ensure standards, principles and practices that provide a safe home, protection and equitable access to services for every internally displaced child and young person, are prioritized. And that internally displaced children and youth themselves have a seat at the table, are taken seriously and offered the opportunity to be part of the solution.

Forced displacement disproportionately affects children. At the end of 2019, approximately 45.7 million people were internally displaced by conflict and violence. Nearly half – 19 million – were estimated to be children, under the age of 18. And millions more are displaced every year by natural disasters.[1] While international human rights standards guarantee the rights of ***all*** children, and the SDGs promised to leave no one behind, internally displaced children continue to fall through the cracks. In a world where conflict, fragility and climate change continue to trigger widespread and often protracted displacement, they live in the shadows, facing immense challenges in the realisation of their rights, and with little to no access to basic services and limited opportunities to fulfil their potential. Some groups of internally displaced children face multiple and compounding rights violations, and barriers to accessing basic services, including due to discrimination and xenophobia, as well as an intersection of their experience of displacement with gender, age, disability and other factors.

Within a global context of increasing urbanization, towns and cities are increasingly becoming a major refuge for displaced populations. Internally displaced children and their families in urban settings may find it difficult to equitably access basic services, including housing, protection and education, have limited support networks, lack information on protection options, and experience economic disruption.[2] Cities on the frontlines of armed conflict are faced with additional challenges relating to access, security and the cumulative impact of protracted urban warfare on infrastructure and service systems. Critical to addressing these challenges are local investment and policies that explicitly include internally displaced populations in local and national plans and budgets for services.

The rights deprivations and needs of children living in internal displacement are acute, immediate and demand action. Now, the global spread of COVID-19 threatens to further erode these children's already precarious existence. For internally displaced children, the consequences will be unlike any we have ever seen – and will continue to have ramifications for

[1] UNICEF, 2020. Lost at Home – the risks and challenges for internally displaced children and the urgent actions needed to protect them; citing Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement,* 2020, available at link; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Number of IDPs by Age at the End of 2019,* 2020, available at link.

[2] UNICEF/IDMC, 2019, Protecting and supporting internally displaced children in urban settings, available at: link

generations to come. We must proactively address their unique rights, risks, needs, and capacities. We must not let any of them down.

Internally displaced children are best served through interventions that strengthen the capacities of local/national systems to reach and include them. We need to strengthen or build systems that are strong, inclusive, age appropriate and able to attend to the specific needs of girls and boys on the move. But the inclusion of internally displaced children into government led health/education/child protection/WASH/social protection systems does not happen automatically- even where strong systems exist. It also requires explicit focus and investments.

Every child, no matter their status of any kind, has the right to life, survival, development and special protection and assistance. In addition, when the right policies and practices are in place to support all internally displaced children, and their families and caregivers to thrive, they make invaluable contributions to their communities. The skills and assets that children and young people bring (drive, creativity, sense of justice, technological savviness, among many others) are needed by societies everywhere, but we are failing to nurture their 'hidden talent'. The High-Level Panel has a critical opportunity to promote the rights of internally displaced children, and to prioritize supporting and empowering such children and youth, to tap into the huge potential for their own development, and that of their communities.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

1) Protect all internally displaced children from violence, exploitation and abuse

Internally displaced children face serious rights violations, safety and protection risks, especially in situations of persistent insecurity. They are vulnerable to abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation, including trafficking, child labour and child marriage, which can impact all aspects of their lives, development and well-being. Children may become separated from their families, and those who are unaccompanied or living on the streets, can face a heightened risk. The risk for mental health conditions and psychosocial problems among children and adolescents is exacerbated when they are exposed to poverty, violence, disease or humanitarian crises.

As a negative coping strategy, children may be forced to work to support their families, and girls and young women may be forced into early marriage.[3] Adolescent girls and young women are at greater risk of sexual assault, abduction, rape and murder. Boys face greater risks of recruitment by combatant forces and groups, and child labour. Protracted exposure to violence, abusive environments, separation from support networks and exclusion from education and learning, can endanger children's natural capacity to cope with adversity. The mental and psychosocial impact of abuse and violations can last a lifetime, if a child is not provided with safety and nurturing care when needed.

To prevent and respond to these protection risks, the child protection capacities of national and local authorities, must be strengthened. This must also be complemented by supporting

[3] UNICEF, 2020, Lost at home: the risks and challenges for internally displaced children and urgent actions needed to protect them.

and strengthening the protective capacity of families and communities for the protection of children affected by internal displacement, including through community and family-based, inclusive initiatives and programmes and mainstreaming child protection efforts across the humanitarian response.

Concretely this means:

- **Strengthening child protection systems** through building the capacity of the social service, workforce, strengthening case management to meet the needs of children, promoting birth registration, delivering mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS), and dismantling fender-related barriers for internally displaced girls and women.

  Somalia has increased the capacity of its social welfare workforce. With *UNICEF's support, six universities developed and rolled out a university curriculum on social work. As a result, 576 students (300 males and 276 females) completed their first year of social work university degree course in Hargeisa, Garowe and Mogadishu. These social workers are trained on prevention and response to all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse and how displacement impacts children's safety and access to rights and services.*

  *In **Pakistan**, where provinces have primary responsibility for child protection legislation and policy, the Balochistan Provincial Assembly enacted its Child Protection Bill in 2016 – the first of its kind in the country to be fully aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.*[4]

- **Investing in and training social and community workers, police, lawyers and teachers in child rights, protection, and MHPSS** (including Psychological First Aid) to equip them to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse, understand how displacement impacts children's rights, safety and equitable access to rights and services, and equip them with the skills they need to support children in distress. Training should include delivery of age-appropriate services and referrals, in alignment with IASC standards.

  *In **Iraq,** internally displaced children received increased protection support as a result of a comprehensive training package that strengthened the capacity of government social workers in child protection, especially case management and family tracing and reunification, through direct case supervision, peer-to-peer support and on the job-training and mentoring. Front-line workers, including health workers, community workers, teachers and camp managers were also trained to identify and refer vulnerable children to the services they need.*[5]

- **Keeping families together and addressing the legal and practical barriers that prevent or delay family reunification.** This calls for stronger policies that prevent children from being separated from their families and faster procedures to reunite them.

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[4] Strengthening Child Protection Systems: Evaluation of UNICEF Strategies and Programme Performance, 2018.
[5] UNICEF, Lost at home – the risks and challenges for internally displaced children and urgent actions needed to protect them

*In **South Sudan**, more than 5,000 children have been reunited with their families. This required multiple local and international partners work together to manage cases, locate family members and reunite them with their children. Each registered unaccompanied or separated children received case management support throughout the process.*[6]

a. **Protecting children, including those who are internally displaced, in the context of COVID-19. This means ensuring child protection services (preventing and responding to violence, exploitation, and abuse of children) are categorized as 'essential services'.**

UNICEF East Asia and Pacific developed and disseminated the 'Guidance on flexible work arrangements and childcare support for employers in the context of COVID-19'. The guidance included messages for caregivers on how to keep children safe and protected during COVID-19 and on how to support them with emotional reassurance and appropriate psychosocial care.

- **Promoting the well-being, resilience and participation of internally displaced children and their families, through strengthening outreach and community-based approaches.**

***Iraq** invested in a combination of mobile units and multi-purpose community-based protection services to monitor child protection risks and violations, and identify, refer and facilitate access to comprehensive services for internally displaced and host community children and their families. Multi-purpose community-based protection centres were established using pre-existing community structures to offer multiple services, including parenting skills programs, education and vocational training and other capacity building initiatives. All services are accessible to IDPs, host communities and refugees alike, without discrimination.*

- **Mitigating protection risks for internally displaced children, including those with disabilities.**

***In Yemen, the Executive Mine Action Centre and the Child Protection Sub Cluster,** developed inclusive and disability accessible, Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) materials to protect vulnerable groups impacted by landmines and explosive remnants of war. A package of materials and messages in sign language were developed and facilitators were trained. A successful pilot campaign was implemented in six governorates, reaching 22,400 children and young people, including 4,045 with hearing disabilities, in internal displacement camps (18 per cent), in host communities (82 per cent), and 18,311 children and young people from surrounding communities. As a result, children and young people began to play an important role as EORE advocates within their own communities, acting as agents of change to widely disseminate the messaging.*

2) Keep internally displaced children learning

Children's right to an education is well established under International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and Member States have an obligation to ensure children in

[6] UNICEF, 2019, African Action Agenda for Children on the Move, available at: link

internal displacement keep learning.[7] This right is further reinforced under Principle 23 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.[8] Yet, too many internally displaced children grow up deprived of an education, learning opportunities and the long-term benefits they afford. A lack of capacity and resources, persistent insecurity, deep-rooted social and political inequities and discrimination, are all significant barriers to education and learning in many displacement contexts – further exacerbating the global learning crisis.

Conflicts and disasters can place great strain on already inadequate and inaccessible education systems and infrastructure, in many cases making them ill-equipped to provide even basic education for displaced children.[9][10] Schools may also be occupied for other uses, like temporary shelters or by armed forces or groups,[11] or damaged in conflict, posing additional safety and protection threats for children. For example, in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, 148 schools were officially closed in the conflict affected areas leaving 1.2 million children in need of education. While Cameroon signed the Safer Schools declaration in October 2018, in the Far North, North West and South West regions of the country, schools continue to be used as bases for both the armed groups and government military.[12] In many IDP contexts, teachers may be unavailable, inadequately paid or lack the necessary training to teach children and youth who have lived through traumatic events.[13] Moreover, in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, schools may be temporarily closed making it harder for internally displaced children to access continuous education through traditional approaches – and they may face challenges accessing online contents (i.e. learning programs and platforms). Language barriers and disability may be additional barriers for children, as over-stretched education systems are often unable to meet their specific learning requirements, such as in minority or indigenous languages, or in accessible formats.

To respond to this issue, ensuring access to national education systems is crucial. Government funding and humanitarian assistance must be channelled into strengthening national education systems and addressing the practical barriers faced by displaced children in accessing formal education—primary and secondary, as well as alternative learning programmes that provide flexible pathways for children with disabilities. Innovations to facilitate distance learning using digital technologies, the internet, as well as radio and television are also critical.

Concretely this means:

- **Including internally displaced children in national education systems.** This means ensuring all internally displaced children, including those with disabilities, and from

[7] *CRC* Art 28; CIHL Rule 135; GC IV Art. 24(1); GC IV Art. 50(1).
[8] Principle 23, Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, available at: link
[9] UNICEF, and IDMC. "Equitable Access to Quality Education for Internally Displaced Children." New York; Geneva, 2019. http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/equitable-access-to-quality-education-for-internally-displaced-children.
[10] Mooney, Erin, and Colleen French. "Barriers and Bridges: Access to Education for Internally Displaced Children," n.d.
[11] UNICEF, and IDMC. "Equitable Access to Quality Education for Internally Displaced Children." New York; Geneva, 2019. http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/equitable-access-to-quality-education-for-internally-displaced-children.
[12] UN Resident Coordinator's briefing for Member States, GVA 2019.
[13] UNESCO. "Migration, Displacement and Education: Building Bridges, Not Walls." New York, 2018. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265866. 74.

ethnic minorities or marginalised groups, are accepted by all schools and alternative education programmes without discrimination, and that their learning takes place in accessible formats/facilities, in accordance with their rights as citizens or habitual residents.

***Somalia**, with support from partners, accelerated primary education across 13 regions of Puntland, Somaliland and South-Central Somalia, successfully including internally displaced children in national education services, from which they had previously been excluded. The project aimed to increase enrolment in formal primary schools and to provide alternative basic education by improving the quality of teaching and strengthening the management of education centres. More than 32,000 new learners gained access to primary education through the project.*[14]

***In South Sudan** in response to the longstanding civil war in 2019, 618,174 children and young people (260,822 girls) who were internally displaced and at risk of having their right to education denied, gained access to protective quality education services in pre-primary, primary, Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALP), and secondary school services.*

- **Strengthening education systems so they can provide high-quality inclusive learning opportunities for host community children, and absorb displaced children, catering to their specific needs.** This means addressing operational challenges such as teachers' pay, infrastructure issues, and developing inclusive curricula, methods and materials that help children overcome communication and cultural and physical barriers. Further, teachers should be prepared to: (a) address adversity and hardship (b) provide mental health and psychosocial support to displaced students, and (c) support inclusive education that addresses the learning needs of all children, regardless of language, disability and other aspects of diversity.

  *The **Ukrainian cities of Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kiev and Zaporizhzhia** host the largest numbers of the country's internally displaced persons, and their education facilities face shortages of classroom space and resources. In response, the government has created additional school places, moved state universities from conflict regions, simplified admission procedures, covered tuition costs and provided incentives, including loans and textbooks, for internally displaced children and youth.*

  *With support from UNICEF**, 1.4 million children affected by conflict or displaced in Syria**, were provided with improved access to education and quality of learning. Additionally, 250,000 children were reached in non-formal settings with education services, providing children with learning opportunities.*

  *With **UNICEF Yemen's support**, financial incentives are being provided to teachers and school-based staff in **Northern governorates** as well as to temporary teachers in **Southern governorates in Yemen**, and payment of remuneration to female teachers in rural areas. Provision of school grants are currently in the design phase.*

[14] OCHA (June 2019) 'Reducing Protracted Internal Displacement: A Snapshot of Successful Humanitarian-Development Initiatives' OCHA Policy and Studies Series Available at: link

Somalia strengthened Community Education Committees (CECs) to provide high-quality learning opportunities for host community children and absorb displaced children. *CECs are trained on school governance, community outreach and mobilization to equip them with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions, generate community support for providing education services to all girls and boys including displaced children, and foster collective local ownership of education provision. CECs have also been an effective avenue to encourage increased access to education for girls and support women in the community to participate in education planning and decision-making.*

Ukraine *increased kindergarten and day care places available to increase access to early childhood development and reduce tensions between IDPs and host communities over limited available spaces. The project initially foresaw the creation of 5,000 new kindergarten placements within the existing educational facilities and an additional 2,500 day-care seats through community-based mechanisms.*

- **Developing child-centred adaptation and resilience strategies for sudden and slow-onset crises to better address and respond to their adverse effects on education**. Sector plans need to take into account the risk of loss of life, infrastructure damage and displacement to ensure that disasters and emergencies disrupt education services as little as possible.

  Many Pacific island nations take climate change risk into account in their education plans. ***The Solomon Islands*** *published a policy statement and guidelines in 2011 with the aim of ensuring that students continue to have access to safe learning environments before, during and after emergencies, and that all schools identify temporary learning and teaching space.*[15]

- **Supporting national education systems to provide temporary alternative distance, online and home-based options for internally displaced children missing school.** This support should ensure children have continuous access to school and learning opportunities throughout a crisis such as COVID-19. To the extent possible, online and distance learning materials should be made available in IDPs local and ethnic languages.

  The Ministry of Education in CAR*, with UNICEF's support, is developing a phased plan to ensure continuity of education for internally displaced and host community children, while scaling-up the existing radio education programme to benefit children all over the country.*

3) Ensure equitable access to quality services for all children, without discrimination.

Internally displaced children and their families face a persistent lack of access to basic services – denying them their right to health, housing, a safe and clean environment and social protection. The problem stems from discrimination and stigmatization, lack of documentation - importantly birth registration details, financial barriers, inadequate information about available services and difficulty navigating the systems. *For example*, in Nigeria, while primary and secondary health

[15] UNICEF/IDMC, 2019, Equitable quality education for internally displaced children, p.10, available here: link

care services are often more accessible to internally displaced children in urban areas, compared with their rural counterparts, secondary health care is frequently unaffordable.[16] Reduced income or economic and financial purchasing power of internally displaced families can also be a significant barrier. And for some displaced children, access restrictions are further compounded by barriers based on age, gender or disability.

Providing equitable and inclusive services for internally displaced children and their communities is critical. Many governments are already taking steps to:

- **Address legal and practical barriers that prevent internally displaced children from accessing the national and local services they need.**

  *During 2019, with support from UNICEF, 4.7 million people in **the Syrian Arab Republic** were reached with improved and sustained access to safe water, and over 1.1 million received enhanced sanitation services. WASH in schools reached over 260,000 children, including children with disabilities, in 238 schools throughout the country.*

- **Ensuring all children, regardless of their displacement status, can access quality health care, including vaccinations, COVID-19 testing and treatment, and sexual and reproductive health services,** in host communities, and following return to their communities of origin. It is critical to take gender, age and disabilities into consideration.

  *Periods of ceasefire or "days of tranquillity" have been used to facilitate access to basic for children in conflict zones. During "days of tranquillity", UNICEF and its partners have been able to carry out successful National Immunization Days for polio eradication in **Somalia, DRC, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Afghanistan**, among others. Where political will exists, conflicts need not be an obstacle to ensuring all children's right to health.*

  *With UNICEF's support in **DRC**, interventions to strengthen infection, prevention and control (of COVID-19 and risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) amongst IDPs have been introduced where there has previously been no testing in IDP communities and IDPs have had limited access to health services or information.[17]*

- **Ensuring mental health and psychosocial support are integrated into policies on health or social services and children and caregivers have equitable access to quality services.** Existing services, especially community-led initiatives and peer support, should be built upon, ensuring effective engagement of children and adolescents, caregivers and community members in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of MHPSS programs to meet their unique needs. Ensuring caregivers' access to MHPSS is essential to improve their capacity to care for their children, especially during adversity and displacement.

  ***Municipalities in Honduras**, including **San Pedro Sula, Catacamas and Choloma** are supporting returned displaced children and other children at risk through care, psychosocial support and referral to psychologists when required. Many of these children*

[16] UNICEF/IDMC, 2019, Protecting and supporting internally displaced children in urban settings, available at: link
[17] UNICEF Overview of the Impact of COVID-19 on IDPs and in Peacekeeping Settings.

cannot go back to their communities of origin due to gang violence and discrimination, and as a result are internally displaced.[18]

*In **Afghanistan**, 100,000 primary caregivers in displaced communities received community-based MHPSS support, with help from UNICEF.*

- **Strengthening social safety nets**, including through the use of cash transfers to families with children.

  *To provide support to some of Yemen's poorest and most vulnerable families, **UNICEF Yemen's Emergency Cash Transfer (ECT) project** is delivering unconditional cash transfers to 1.5 million beneficiaries, impacting the lives of approximately 9 million people, in all of Yemen's 333 districts and 22 governorates. The ECT project is a social safety net project that makes use of the pre-crisis Social Welfare Fund list of beneficiaries, who are without assistance following the suspension of the Fund mainly due to escalation of the conflict.*

  *With support from UNICEF, **the Syrian Arab Republic** implements an innovative humanitarian cash transfer programme targeting children with disabilities. The programme combines cash transfers with case management services to address social and economic vulnerabilities. In January 2019, 40 per cent of the households receiving cash assistance reported that the assistance helped them meet the basic needs of their children. Other benefits of the programme include a decrease in negative coping strategies among beneficiary households; decreases in school dropout rates (by 68 percentage points); and high levels of satisfaction (98 per cent).*

- Expanding opportunities for **family income and youth employment**.

  ***Sierra Leone**, in partnership with UNDP and CAUSE Sierra Leone, has supported 5,000 young people to start their own businesses. This has been achieved through strengthening policy and coordination at the national level to improve youth employment and providing-basic support services, including mentoring for micro and small enterprises as well and career advisory services.*[19]

- **Promoting social cohesion** and facilitating peaceful conflict resolution.

  ***Kyrgyzstan,** with UNICEF's support, has implemented an Early Childhood Education (ECE) intervention in selected geographical areas to promote harmonious inter-ethnic dynamics and prevent conflict. It aims at directly changing children's, teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other towards more inclusive and tolerant attitudes, and targets parents with young children, providing them -particularly women- with the opportunity to allocate time differently. The programme is media-based and implemented through community-based kindergartens. Teachers are also trained to*

[18] UNICEF, 2020, Lost at home – the risks and challenges for internally displaced children and urgent actions needed to protect them.
[19] Ibid.

facilitate sessions with parents and community members on the importance of respecting diversity.

*With UNICEF's support, **Ukraine** implemented an anti-bullying campaign to address violence among peers and facilitate the integration of internally displaced children, who face a greater risk of being bullied. The campaign reached over 2.5 million children aged 13-17 and of those targeted, the number of children saying they would support victims increased by 51 per cent.*

*With support from UNICEF, **Somalia**, initiated the Upshift programme to respond to the social, economic and political exclusion that young people face. In 2019, the programme engaged 300 young people (50 per cent male and 50 per cent female) including in IDP camps in Borama, Burao, Hargeisa, Garowe, and Mogadishu. The programme promotes innovative thinking, helps young people reflect on the challenges they face and promotes their engagement and leadership to find lasting solutions.*

4) Empower internally displaced children and youth as critical partners to help shape solutions

The key issues faced by internally displaced children, adolescents and youth, as they themselves see them, must be prioritized. Children and adolescents have the right to express their views on matters affecting them, and to have these views be taken seriously. They must be offered the opportunity to be part of the solution. This means systematically including them in the decisions that affect them and addressing any pragmatic, ethical and sociocultural barriers to their meaningful participation, including barriers related to their gender, disability or other factors. Participation can support internally displaced children and youth to regain control over their lives, develops their skills and strengthens their sense of identity.[20] These efforts must be inclusive of efforts to engage a diverse group, ensuring for example, that the voices of married girls, young mothers, children with disabilities, and the many girls and boys who are generating income for their families are amplified.

UNICEF is committed to elevating the voices of internally displaced children and youth as partners at every step of the way. UNICEF's 2018 report, ***A Right to be Heard***, found that nearly 40 per cent of uprooted children aged 14–24 who participated in a poll said they received no help at all during their journey in search of a safe and a better future – not from family, not from friends, not from institutions. About 40 per cent said they travelled alone and nearly half reported that they did not see a doctor when they needed one.[21]

This data was captured with **U-Report – an innovative social messaging tool and data collection system** designed to improve citizen engagement, inform leaders, and foster positive change. To support IDPs – and the work of the High-Level Panel – U-Report could be used to capture the voices of children and youth in IDP contexts, to help inform more impactful solutions.

[20] Report of the Special Rapporteur, July 2019m, A/74/261, available at: link

[21] UNICEF, 2018, A Right to be Heard: Listening to Children and Young People on the Move, available at: link

Concretely this would mean:

- **Capturing existing data on IDP children, youth and their caregivers:** Looking through existing data to identify IDPs already in the U-Report on The Move database (A right to be heard data as well as other data from global and country UReport platforms);
- **Establishing a U-Report IDP youth reference group/expert group/sounding board:** identifying a group of U-Reporters to function as a reference group to support the High-Level Panel through continuous discussions and by providing insights based on their unique experience, knowledge and perspective. This would help ensure that the HLP adopts a 'child lens';
- **Running a global U-Report poll on IDP children and youth in summer 2020 (June or July):** to capture young IDP's voices from around the world. The poll could be implemented using platforms at global or country level. Country platforms (with IDP populations) include Nigeria, DRC, Cameroon, CAR, Ethiopia, Iraq, Pakistan, Ukraine. And we could also target countries with IDP populations but without a report country platform, e.g. in Colombia, Syria etc. (provided it is politically viable).

U-Report in Action: *Following two Level 4 cyclones in* ***Mozambique,*** *U-Report was used to reach out to affected areas to understand situation on the ground as experienced by youth. Within one week of the disasters, the poll was launched focusing on damage to housing, displacement, WASH and communication needs. Response rates were higher than average ranging from a 43 to 62 per cent completion rate. In collaboration with the U-Report Global team, flood-related support information and contacts of authorities was shared via the platform. In total the system was activated over 5,750 times.*

5. Improve data and evidence on internally displaced children and youth

Limited available data – internally displaced children go under the radar
Data on internally displaced children does exist but is limited, it is neither collected systematically nor consolidated. In 2017, only 20 per cent of the countries and territories with conflict related displacement data disaggregate data by age.[22] Because internally displaced populations are largely invisible in official statistics, the exact number of IDP children cannot be determined – nor can the many risks and challenges they face. Without this information, interventions cannot be appropriately responsive and these children's right to a fair and equal chance in life will be violated.

Disaggregation of data by age, sex and as well as other demographic and socio-economic characteristics like disability, education level, and whether or not they live with their parents is critical to understand the social texture and the diverse needs and concerns affecting sub-groups in the population. Such data improves our understanding of how internal displacement affects children and their families and allows countries and organizations to plan and implement solutions more effectively. These data are also necessary to monitor progress toward the child displacement relevant targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a call for countries to significantly increase reliable disaggregated data.

[22] UNICEF et al, A Call to Action: Protection children on the move starts with better data', UNICEF: New York; 2018.

Not only do these serious data gaps compound the grave risks associated with displacement, but they also have another consequence: countries are missing out on vital opportunities to invest in the future as these children grow up and become productive adults. Supporting children now sets the course for more successful economies and societies.

Investing in improved data collection efforts and availability lays the groundwork for evidence-based policies that better protect displaced children and position them as rights-holders. Only through these numbers can the full story of children in displacement be understood.

Concretely, this means:

- **Strengthening national data systems** and make better use of existing data. Data should be disaggregated at a minimum according to age and sex and preferably according other demographic and socio-economic indicators. This is especially important when decisions have to be made about equitable access and the severity of needs. There are often inadequate resources to meet the needs of all; and data is required to make fair, equitable choices. Without evidence there is scope for politicization of a response. This includes a consideration of host or communities near by IDP sites etc.

  Iraq *integrated Child Protection data in large-scale, country-wide existing data collection tools. These included the IOM-DTM (Displacement Tracking Matrix) and the Protection Monitoring system put in place by the Protection Cluster. Through integration of basic Child Protection metadata in the IOM-DTM system, Iraq was able to collect numbers on IDP children including patterns and trends in their population movements. Appropriate guidance on ethical considerations for data collection was also provided.*

  In ***Mongolia****, evidence generation on equity and children has been made a priority. As a result, the National Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (N-MODA) a baseline for monitoring government efforts to target child inequalities was set. In the same year, children's statistics were incorporated into the monitoring frameworks of the cabinet secretariat.[23] This approach to strengthening data systems for children, can be translated to IDP contexts.*

- **Ensuring safety and security during all stages of data collection and analysis:** collection of child protection data, especially Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) related data on grave violations, can be extremely sensitive during situations of conflict. The collection of data can pose a threat to those providing the information, those receiving the information and those mentioned in the information. It is extremely important those that are collecting child protection data are trained on all stages of data collection including data management and storage. Specific consideration needs to be given to MRM related data.

[23] Strengthening Child Protection Systems: Evaluation of UNICEF Strategies and Programme Performance, 2018.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Reinforcing international law and policy

As the primary duty bearers, national governments are responsible for protecting and providing assistance to internally displaced children and their communities. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most comprehensive statement of child rights ever produced and the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. The CRC sets international standards for the protection of all children's rights, including those who are internally displaced, and compels State parties to take action to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all children including to survival and development, education, the highest attainable standard of health, and to protection from violence, abuse and exploitation with the appropriate legal and social protections, without discrimination of any kind. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) also reinforce the rights established for all children in the CRC and set out additional specific protections. Further, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement encompass principles from various legally binding documents to protect the rights and freedoms of internally displaced persons during displacement, through provision of humanitarian assistance, and upon return.[24]

UNICEF calls on the High-Level Panel to highlight the importance of State Parties systematically including information about the situation of IDP children in their formal reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Respect for International Humanitarian Law plays a critical role in both prevention of internal displacement and protection of IDPs. One of the main causes of *forced* displacement in armed conflict remains, undoubtedly, violations of international humanitarian law. It is logical, therefore, that if these laws were better respected, internal displacement could to a large degree be prevented from happening in the first place. So better respect of IHL can contribute to reducing the scale of displacement, in addition to protecting those displaced. Secondly, IHL contributes to the protection of IDPS by maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of sites and settlements. Under IHL, camps qualify as civilian objects and are entitled to protection against direct attacks, unless and for such time as they, or parts of them, become military objectives. Since combatants, fighters and civilians who directly participate in hostilities may be subject to direct attack, their presence in the vicinity of or within camps presents a danger to the camps and their inhabitants.[25]

Finally, durable solutions – be it voluntary return, local integration or resettlement in another part of the country – are needed to end displacement. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, explicitly recognize the right of IDPs to return to their former homes, integrate at the location to which they were displaced, or resettle in another part of the country. Under Human Rights law, these durable solutions are derived from the right to freedom of movement and residence. Freedom of movement is fundamental for IDPs to have

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[24] Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998, available at: link

[25] ICRC Report on IHL and the challenges of contemporary armed conflict, p.41, available at: link; UNHCR-ICRC Operational Guidance on maintaining civilian and humanitarian character of sites and settlements, available at: link

access to livelihood, education for children and ascertain their futures including durable solutions.[26]

Addressing drivers of internal displacement for long-term solutions

Conflict and violence are key drivers of internal displacement for children and their families. And child-specific drivers of displacement, such as forced recruitment into armed groups, forces or gangs; child trafficking; female genital mutilation; child marriage; and domestic violence are often exacerbated in situations of warfare and disasters. Further, climate change will continue to affect children disproportionally, with around 500 million children living in areas with very high risk of flooding and nearly 160 million living in areas of extreme or high risk of drought.[27]

In countries around the globe, governments and their partners are working to address some of the root causes of displacement. Many of these efforts are linked to the implementation of international human rights international humanitarian law standards, and programmes and policies aimed at achieving the SDGs. Coordinating humanitarian, development, peace, climate change and DRR actors is critical to strengthen efforts to address the root causes of displacement and prepare communities to respond. Strengthening early preparedness is crucial, so that when a humanitarian crisis unfolds, there is timely and effective delivery of protection and assistance.

Addressing child-specific drivers of forced displacement, such as forced recruitment into armed groups or gangs, child trafficking, female genital mutilation, child marriage and family and domestic violence, and a range of human rights violations committed against minority or marginalised groups, as part of ongoing development programming and as preparedness measures is critical. Under IHL, children must not be recruited into armed forces or groups and must not be allowed to take part in hostilities (AP I Art. 77(2); AP II Art. 4(3); CIHL Rules 136 and 137). Using children under 15 to participate actively in hostilities is a war crime in international and non-international armed conflicts (ICC Statute Arts 8(2)(b)(xxvi) and 8(2)(e)(vii)). In addition, the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 2000, refers to the involvement of children in armed conflict.[28] Once released, children who had been recruited in IDP camps and were then released should primarily be treated as victims and not as terrorists by national security forces. Children formerly associated with armed forces and groups, should be provided every opportunity to reintegrate into a normal childhood through restorative services and support programmes. Any judicial processes must follow child justice frameworks that have been established.

Colombia's *"Protective Communities" project is being implemented at the border region with Ecuador in order to strengthen institutions', communities' and children's capabilities to prevent child recruitment in rural areas of the municipalities of Ipiales and Cumbal. The project has been funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund and is being implemented jointly with UNICEF, UN Women and UNHCR. In 2019, 6,553 boys, girls and adolescents, 493 parents and caregivers and 474 teachers participated in the project activities.*

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[26] Article 11, available at: link; Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Principles 28, 29, 30, available at: link
[27] UNICEF, 2015, Unless we act now – the impact of climate change on children, p.8, available at: link
[28] ICRC Fact sheet – Internally Displaced Persons and International Humanitarian Law, available at: link; Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Principle 13, available at: link

Nigeria *invested in and trained community-based volunteers deployed in the country's northeast to strengthen access to child protection services that prevent and address some of the key child protection drivers, enable access to education, boost birth registration, and support behaviour change-related activities among caregivers.*[29]

Focusing on solutions – building on what works

Solutions exist. We know what works – there are many examples of governments and partners already putting into place innovative initiatives for and with internally displaced children. By providing practical and doable solutions, the High-Level Panel can help states and their partners prevent unnecessary dangers and discrimination and support internally displaced children to thrive. It is critical for the panel to build on what already exists – for example, identifying where refugee education solutions can be adapted or expanded to contexts of internal displacement.

In ***Georgia****, the Birth Registry (BR) has become an essential tool for the Government to continue to inform and positively influence maternity care practices. With UNICEF support, quarterly perinatal reports from the BR became an institutionalized practice in the MCH Committee of the Ministry for Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoIDPOTLHSA), establishing a new mind-set about the use of BR data, increasing the role of the Committee and strengthening evidence-based policy and decision making on organization and quality of MCH services.*

Some national and local governments and their partners are already actively engaged in initiatives to support and protect internally displaced children. Although much has been done, there is an urgent need to do more. As the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement convenes in 2020 to address the global challenge of internal displacement, it has a unique opportunity to support the exchange of practices and lessons learned, build on and adapt existing models, galvanize political will and public attention – and support Member States to ensure principles – and practices – that provide a safe home, protection and equitable access to services for every internally displaced child are front and centre and translate into tangible impact in the lives of children the ground. Improved knowledge management and mechanisms to exchange reflections, practices and tools is also critical to capitalize on different countries' experiences.

Strengthening response management, coordination and accountability

- **Establish clear accountabilities between levels of government, UN agencies and other stakeholders** – ensure interagency and inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms are in place, allocate clear responsibilities across sectors, avoid gaps and reduce duplication, and that resources are there to fund these. IDP responses are often localized, so without localized coordination structures, empowered to make decisions, they are hindered significantly.
- **Support the coordination model/response plan in place** to ensure that the needs of children and adolescents are adequately captured in interagency/sector assessments, strategies and programmes. Sensitivity to age, gender and disability are extremely important.

[29] UNICEF, 2020, Lost at home: the risks and challenges for internally displaced children and urgent actions needed to protect them.

- **Work with partners to harmonize approaches, avoid gaps and reduce duplications. Ensure complementarities** between the cluster system and other coordination models, including the Refugee Coordination Model and the Camp Coordination and Camp Management approach, and government systems, where they exist.
- **Focus on the local level.** Local governments are uniquely placed to protect the rights of displaced children and are often responsible for meeting the immediate needs of children and families, including reception, safety, housing, education, healthcare and protection. The protection and successful integration of internally displaced children therefore depends on local leadership and municipal actions. It is critical to include IPDs in local service delivery and monitoring activities (e.g. education responses and community participation in school management).
- **Promote an integrated approach** that addresses exclusion on multiple grounds, including on the basis of displacement status, gender, age, disability and other. Only an integrated approach will comprehensively address these multiple and intersecting dimensions of exclusion.

RESOURCES

- Lost at home – the risks and challenges for internally displaced children and the urgent actions needed to protect them
- Equitable quality education for internally displaced children
- Supporting and protecting internally displaced children in urban settings
- African Action Agenda for Children Uprooted