



Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts
Submission to the High Commissioner's Dialogue Opening Session
Wednesday 21st October 2020

This submission is made by the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts - a multi-stakeholder partnership bringing together over 30 civil society, trade union, UN and philanthropic organisations around a shared agenda - to create a continuum of care, protection and support for refugee and migrant children and to ensure that children's rights are at the heart of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. Many of our members are actively participating in the High Commissioner's Dialogue.

The current COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the daily lives and futures of girls and boys all over the world, with refugee and internally displaced children at heightened risk of being negatively impacted. Despite the grave effects on children, they are being deprioritised in current responses to COVID-19.

The pandemic has reduced children's safe and adequate access to school, health, nutritious food, immunisations, and livelihoods. It has put children at greater risk of violence and exploitation. It is exacerbating gender-based inequalities and violence. It has resulted in more children under 5 suffering from acute malnutrition. Progress in reducing child mortality is under threat. As children's protection needs have increased, access to protection has decreased. Border closures and service restrictions are limiting peoples' access to international protection and asylum.

All of this is affecting children's lives and wellbeing now and it will undoubtedly affect their futures in ways we can only begin to imagine.

It is not too late to act, but it is imperative that governments and the international community take decisive and collaborative action now to limit and reverse these effects for all children, including migrant, refugee, internally displaced and stateless children.

Governments have shown during this pandemic that rapid change to increase the protection of people in vulnerable situations is possible. We have seen innovative ways of responding to the health crisis, including initiatives led by refugees. And international frameworks exist that can help ensure that responses to the pandemic are child-focused and in line with the child's best interests and the rights of the child.

Working with children, partners and affected communities, governments must immediately prioritise the rights and needs of all children to respond to the critical challenges faced by children who are forcibly displaced or stateless in particular in terms of access to education, adequate protection and access to asylum. Governments must ensure that all children have safe and adequate access to: 1) education, 2) protection, and 3) asylum and sustainable solutions in children's best interests. Responses must be sensitive to the needs of the individual child, age, and gender.

In doing so, we urge all stakeholders to involve children. This means consulting with and ensuring the full participation of children from refugee and host communities and of diverse backgrounds, gender, and abilities to ensure their specific needs and recommendations are addressed in response plans.

The current global health crisis has further demonstrated the importance of cooperation and global and regional partnerships to respond to refugee situations and support people seeking international protection. The Global Compact on Refugees can help in responding effectively and safely to the pandemic for children. It outlines a practical way forward to respond to refugee situations through cooperation and responsibility-sharing and includes specific provisions for children who represent more than half of all refugees in the world. It outlines how to considerably improve cooperation and partnerships and provide a continuum of protection, care and access to services for refugee children. It must be implemented hand in hand with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to ensure no children fall between the two.

The Initiative and its members are committed to support States and other stakeholders to respond to key challenges affecting refugee and migrant children and look forward to the opportunity to support action-oriented discussions during the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges.

We have recently published a collection of child-focused work in line with the GCR and will be organizing a virtual meeting with different stakeholders to come together and discuss how best to implement the important measures outlined in the GCR which will make a difference for children during this pandemic and beyond. We hope this will be the start of a discussion that could be taken forward by interested parties.

BRING THE #REFUGEECOMPACT TO LIFE



Read the new publication about child-focused work focusing on:

- Child protection
- Education
- Access to services
- Building skills
- Empowerment and participation
- Sustainable solutions

www.childrenonthemove.org

For further information about the Initiative, including a list of members, please go to www.childrenonthemove.org.

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