

**High Commissioner's Dialogue
on Protection Challenges:
Protection and Resilience during Pandemics**

UNICEF written statement

Resilience and inclusion



Including refugee children into national and local services is the most efficient and effective strategy to fulfil their rights, integrate them in the local host communities and build their resilience.

The needs of refugee children are often addressed through parallel services or systems, creating duplication, inefficiencies and high costs. Strengthening and supporting existing national systems and services of refugee hosting countries to enable them to also address the needs of refugee children is cheaper, more efficient, advances the integration of refugee children in host communities and creates a harmonized response to the needs of all children. Inclusion matters at every phase of a child's life and starts at birth with access to birth registration, health care, early childhood development, primary and secondary education, WASH services, child protection systems and social safety nets. Inclusion in services will contribute to social cohesion and combat xenophobia and discrimination against refugee children and their families.

As a dual mandated agency that is providing both development and humanitarian support, UNICEF is uniquely positioned to support the inclusion of refugee children in national systems and to help build their resilience. UNICEF supports Governments to strengthen their national education, health, child protection, and WASH systems to provide quality services to both host community and refugee children. UNICEF also supports Governments to ensure national legal frameworks, child-related policies, development plans, preparedness plans and response plans are inclusive of refugee children.

UNHCR-UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children

At the Global Refugee Forum, UNICEF pledged to advance the inclusion of refugee children in national systems and services. To put this pledge in practice, UNICEF and UNHCR have adopted a transformative and innovative "Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children". This Blueprint

reshapes the way in which UNICEF and UNHCR collaborate and aims at delivering measurably more effective and efficient response for refugee children, their families *and* the communities that host them. The Blueprint focusses on including refugee children in national education, WASH and child protection systems and is currently being rolled out in eleven countries, which are home to more than 2 million refugee children, representing 20 percent of the world's refugee population, before being rolled out globally as from 2022. This new and transformative approach towards UNICEF and UNHCR's collaboration for refugee children will not only help to realize the commitments set out in the Global Compact for Refugees but also accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and contribute to the United Nations reform.

As vulnerable groups, including refugee children, are disproportionately affected by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has never been a more important time to support countries with inclusive emergency responses and sustainable early recovery. Through the Blueprint, UNICEF and UNHCR have committed to urgent action, to place refugee children and their families, as well as the communities that host them, at the forefront of our preparedness, prevention and response to COVID-19.

The country-level plans to implement the Blueprint ensure the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugee children are mitigated. Joint UNICEF-UNHCR water and sanitation programs in refugee settings and host communities include a focus on handwashing and the provision of hygiene kits to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. As many schools are closed due to the pandemic, UNHCR and UNICEF country offices collaborate to explore virtual learning through e-learning platforms. Violence against children has increased during the COVID-19 crisis and UNICEF and UNHCR are jointly advocating to address this and other child protection concerns. Finally, UNHCR and UNICEF country teams jointly advocate to ensure that national COVID-19 response and early recovery plans are inclusive of all children, regardless of their status.

[More information on the UNICEF-UNHCR Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children?](#)

[Visit our webpage](#)

UNICEF calls upon Member States to include refugee children in their national and local systems and provide them with access to health, education, WASH, protection and other essential services. Refugee children should also be included in all preparedness, response, and mitigation efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.