Child Protection
420 million children live in countries affected by violent conflict.

Millions of children suffer violations of their rights, including violence, trafficking, sexual exploitation, child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Child protection aims to prevent and respond to such abuse, especially for those most vulnerable: children on the move, children living on their own, and children living in areas affected by conflict or natural disasters.

Despite advances in child protection, around 237 million children under five do not have a birth certificate. At least 200 million girls and women have been subjected to FGM/C, an estimated 650 million were married before their 18th birthday, and every year an estimated 1 billion children experience some form of emotional, physical or sexual violence.

Economic and social inequities often underpin such violations, which are fueled by social norms that condone violence. Without effective social protection and judicial systems, and evidence-based policies to protect children, harmful practices remain in place. Victims find themselves without means to report their situations, hold perpetrators accountable, or gain access to support services. These problems require solutions that address systemic and social drivers of protection issues.

UNICEF in Action
UNICEF protects children around the world from violence, exploitation and abuse, enabling them to lead healthy and productive lives. UNICEF identifies child-protection risks and assists governments with budgetary policies and child-protection legislation. UNICEF works in the areas of juvenile justice, support for unaccompanied and separated children, discriminatory practices, birth registration, trafficking and child-labor prevention. Through direct partnerships with social welfare ministries, UNICEF strengthens reporting systems, through which violence, exploitation and abuse can begin to be addressed.

UNICEF is harnessing data to learn the drivers of violence in order to create effective policies and programs. At the country level, UNICEF
Humanitarian aid alone is not enough. Children need peace and protection at all times.
— UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore

works with national and community-based leaders to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, exploitation by armed groups, and violence in the home and in schools. In 2013, UNICEF launched the End Violence Against Children Initiative, which builds political will and expands the capacity of governments and partners to end violence against children. As of 2018, 20 countries are working in global partnership to end this violence. Convening governments, UN agencies, civil society, and faith-based, private-sector, and NGO actors, the partnership is drawing on lessons learned and bringing successful initiatives to scale.

Ensuring the protection and safety of migrant children is a core part of UNICEF’s child protection strategy. In the Dominican Republic, in 2019, UNICEF reunited 330 migrant children with their families who had been separated along their migration routes. Workshops were also held at border points for law enforcement to learn skills for prioritizing the best interests of migrating children who have often experienced harrowing and traumatic journeys.

Working with local community leaders and families is critical to addressing harmful attitudes, customs and practices, such as FGM/C and child marriage. In several West African countries, UNICEF is working with governments and NGO partners to combat FGM/C. As a result of informing communities about risks to human rights and health, and fostering dialogue around traditional practices, the prevalence of FGM/C has decreased by 50% within a ten-year span.

Some 420 million children live in countries affected by violent conflict. Nearly 69 million people have been uprooted from their homes, driven out by war and conflict, poverty and climate change. UNICEF is on the ground before, during and after emergencies to protect children in times of natural disaster and human-caused crises. In humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF sets up child-friendly spaces to give children a safe space to rest, play, learn and receive psychosocial support.

**2019 UNICEF Child-Protection Snapshot**

In 2019, UNICEF:

- Supported interventions to provide health, social work or justice and law enforcement services to 2.7 million children who experienced violence.

- Recorded the exit or release of nearly 13,200 children (18 percent girls) from armed forces or armed groups in 17 countries across six regions.

- Increased the number of birth registrations by 35 percent compared with 2018.

- Reached 4.37 million girls and boys in 22 countries affected by landmines and other explosive weapons with relevant prevention and survivor assistance interventions.

- Provided more than 158,000 girls and women with prevention and protection services against female genital mutilation.

- Provided more than 5.7 million adolescent girls with prevention and care interventions to thwart child marriage.

- Overall, reached millions of children in humanitarian situations in 74 countries with protection services.

To learn more, visit [unicefusa.org](http://unicefusa.org)