



children first.

Child Protection

535 million children — nearly 1 in 4 — live in countries affected by violent conflict or disaster.

Millions of children experience the worst kinds of rights violations, including violence, trafficking, sexual exploitation, child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Child protection is the prevention and response to such abuse. This includes reaching the most vulnerable, such as children on the move, those living without family, on the streets, in conflict settings, or natural disasters.

Violations of children's rights to protection occur in every country and transcend ethnic and economic lines. Every seven minutes an adolescent is killed by an act of violence. If current rates prevail, more than 150 million additional girls will marry before their 18th birthday and 68 million more girls will undergo female genital mutilation (FGM) by 2030. More than 650 million children under the age of 16 never had their births registered, which puts them at risk of missing out on health care and education, and makes them vulnerable to exploitation, child labor and trafficking.

Economic and social inequities often underpin such violations, which are in turn fueled by social norms that condone violence. Without effective social protection and judicial systems, and evidence-based policies to protect children, harmful practices proliferate. Victims find themselves without means to report their situations, hold perpetrators accountable, or gain access to support services.

These problems call for solutions that address the systemic and social drivers of protection issues, so that government leaders, communities, schools and families can take meaningful protective action.



The parents of Madhalsi Sarkar, 17, unaware of India's child marriage act, tried to marry her to a 27-year-old man, but the marriage was prevented thanks to a UNICEF-supported help line.

© UNICEF/UNI112032/SLEZIC

About UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) works in more than 190 countries and territories to put children first. UNICEF has helped save more children's lives than any other humanitarian organization by providing health care and immunizations, clean water and sanitation, nutrition, education, emergency relief and more. UNICEF USA supports UNICEF's work through fundraising, advocacy and education in the United States. Together, we are working toward the day when no children die from preventable causes and every child has a safe and healthy childhood.

For more information, visit unicefusa.org.

UNICEF in Action

UNICEF aims to protect children around the world from violence, exploitation and abuse so that they can lead healthy and productive lives. To achieve this mission, UNICEF identifies child protection risks and gaps, assisting governments on budgetary policies and legislation to protect children: juvenile justice, support for unaccompanied and separated children, discriminatory practices, birth registration, trafficking and child labor prevention. Working in direct partnership with

social welfare ministries, UNICEF strengthens systems to report cases of violence, exploitation and abuse, and protect vulnerable children.

UNICEF is harnessing data to illuminate the drivers of violence and inform effective policies and programs. At the country level, UNICEF 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. The initiative aims to build political will, accelerate action to end violence at the country level, and build the capacity of governments and partners to work together in ending violence against children. As of 2018, 20 countries are working under a global partnership to end violence. Convening governments, UN agencies, civil society, faith-based, private-sector, and NGO actors, the partnership is drawing on lessons learned and bringing successful initiatives to scale.

Empowering youth as agents of change is a core component of UNICEF's approach. For example, in Liberia, UNICEF heard that students were being exploited for sex in return for grades. In just days, UNICEF polled more than 60,000 youth through a free, open-source SMS system called U-Report, and found that 86 percent of children said sexual exploitation was a problem in schools. Using this evidence, UNICEF quickly set up a legislative task force to create a hotline to report abuse — something that might otherwise have taken years to establish through traditional evidence gathering.

Working with local community leaders and families is critical to addressing harmful attitudes, customs and practices, such as FGM/C and child marriage. For example, in several West African countries, UNICEF is working with governments and NGO partners to combat FGM/C by informing communities about human rights and health risks, and fostering community dialogues about traditional practices. In just ten years, the prevalence of FGM/C dropped by half in communities engaged in the program.

Some 535 million children live in countries affected by violent conflict or disaster — from Syria to Nigeria and beyond. Nearly 65 million people have been uprooted from their homes,

driven by war and conflict, poverty and climate change. UNICEF is on the ground before, during and after emergencies to stem the protection risks children face in times of natural disaster and man-made crises. In humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF sets up child-friendly spaces to give children a safe space to rest, play, learn and receive psychosocial support. In 2017, UNICEF responded to 337 emergencies in 102 countries, reaching 3.5 million girls and boys with psychosocial support. UNICEF also works to release children from armed groups and provide them medical support, counseling and education to help them reintegrate into their communities.

2017 UNICEF Child-Protection Snapshot

In 2017, UNICEF:

- Spent nearly \$690 million on child protection programs, with 790 child protection staff in 119 countries.
- Since 2014, 25 million girls and boys involved in child labor were reached by one or more UNICEF-supported interventions.
- Helped over 24 million people in almost 9,000 communities make public declarations to abandon FGM since 2014.
- Helped more than 16 million children to have their births registered in 58 countries.
- Reached more than 5.9 million children with mine-risk education.
- Reached nearly 870,000 girls and women at risk or affected by FGM with services.
- Helped about 36,000 unaccompanied or separated children receive care, reuniting 19,000 children with their families or caregivers.
- Assisted in the release of 12,000 children from armed forces and groups and then reintegrated them with their families or communities.
- Reached 3.5 million girls and boys with psychosocial support in humanitarian emergencies. ●

Humanitarian aid alone is not enough. Children need peace and protection at all times.

— UNICEF Executive Director, Henrietta Fore