



children first.

Child Protection

535 million children 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. Almost 1 billion children are subject to physical punishment by caregivers on a regular basis. About 120 million girls have experienced forced sexual acts; 200 million girls/women have been subjected to FGM/C; and some 700 million women were married before the age of 18. Some 230 million children under age five have 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 analyze the systemic and social drivers of protection issues, so that government leaders, communities, schools and families can take meaningful protective action.



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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. By mid-2016, ten countries were 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 50 million children 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 2016, UNICEF responded to 344 emergencies in 108 countries, reaching 3 million children 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.

2016 UNICEF Child-Protection Snapshot

In 2016, UNICEF:

- Spent \$606 million on child protection programs, with 765 child protection staff in 127 countries.
- Prevented or withdrew more than 7.5 million children from child labor in 54 countries.
- Helped over 8.5 million people in over 2,900 communities across 16 countries commit to the abandonment of FGM.
- Helped more than 12 million children to have their births registered in 54 countries.
- Provided mine-risk education to 4 million children in 20 countries.
- Reached more than 3.6 million children and adolescents with gender-based violence prevention programs.
- Helped about 33,000 unaccompanied or separated children receive care, reuniting 22,000 children with their families or caregivers.
- Reached approximately 13 million people in 17 countries with messages about online sexual exploitation.
- Reached over 3 million girls and boys with psychosocial support in humanitarian emergencies. ●

Our world has become more chaotic and brutal than at any time since the Second World War. And no part of humanity pays a dearer cost for these failures than children.

— UNICEF Executive Director, Anthony Lake