



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



Protecting Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Children: What do we know?

**UNHCR's child protection data from
2015-2021**





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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

Every year, millions of children are affected by forced displacement and statelessness around the world. Data on the number of affected children, the risks that these children are exposed to, the type of child protection interventions undertaken, along with the results they achieve, form the cornerstones of appropriate responses for UNHCR. The objective of the analysis was to determine trends, achievements and challenges within UNHCR's child protection programming to better understand the evolution of risks to the children that UNHCR works with and for¹, the interventions that the organization implements to respond to these, and the achievements and challenges that impact on its work on child protection.

It has never been more important to enhance the knowledge of the child protection risks faced by the children that UNHCR works with and the effectiveness of responses. Global forced displacement has seen a significant increase over the past few years, from 63.3 million people in 2015 to 89.3 million by the end of 2021². UNHCR estimates that in 2021 at least four out of 10 forcibly displaced and stateless people globally were children, living in highly diverse settings and with dramatically different prospects for the immediate and longer-term future. The number of forcibly displaced children reached an estimated 36.5 million in 2021, meaning that children constituted approximately 41 per cent of forcibly displaced people. Depending on the context, children constituted from 40 per cent to more than 60 per cent of the people that UNHCR works with.

This report provides an overview of UNHCR's data related to child protection from 2015 to 2021, providing a consolidated overview of the number of to the children that UNHCR works with, the child protection risks they face, programmes implemented by UNHCR, results achieved and challenges facing UNHCR and its partners in protecting forcibly displaced and stateless children.

In 2021, there were an estimated 36.5 million forcibly displaced children, including **10.4 million refugees and asylum-seekers**, and **23 million internally displaced people (IDPs)**.

In UNHCR's operations where age-disaggregated data is available, an estimated 40 to 60 per cent of the people that UNHCR works with and for are children. **Children make up approximately 42 per cent** of refugees and asylum-seekers, 45 per cent of IDPs, and 45 per cent of stateless people.

Overall, UNHCR estimated that children make up 41 per cent of forcibly displaced people, which include asylum-seekers, refugees (both those under the mandate of UNHCR and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), other people in need of international protection, and IDPs.

Children affected by crises are frequently more vulnerable to various forms of abuse, separation from their families and caregivers, neglect, violence, exploitation, trafficking or recruitment by armed actors

¹ As of 2022, the terminology "People/Children of concern to UNHCR" has been updated to "People/Children that UNHCR works with and for". Hereafter referred to as "People/Children that UNHCR works with" for the purposes of this report.

² As of mid-2022, the number of forcibly displaced people is estimated to have increased by more than 15 per cent to 103 million. Reported figures in the Refugee Data Finder from UNHCR operations where age-disaggregated demographic data is available.

or groups. Children are likewise affected by statelessness or live in stateless-like situations, among other reasons, due to lack of access to birth registration procedures and documentation, as well as gaps in or discriminatory nationality laws.

The protection of children has been a core part of UNHCR's mandate since its establishment in 1950, and a number of key policy developments have occurred over this time including the adoption of UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion 107 on Children at Risk in 2007.³ In 2012, UNHCR adopted the Framework for the Protection of Children, which was an expression of the organization's commitment to the protection of children and defined UNHCR's role in the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless children as responding to children's specific needs and the risks they face, including protecting and advocating against all forms of discrimination; preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation; ensuring immediate access to appropriate services; and ensuring durable solutions in the child's best interests.⁴ Depending on the operational context, UNHCR child protection interventions span a wide range of programmatic activities from advocacy and technical support to community engagement and service delivery.

PURPOSE AND USE

The report is intended to inform programming, advocacy and communication on child protection. The report targets an internal and external audience of UNHCR and partners' staff across a variety of functions related to child protection. This includes senior managers with overall responsibility for country operations, for overall protection programming as well as staff responsible for child protection activities.

The report addresses several key questions for child protection in UNHCR:

- who are the children that UNHCR works with and for?
- what child protection risks are forcibly displaced and stateless children exposed to?
- what child protection interventions is UNHCR implementing to address these risks?
- how is UNHCR resourcing child protection programming?
- what are the challenges?

This report complements several other important UNHCR initiatives relevant to child protection. First, UNHCR commissioned an external evaluation⁵ of its child protection programming, which was finalized at the end of 2021. The purpose of the evaluation was to review its child protection

3 2007 ExCom conclusion <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/conclusion-children-risk> and 1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees <https://www.unhcr.org/media/28185>.

4 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2012). A Framework for the Protection of Children Geneva <https://www.unhcr.org/media/31720>.

5 Available from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/evaluation-unhcrs-child-protection-programming-2017-2019>.

leadership role, strategies and programme performance. In addition, a child protection audit⁶ was undertaken in 2021. Both of these processes are being used to inform the strategic direction of child protection for UNHCR. The findings of the initial analysis in this report served as one of the inputs to the evaluation and the child protection audit.

Second, building on the evaluation and audit, UNHCR is developing a new policy on child protection that will build on the experiences of the past several years, the findings of the evaluation and audit and the data presented in this report. The development of the policy is an opportunity to revise the objectives of UNHCR's child protection interventions and set benchmarks for performance. This report will provide a baseline against which the policy and related benchmarks can be formulated and measured.

Finally, in parallel with these initiatives, UNHCR has also revised its results-based management (RBM) framework. While this revision goes significantly beyond child protection, the analysis of child protection data in UNHCR has informed the formulation of new indicators for child protection in UNHCR as well as the ongoing monitoring and reporting of results on child protection through the results management framework included in the COMPASS platform.⁷

This report will also inform the development of inter-agency initiatives on child protection and provide UNHCR and partners with data to inform programming priorities. By increasing transparency through the systematic review of child protection programmes, UNHCR contributes to the evidence base of what is known, what has been done and what works in child protection for the children that UNHCR works with.

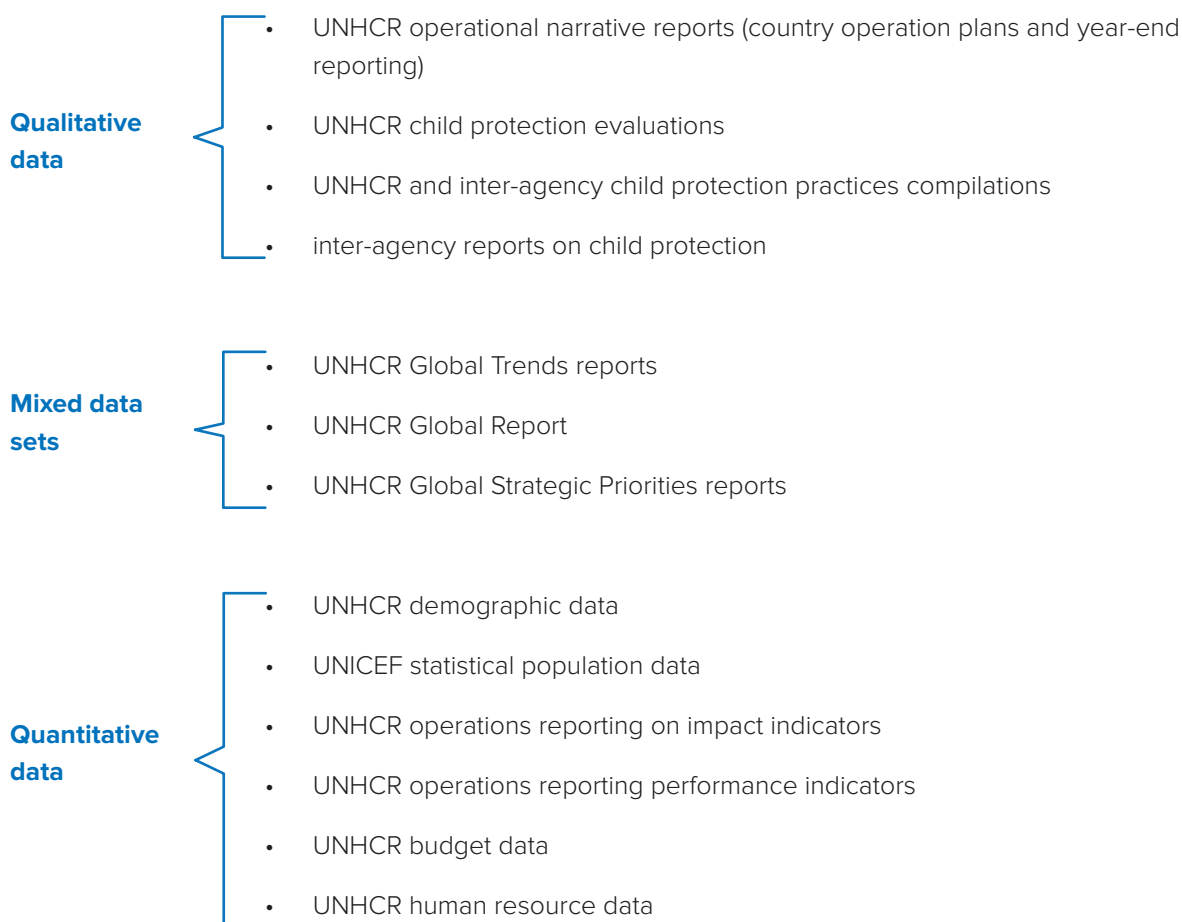
6 Available from <https://oios.un.org/fr/file/9276/download?token=t4-wK-Ds>.

7 COMPASS is UNHCR's new planning, budgeting, and monitoring system supporting the transition from annual planning to multi-year planning informing evidence-based decision-making.



METHODOLOGY

The analysis consisted of a desk review of qualitative and quantitative data from UNHCR relevant to child protection covering the period from 2015 to 2021. Data was mainly drawn from routine UNHCR reporting systems, including the registration and child protection case management system for people that UNHCR works with, and UNHCR's results-based programme management systems (see below). In some instances, internal data was complemented by data from other partners such as UNICEF. The desk review examined data derived from the following sources:⁸



Qualitative data on risks, needs, interventions and challenges from more than 1,100 annual narrative reports⁹ from 124 countries and operations covering the seven years from 2015 to 2021 was analysed¹⁰. The analysis was informed by analytical frameworks¹¹ that outlined areas of interest

⁸ See annex II for a complete list of quantitative and qualitative data that was reviewed and data sources.

⁹ The reports were drawn from Global Focus Insight, UNHCR's main operational reporting platform from 2015-2021. FOCUS was replaced by the COMPASS platform in 2022.

¹⁰ Throughout the report the proportion of operations reporting on a given risk, intervention or challenge is listed in absolute terms, and refers to a given risk, intervention or challenge being listed at least once throughout the 2015-2021 period.

¹¹ See annex I's and II's analytical frameworks for child protection risks and interventions.

(information needs) and ensured consistency in the organization and tagging of data across data sources and data sets for data from 2015 to 2021.

In the context of strategic planning and reporting, UNHCR operational narrative reports outline the operational plan and priorities at the beginning of the year (Country Operational Plans) and the results achieved by the end of the year (End Year Report). These plans and reports offer insight into the operational context and key issues each operation is addressing, as well as the achievements beyond what is captured in RBM indicator reporting. There is a lack of consistency in how reporting is done between operations and over time in a considerable number of operational narrative reports which therefore make comparisons over time and between operations challenging, as detailed in the data limitation section below.

Due to the length of the period under review, analytical frameworks and methodologies have been continually updated while ensuring data comparability. While the qualitative nature of data related to risks, interventions and challenges has not made it possible to determine the extent or impact of a given risk, intervention or challenge, analysis across operations and over time provides clear trends in the reported risks, interventions and challenges.

The volume of data on child protection provides significant potential for analysing and monitoring needs and responses. However, the regular and strategic use of this data is limited by a number of factors related to the coverage of data, the completeness of the data, the interoperability of the data sets and the accessibility of the data (see below). In order to address these gaps and limitations, this report analyses data across operations over an extended period of time and collates data from multiple sources using systematic data analysis frameworks.

Finally, key interagency data on child protection generally – particularly prevalence data from [UNICEF](#) – and interagency data on children on the move from the [International Data Alliance for Children on the Move](#) was reviewed. This data is included to complement the UNHCR data presented in this report where relevant.



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DATA AVAILABILITY AND LIMITATIONS

This section provides an overview the data used for this report, including any relevant limitations.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Age-disaggregated demographic data is fundamental for gaining an overview of numbers of children that UNHCR works with. UNHCR's [Refugee Data Finder](#) contains information about populations that UNHCR works with, including forcibly displaced populations, such as refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people, and stateless people. The database also reflects data related to the different types of solutions for displaced populations such as repatriation or resettlement.¹² UNHCR compiles data globally on the combined sex- and age-distribution of the populations under its mandate at the end of each year.

The availability of demographic data varies greatly by population group and by country of displacement. Statistical modelling can be used to impute the sex and age-distribution for missing demographic data for these populations, helping to fill these data gaps with estimates. Part of the reason for the lack of age disaggregated data relates to differences in UNHCR's role in specific contexts. Where UNHCR is providing a refugee response¹³ (either directly or through implementing partners), it will always collect and maintain data on the people it assists. ProGres v4 is deployed to 126 UNHCR operations¹⁴ and sex and age are mandatory fields for all individual records in the system.¹⁵ In other contexts where UNHCR plays less of a role in operational delivery, it is more likely to rely on secondary sources for data about affected populations, which may or may not be disaggregated by age and sex and/or status. If it is available, for example from governments or other actors, age-disaggregated data may or may not be shared or made public at a level of detail that is useful for UNHCR data analysis and programming.

REGISTRATION AND CHILD PROTECTION CASE MANAGEMENT DATA

Identification and Registration are the first two steps in ensuring the protection of people fleeing their countries. Registration is a key tool to know the identity of people arriving as well as overall numbers and profiles of arrivals. Registration is also a critical first step in conferring legal status and ensuring access to protection and assistance. Registration enables early identification of people with specific needs, including children, and facilitates referral to relevant services. PRIMES¹⁶ – UNHCR 's Population Registration and Identity Management Eco-System – is an enabler for registration, case-management (including child protection), assistance (cash and in-kind), and data management. Data in proGres pertains mainly to refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as, in few cases, IDPs assisted by UNHCR and our partners.

12 <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>

13 ProGres v4 is primarily used in refugee operations. As of 2022, the system has also been deployed for the IDP response in Ukraine.

14 As of September 2022

15 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2022). Advancing Participation and Inclusion. Age, Gender, and Diversity Accountability Report 2021.

16 [UNHCR – Guidance on Registration and Identity Management](#)

The current version of proGres includes a Child Protection Module that can be used for case management in child protection, and sex and age are mandatory fields for all individual records in the system. Roll out of proGres v4 is ongoing.¹⁷ Data available from proGres v4 at the global level therefore does not comprehensively represent all refugee and asylum seeker data. Moreover, the use of the child protection case management module is optional, and as of mid-2022 was in use in 46 refugee operations.¹⁸ Any data contained in the database will therefore be limited to operations where it is rolled out and utilised, and to what extent the module is utilised by those operations.

UNHCR PROGRAMME INDICATORS

Between 2015-2021, UNHCR's results framework and monitoring consisted of a number of pre-determined indicators against which operations reported progress on an annual basis.¹⁹ Reporting from operations on impact and performance indicators related to child protection is key to measuring performance against benchmarks. The selection of indicators, including indicators on child protection, during this period was non-mandatory resulting in significant variation in which indicators were reported against by operations. Use of both performance and impact indicators on child protection decreased over time. In 2015, one-third of the performance indicators and 38 per cent of impact indicators had less than 10 operations reporting against them. In 2021, 60 per cent of performance indicators had less than 10 operations reporting against them, while the total number of reports on impact indicators decreased by 46 per cent, from 412 in 2015 to 223 by 2021.

This reduces the degree to which indicator reporting can be reliably used to track performance across multiple countries or regions and suggests a need to both streamline the available indicators as well as reinforce reporting on child protection results. When planning within the new RBM system COMPASS, which largely leaves to operation the formulation of outcome and output indicators, it is essential that where operations are implementing similar types of interventions, that comparable indicators are consistently used to allow for tracking of results across operations and regions, and that these indicators correspond to the most common types of interventions implemented by UNHCR (see below).

RESOURCE ALLOCATION DATA

Information on funding and staffing levels dedicated to child protection within UNHCR provides an important overview of what resources are required and available to the organisation to respond to risks to the children that UNHCR works with. By examining funding needs in comparison to actual budget allocations, and comparing with overall funding needs and budget allocations in the organisation, it can also provide an indication of whether resources are sufficient to meet the identified needs, and the degree to which child protection is prioritised. Funding²⁰ and staffing data from 2015-2021 was contained in the UNHCR Managing Systems, Resources and People (MSRP). Within MSRP, it is possible to track the budgetary requirements, funding allocated, and expenditure under child protection throughout the year. The system does, however, not allow for financial tracking of child protection activities that may be charged under other technical areas.

¹⁷ See the [PRIMES Deployment Page](#) for the most recent status of PRIMES roll-out.

¹⁸ Count of operations with at least one entry in the Child Protection Module as of August 2022.

¹⁹ The reports were drawn from Global Focus Insight, UNHCR's main operational reporting platform from 2015-2021. As of 2021 UNHCR has a new approach for Results-based Management named COMPASS.

²⁰ Throughout this report, funding refers to both funding needs as well as budget allocated to address those needs by UNHCR

Similarly, human resource data can be tracked to provide analysis of the workforce composition. However, child protection is frequently also covered by staff listed who do not have child protection specific job titles, such as protection, gender-based violence or community-based protection (CBP). As such, the staffing figures for child protection significantly under-represent UNHCR's total workforce engaged in child protection. To address this issue, the report includes information from a survey of protection, CBP, GBV and child protection staff on the percentage of time they spent on child protection.

OPERATIONAL NARRATIVE REPORTS

UNHCR operations provide annual narrative reports which outline the Operations Plan and priorities at the beginning of the year (Country Operation Plan) and the results achieved by the end of the year (Annual Report). These documents offer insight into the operational context and key issues the operation is addressing, as well as the achievements beyond what is captured in RBM indicator reporting. As noted above in the methodology section, a lack of consistency in the focus, scope and quality of operational narrative reports makes it difficult to compare over time and between operations.

In particular, the reports differ in how they present findings and what level of detail they provide. While some reports provide comprehensive information on relevant child protection risks, actions taken to address these, and the outcomes achieved, other reports only list outputs without providing contextual information on child protection risks or detail on the interventions that were implemented. Narrative reports offer the option of reporting on individual population groups, but this is inconsistently applied, with some operations aggregating population groups and others disaggregating down to specific populations in specific locations. The level of disaggregation also varies within operations from year to year, with some operations initially disaggregating population groups but aggregating them for subsequent years.

Despite these challenges, as described in the methodology section above, this report used a system of categorisation of narrative reports which allowed these challenges to be overcome and to aggregate and quantify a large amount of qualitative data. This demonstrates the value of providing more systematic guidance and templates for operations narrative reporting and adopting data analysis tools – such as tagging and qualitative data analysis software – that facilitate the analysis of qualitative data.

ACCESSIBILITY OF DATA AND USER-FRIENDLINESS OF SYSTEMS

In addition to the specific challenges with individual datasets, the multiple systems hosting child protection data presents a challenge to the ease of accessing and utilising the available data. While broadly aligned, the different systems are not fully consistent, which makes it challenging to compile child protection data and generate an overview. This includes differences in the frequency with which data is updated, which may result in identical searches at the same time on different systems yielding different results. It also includes differences in levels and measures for aggregation of data with some data being reported according to population groups while others are reported by operation.



GLOBAL TRENDS IN NUMBERS OF FORCIBLY DISPLACED AND STATELESS²¹

Throughout the world, the population of children that UNHCR works with constitutes one of the largest subgroups within the overall population of forcibly displaced and stateless people. Reflecting the increase in displacement figures, the past decade has seen a 230 per cent increase in the number of forcibly displaced children from 15.9 million in 2010 to an estimated 36.5 million in 2021.²²

In 2021, in operations where age-disaggregated data was available, children made up approximately 40 to 60 per cent of forcibly displaced people in UNHCR operations, and in some settings exceeded 60 per cent.²³ Based on available age-disaggregated data, children constituted 44 per cent of the children that UNHCR works with (Figure 1). In the same year, using statistical modelling, UNHCR estimated that the proportion of forcibly displaced children was 41 per cent.²⁴ Both of these figures are significantly higher than within the overall world population where children constitute fewer than one in three.²⁵ By 2021, there were approximately 9 million children who were refugees, 1.4 million asylum-seekers and 23 million children who were internally displaced (Figure 1).

21 All numbers are based on reporting from UNHCR operations.

22 UNHCR Refugee Data Finder – <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>

23 These percentages are based on operations with age-disaggregated data. Statistical modelling is used by UNHCR to correct for higher fertility rates in the operations with age-disaggregated data than the global average fertility rates. As such, estimates of numbers and percentages of children based on data from operations where age-disaggregated data exists tend to overestimate the percentages of children.

24 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2022). Global Trends Report 2021. These differences are based both on the difference between the scope of forcibly displaced people and other people that UNHCR works with and for and the difference in the methodology to make the calculation (either based on data where age disaggregation is available or on statistical modelling).

25 UNICEF data: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/>

Figure 1 | Forcibly displaced, stateless and other children that UNHCR works with and for. Figures based on available age-disaggregated data, 2021

Population type	# of Population	% of Age disaggregation coverage	% of Children	Estimated # of Children
Internally displaced people ²⁶	51,323,000	42%	45%	23,095,000
Asylum-seekers	4,616,000	36%	31%	1,431,000
Refugees under UNHCR's mandate	21,327,000	84%	42%	8,957,000
Other people in need of international protection ²⁷	4,406,000	42%	42%	1,851,000
Others of concern to UNHCR ²⁸	4,224,000	49%	34%	1,436,000
Internally displaced returnees	5,266,000	26%	58%	3,054,000
Refugee returnees	429,000	22%	53%	227,000
Stateless people (in situ) ²⁹	3,065,000	60%	45%	1,379,000
Total children that UNHCR works with and for		Weighted average 39%	Weighted average 44%	41,430,000

Source: Refugee Data Finder

26 UNHCR compiles data only on conflict-generated IDPs to whom the organization extends protection and/or assistance. As such, UNHCR statistics do not provide a complete overview of global internal displacement. The [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\)](#) maintains a database on IDPs displaced due to violence and conflict as well as due to natural disasters, providing a more comprehensive picture of global internal displacement

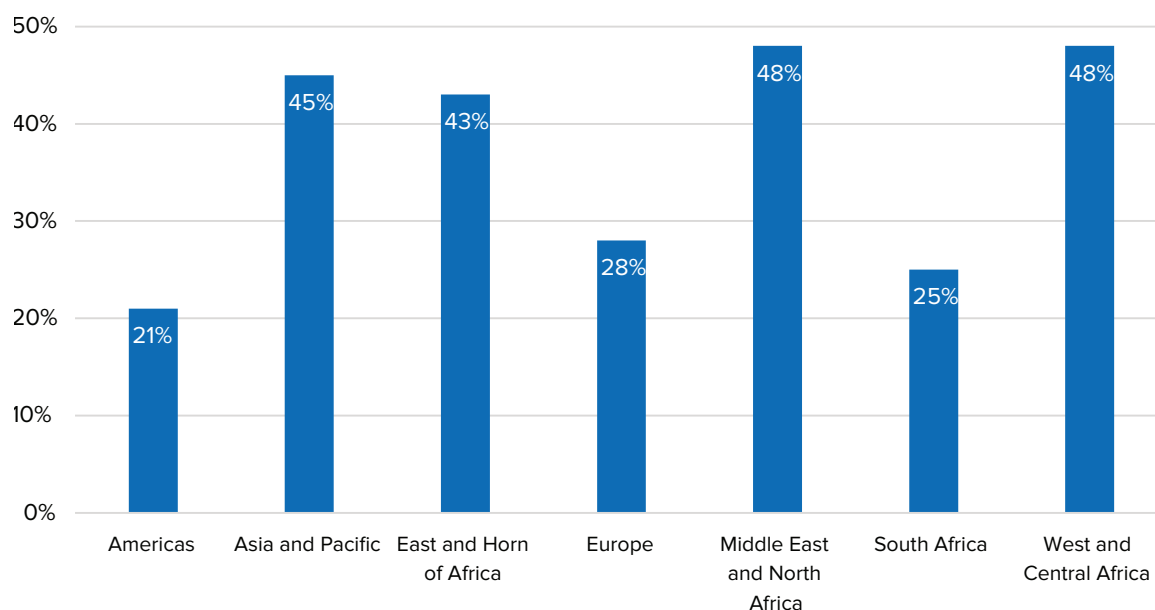
27 The category “Other people in need of international protection” was first introduced in mid-2022 reporting and refers to people who are outside their country or territory of origin, typically because they have been forcibly displaced across international borders, who have not been reported under other categories (asylum-seekers, refugees, people in refugee-like situations) but who likely need international protection, including protection against forced return, as well as access to basic services on a temporary or longer-term basis. Venezuelans previously designated as “Venezuelans displaced abroad” are included in this new category. This change has been made retroactively in UNHCR’s statistics since 2018 and the term Venezuelans displaced abroad will no longer be used.

28 The terminology ‘others of concern to UNHCR’ was used in the period under review in this report, but has subsequently changed to ‘other people that UNHCR works with and for’

29 While in total UNHCR reports 4.3 million stateless people, 1.3 million are also forcibly displaced (e.g. the Rohingya in Bangladesh that have been forcibly displaced from Myanmar). These 1.3 million are only counted as forcibly displaced when calculating the total population that UNHCR is mandated to protect and/or assist to avoid double counting.

There is significant variation in the relative proportion of children between regions. Numbers range from 25 per cent in the Americas to 48 per cent in Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA) and West and Central Africa (Figure 2). Also, within regions there are considerable differences in proportion of children between operations. For example, in West and Central Africa, children make up almost 35 per cent of the forcibly displaced population in Ghana, but almost 61 per cent in Burkina Faso. Similarly, in Asia and the Pacific, children constitute less than 25 per cent of forcibly displaced people in Malaysia, whereas in Bangladesh this number is 52 per cent.

Figure 2 | Per cent of children among people that UNHCR works with and for by region in 2021



Source: Refugee Data Finder

Operations that report age-disaggregated population data are in many cases among those with a higher proportion of the population that are children. This factor may partially account for the discrepancy between global estimates and operational reporting. To make the best use of the available data at different levels, global estimates should be used as an overview of the overall population of children. However, at the regional and country levels, reporting by operations – wherever age-disaggregated data is available – should be considered to avoid underestimates of numbers of children that UNHCR works with at those levels. A major innovation introduced in 2021 and used in 2022 planning and beyond, UNHCR’s new RBM system COMPASS should contribute to a better reflection of age-disaggregated data for UNHCR’s reporting on results.

CHILD PROTECTION RISKS TO THE CHILDREN THAT UNHCR WORKS WITH AND FOR

Children affected by forced displacement and statelessness are among those most vulnerable to protection risks. Every year, millions of children are uprooted or in protracted situations of displacement or crisis where they face heightened risks of violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation.

Child protection risks are reported by UNHCR operations in their operational plans and year end narrative reports, which also detail the results and challenges that the operation has encountered. Risks to children are also recorded in the case management system of UNHCR, where the cases of children at heightened risk are assigned specific needs codes according to the individual situation of each child identified. These are the two main sources used for data on types of child protection risks in this report.

Reporting from field operations from 2015 to 2021³⁰ and case management data³¹ identified a core set of nine child protection risk categories:³²

1. Physical or emotional violence or abuse
2. Child Protection related health and psychosocial risks
3. Family separation and care arrangements
4. Risks of gender-based violence including sexual abuse
5. Exploitation or discrimination, including child labour
6. Legal and documentation risks
7. Lack of access to services
8. Unmet needs
9. Other risks

Of these nine child protection risk categories, data from 2015-2021 indicates that the most prevalent risk relates to family separation and care arrangements, followed by legal and documentation risks, exploitation or discrimination and lack of access to services (Figure 3).

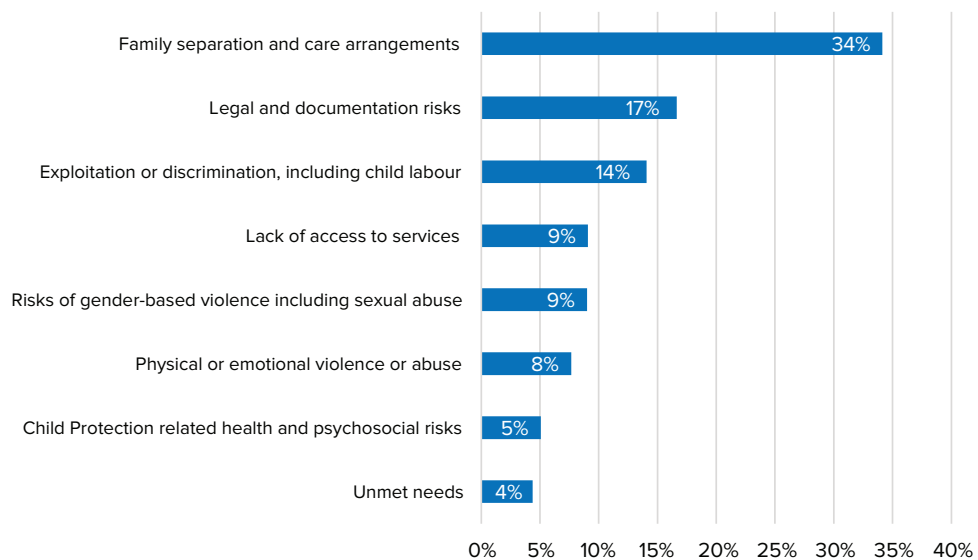
30 Derived from end-year operational narrative reports

31 Derived from proGres

32 See annex I's child protection analytical framework on risks



Figure 3 | Per cent of total reported child protection risks globally between 2015-2021 by categories of child protection risks³³.



Source: Operational Narrative Reporting

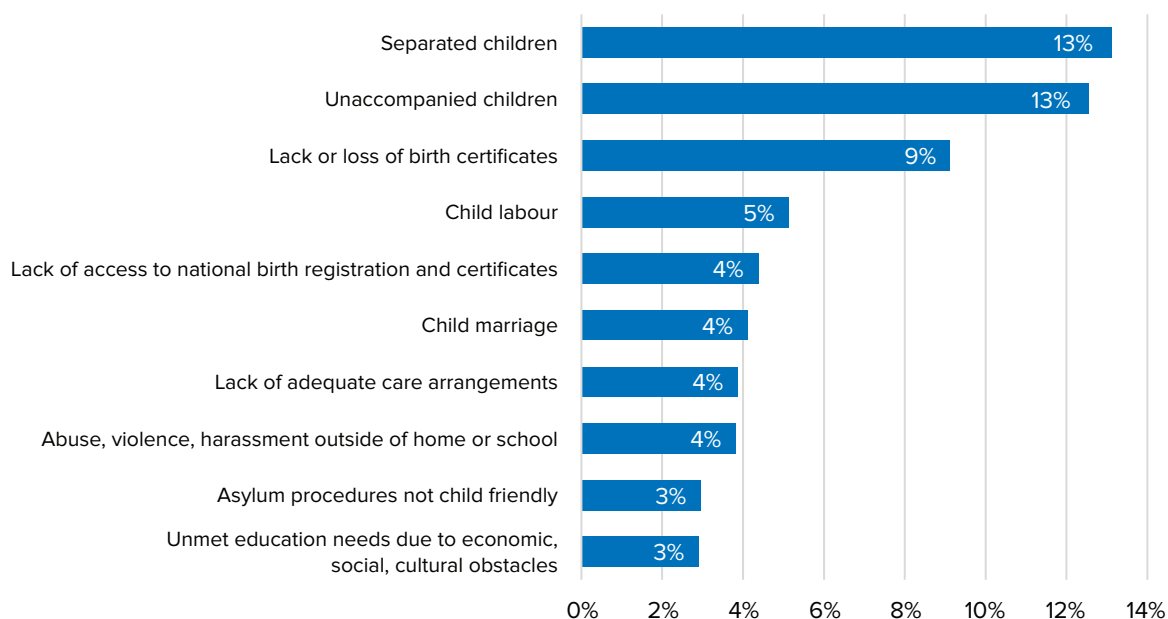
The nine broad risk categories were categorized into 44 sub-categories of risks affecting the children that UNHCR works with, as reported by UNHCR operations, including risks of violence or abuse at home or in school, harassment, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, unaccompanied or separated children, child heads of households, child marriage, sexual violence or exploitation, child labour, lack of child-friendly asylum procedures, lack of access to national services³⁴ and lack or loss of birth certificates or other ID (See annex I for full list).

³³ By proportion of total Child Protection Risks reported across all operations in the 2015-2021 period (Overall categories).

³⁴ While lack of access to services and basic needs are not generally considered child protection risks per say, in UNHCR reporting these were reported as both broader risks to children and contributors to violence, abuse, exploitation and separation of children. They are also part of the UNHCR category of children at risk.

The analysis demonstrates that types of child protection risks are largely predictable i.e., they have a high degree of consistency over time and across regions. The most commonly identified sub-categories of risks were separated children, unaccompanied children, lack or loss of birth certificates, child labour, lack of access to national birth registration and certificates, child marriage, lack of adequate care arrangements, abuse, violence or harassment outside of home or school, lack of child-friendly asylum procedures, and unmet needs due to economic, social or cultural obstacles. (Figure 4)

Figure 4 | Top 10 most commonly reported child protection risks by subcategory globally, by proportion of reported risks, between 2015-2021³⁵



Source: Operational Narrative Reporting

Variations in the occurrence of risks can be observed between regions. Separated children, unaccompanied children, lack or loss of birth certificates or lack of access to national birth registration and certificates were consistently the most common risks across all geographical areas. Child labour was also among the top 10 reported risks in all regions except Europe, while child marriage was in the top 10 in all regions except Europe and the Americas. Some issues are more common in specific regions, such as child recruitment in the Americas or psychosocial distress in MENA, but it is unclear whether this reflects different levels of these risks in these contexts, or the focus of the operation on these risks.

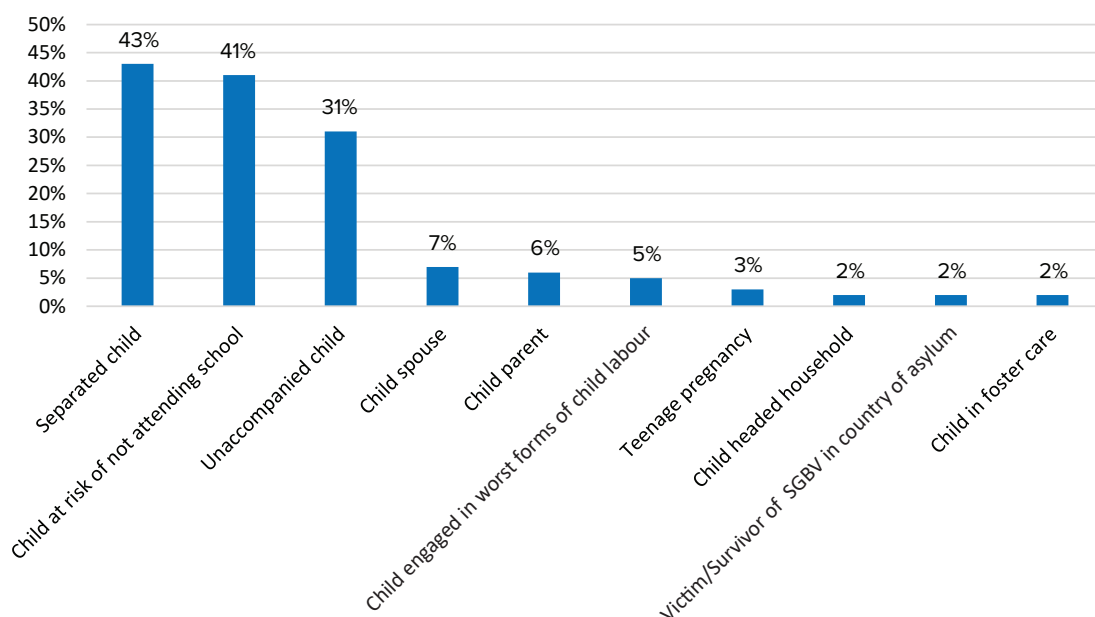
Data from the child protection case management system in proGres v4, which largely reflects information on child refugees and asylum seekers, shows a similar distribution of risks (Figure 5). Of the 27,000 active child protection cases with specific needs identified as of August 2022, separated children are the largest category of children making up 43 per cent (11,583 cases). Unaccompanied children (31 per cent, or 8,504 cases), out-of-school children (41 per cent or 11,231 cases), child marriage (1,873, or 7 per cent) and child labour (1,414, or 5 per cent) are all among the top 10 most common specific needs codes.³⁶

³⁵ By proportion of total Child Protection Risks reported across all operations in the 2015-2021 period (Sub-categories).

³⁶ Only data from proGres V4 has been included in the analysis. Note that some UNHCR operations still utilize proGresV3 or other IM4CM systems to record child protection cases, and that this data is not covered by the analysis. During the period under review, many operations were still using proGresV3 while V4 was gradually introduced.

As a result of the difference in the degree to which UNHCR undertakes direct case management in different regions and the ongoing rollout of proGres V4, significant regional variation can be observed in the application of risk categories through case management data. The top ten most common specific needs codes³⁷ account for 90 per cent (38,701) of all codes linked to child protection cases in proGres V4 (42,929), and 93 per cent (35,930) of these originate from just three regions: MENA, East and Horn of Africa and the Americas.

Figure 5 | Per cent of cases by top 10 most frequent specific needs codes used in the global child protection case management system³⁸



Source: ProGres v4

Notes: SGBV stands for sexual and gender-based violence³⁹

Child protection risks are identified by operations at a high level of consistency, revealing a core set of child protection risks that UNHCR operations should address for the design of child protection programming. Moreover, UNHCR reporting should be strengthened to ensure that all UNHCR operations report on the full range of child protection risks for the children that UNHCR works with.

The analysis found that while operational narrative reports contained important information regarding child protection risks that the children that UNHCR works with were exposed to, they contained little to no information on protective factors for children – as outlined in the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Settings. These are nonetheless important aspects of designing quality child protection programmes and the absence in reporting is a gap in creating a comprehensive overview of the child protection context for children. UNHCR reporting should therefore systematically include protective factors, along with risks.

37 As of August 2022 there were 35 active specific needs codes registered within the Child Protection module of proGresV4

38 As of August 2022

39 UNHCR now uses GBV rather than SGBV but the term SGBV is maintained in this report as this was the term used in proGres from 2015-2021.

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE OF FORCIBLY DISPLACED CHILDREN

Between 2015-2021, 48 per cent (60) of the 124 countries or territories reporting on child protection or birth registration reported risks of violence and abuse of children as a concern in their operational end-of-year narrative reports. When broken down by the five risk subcategories of violence and abuse, 39 per cent (48) reported on risks related to abuse or violence outside home/school, 23 per cent (28) reported on risk of abuse or violence at home, 10 per cent (13) reported on risks of generalized violence and criminality, while risks of abduction/kidnapping or abuse or violence in school were each reported by 5 per cent (6). It should be noted that the proportion of reports that pertain to violence or abuse at home may be higher than indicated, as some instances may have been mentioned as generalized violence where insufficient information have been available.

Although the proportion of countries or territories reporting on risks of violence or abuse at home remained relatively stable in 2020-2021⁴⁰, many operations reported increased risks of violence and abuse at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, as lockdown measures placed financial and psychological strain on families and caregivers.

Despite the number of UNHCR operations reporting on violence or abuse against children being significant, a comparison with global statistics on violence against children indicate that UNHCR figures are not fully capturing the scale and nature of such risks. For example, UNICEF global statistics show that between 2015-2021 an average of 75.5 per cent of children from 1-14 years of age experienced violence by their caregivers.⁴¹ This prevalence rate indicates that violence at home or by caregivers likely to be among the most widespread child protection risks in the majority of UNHCR operations. However, only 28 out of 124 countries and territories covered by UNHCR narrative reports (23 per cent), reported the risk of violence against children at home as a concern between 2015-2021, therefore indicating a significant underestimate in UNHCR reporting.

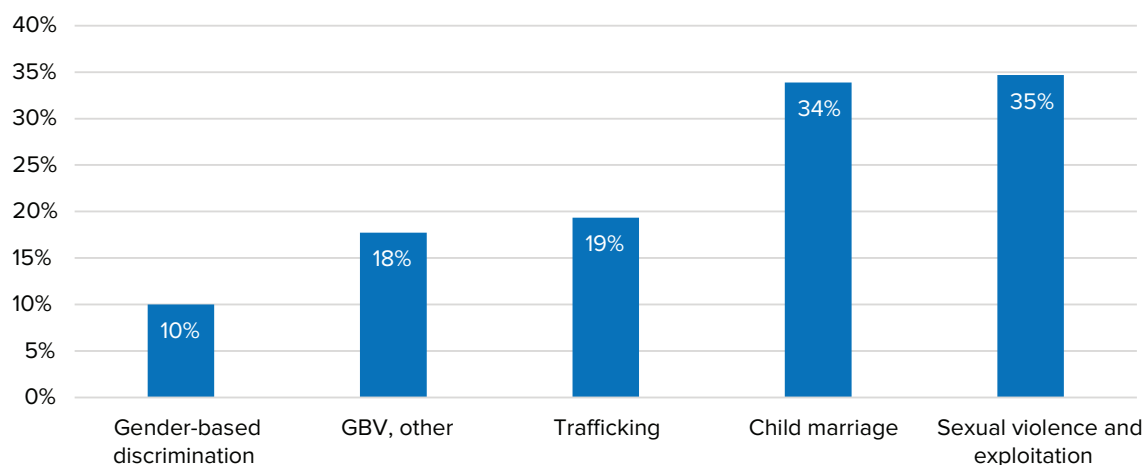
In addition, global data on sexual violence affecting children indicates that this risk is significantly more widespread⁴² than UNHCR reporting suggests. Both girls and boys are exposed to gender-based violence, including sexual violence and exploitation, but girls are disproportionately affected. Moreover, the nature and forms of GBV risks often vary between girls and boys. During displacement and times of crisis, the threat of GBV significantly increases for both girls and boys, due conflict related sexual violence, breakdown of law and order, weakening of community and family protective mechanisms, unsafe accommodation and limited livelihood options. Between 2015-2021, GBV risks for children were reported in 59 per cent (73) of the 124 countries and territories covered by UNHCR reporting on child protection or birth registration. Sexual violence and exploitation and child marriage were the two most commonly reported forms of GBV against children (Figure 6).

40 Decreased from 14% in 2019 to just 9% in 2020, before increasing to 15% in 2021. Lack of access to children at risk and a high number of countries and territories reporting in 2020 is likely the underlying cause of the decrease.

41 UNICEF surveys between 2015-2021 covering 69 countries across seven regions. See https://data.unicef.org/dv_index/.

42 UNICEF surveys between 2015-2022 covering 44 countries across six regions. See https://data.unicef.org/dv_index/ and UNHCR, 2017, "We Keep It in Our Heart" – Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys in the Syria Crisis

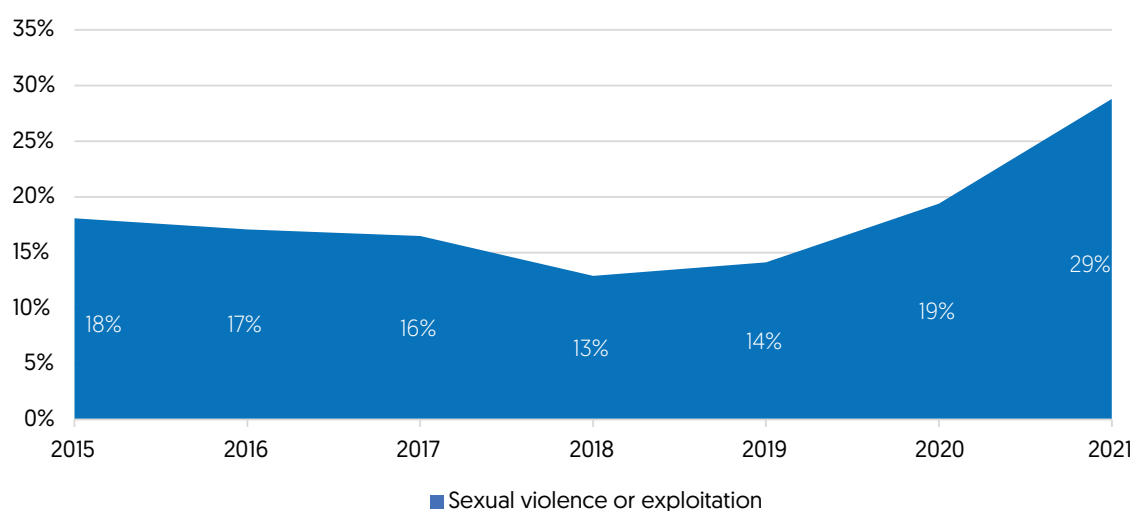
Figure 6 | Percent of countries and territories reporting on child GBV risks, by sub-category, 2015-2021



Source: Operational Narrative Reporting

Between 2015-2019, the proportion of operations highlighting sexual violence or exploitation as a concern was fairly stable and then increased in 2020-2021 (Figure 7). As with other child protection risks, this may be partially correlated to the effect of the pandemic on children and families.

Figure 7 | Percent of countries and territories reporting on risk of sexual violence or exploitation, 2015-2021



Source: Operational Narrative Reporting

UNICEF data from 2015-2022 shows a global prevalence of sexual violence against girls aged between 15-17 of 5.7 per cent and boys of the same age of 4.1 per cent. In some of the countries where UNHCR works this figure is as high as 14 per cent for girls and 11.4 per cent for boys⁴³ and studies have in even higher rates in some refugee populations⁴⁴.

This would indicate that the most contexts where UNHCR works, sexual violence is likely to be among the most important child protection risk affecting children. Yet even in the year with the highest rate of risk reporting on the issue (2021), only one third of countries and territories reporting on child protection (Figure 7), highlighted sexual violence or exploitation as a concern, while prevalence data indicate that sexual violence against children is an issue in all operations – indicating under reporting on this issue.

In conclusion, UNHCR reporting combined with prevalence rates of violence against children has identified a set of predictable child protection issues facing children under UNHCR's mandate which include 9 broad categories: physical or emotional violence or abuse, child protection related health and psychosocial risks, family separation and care arrangements, risks of gender-based violence including sexual abuse, exploitation or discrimination, including child labour, legal and documentation risks, lack of access to services, unmet needs, and other risks. These 9 broad categories can be further divided into 44 subcategories (see Annex I).

Top ten most commonly reported child protection risks 2015-2021

1. Separated children
2. Unaccompanied children
3. Lack or loss of birth certificates
4. Child labour
5. Lack of access to national birth registration and certificates
6. Child marriage
7. Lack of adequate care arrangements
8. Abuse, violence or harassment outside of home or school
9. Lack of child-friendly asylum procedures
10. Unmet educational needs due to economic, social or cultural obstacles.

43 UNICEF surveys between 2015-2022 covering 44 countries across six regions. See https://data.unicef.org/dv_index/.

44 UNHCR, 2017, [“We Keep It in Our Heart” – Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys in the Syria Crisis](#).

UNHCR CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

National and local authorities have overall responsibility for the protection of children within their territories. They are responsible for the national child protection systems and mechanisms as well as for implementing policies and practices that are child-friendly and contribute to children's protection.

UNHCR interventions on child protection span across a range of technical areas that take into account the diversity of the situations experienced by the children that UNHCR works with, and the different roles that children themselves, families, communities and other actors play in addressing their protection needs.

UNHCR's child protection interventions are most often complemented by several other local, national, and international actors with specific mandates or expertise for preventing, mitigating and addressing protection risks to children. Community-based organizations and local NGOs are often well-placed to identify and prevent risks to children and make up the first responders to provide support and protection to children exposed to risk. Several international child protection actors likewise implement programmes in many of the settings where UNHCR operates.

UNHCR has a specific mandate for refugees, asylum-seekers and refugee returnees and therefore has an operational focus on these groups of children. UNHCR also contributes to the protection of children in IDP settings through its operational response and contribution to both the child protection and protection coordination mechanisms under the Cluster System.

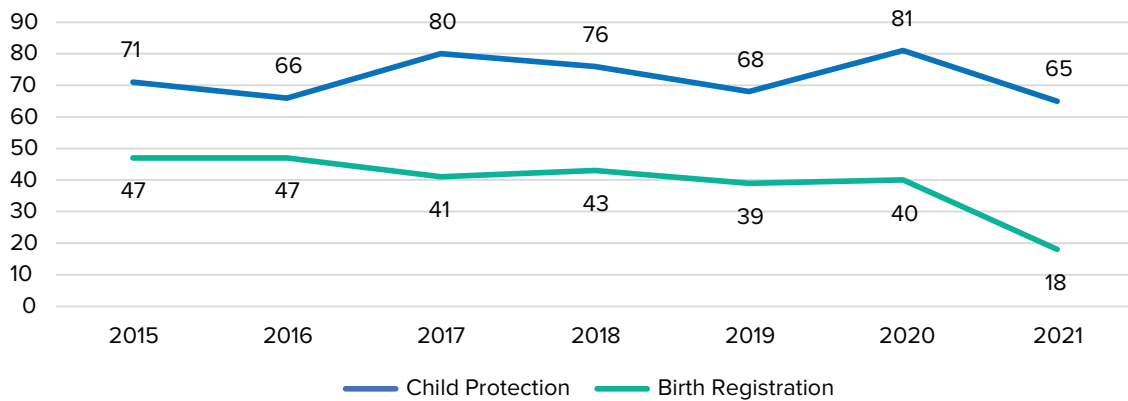
Overall, child protection, including birth registration, forms a core component of most UNHCR's responses, particularly in refugee situations⁴⁵. In 2021, 69 per cent (75) of UNHCR operations⁴⁶ had child protection as an objective in their operational planning, while 29 per cent (31) selected birth registration as an objective.⁴⁷ Of the 75 operations that selected child protection as an outcome area, 87 per cent (65) reported on this in their year-end operational narrative. Meanwhile, only 58 per cent (18) of the 31 operations which had selected birth registration reported this their year-end operational narrative in 2021 (Figure 8). This suggests that not all operations selecting child protection or birth registration as an outcome area are reporting on them, with the rate of reporting for operations with birth registration activities being particularly low in 2021.

45 Note that birth registration and child protection are recorded as separate outcome areas for UNHCR.

46 Of 108 operations, including multi-country operations, with the "Protection of children strengthened" set as an objective in 2021. The figures do not include activities at the regional or headquarters level.

47 Operations with the "Civil registration and civil status documentation strengthened" set as an objective, and "Birth registration and certificates provided" as an output area.

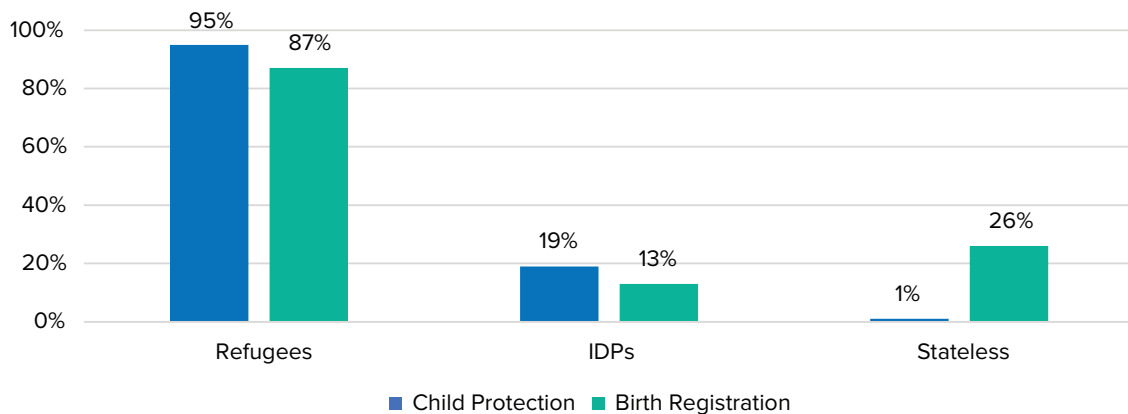
Figure 8 | Number of UNHCR operations reporting on child protection or birth registration activities, 2015-2021



Source: Operational Narrative Reporting

UNHCR is much more likely to undertake child protection and birth registration programming in refugee settings than in IDP settings. For child protection in 2021, 95 per cent of operations reported programmes targeting refugee children, while only 19 per cent of operations had child protection programmes targeting internally displaced children, 3 per cent targeting refugee or IDP returnees, and only 1 per cent targeting stateless children. For birth registration in 2021, 87 per cent of programmes targeted refugee children, 26 per cent stateless children and 13 per cent internally displaced children (Figure 9).

Figure 9 | Per cent of UNHCR operations undertaking child protection or birth registration programming, by displacement population group targeted in 2021



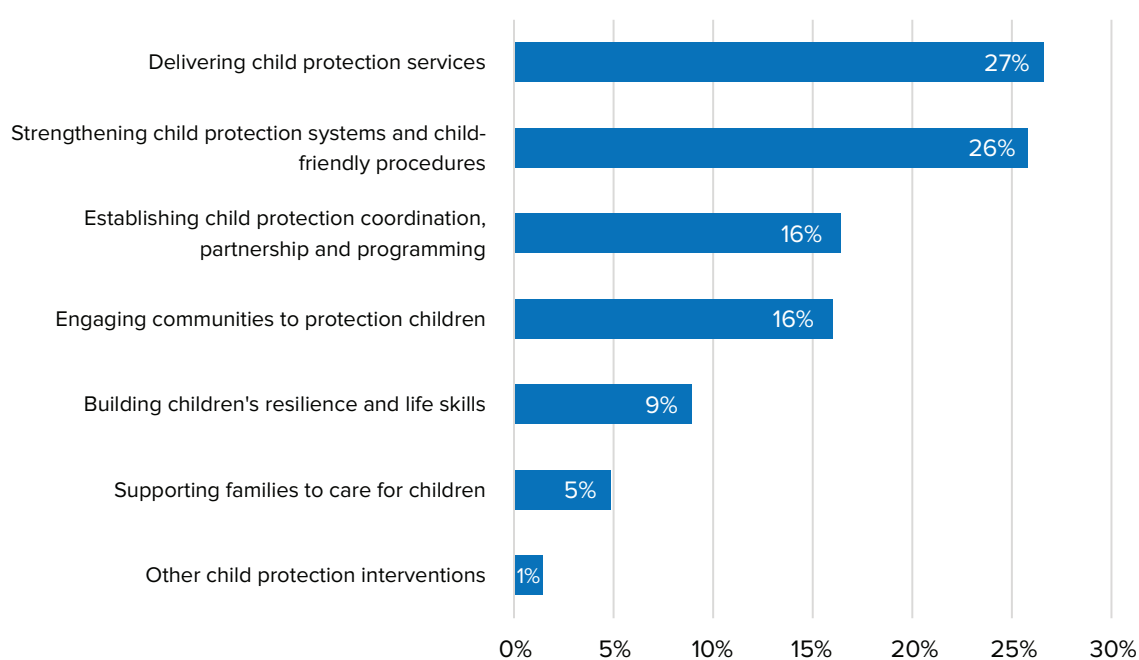
Source: Operational Narrative Reporting

The analysis of operational narrative reports found that UNHCR child protection programmes cover seven broad groups of interventions:⁴⁸

1. Building children’s resilience and life skills
2. Supporting families to care for children
3. Engaging communities to protect children
4. Strengthening child protection systems and child-friendly procedures
5. Delivering child protection services
6. Establishing child protection coordination, partnership and programming
7. Other child protection interventions

Of these seven child protection intervention categories, data from 2015-2021 indicates that the most frequently reported interventions relate to Delivering child protection services, followed by Strengthening child protection systems and child-friendly procedures, Establishing child protection coordination, partnership and programming, and Engaging communities to protect children (Figure 10)⁴⁹.

Figure 10 | Per cent of total reported UNHCR child protection interventions globally between 2015-2021 by categories of child protection intervention.



Source: Operational Narrative Reporting

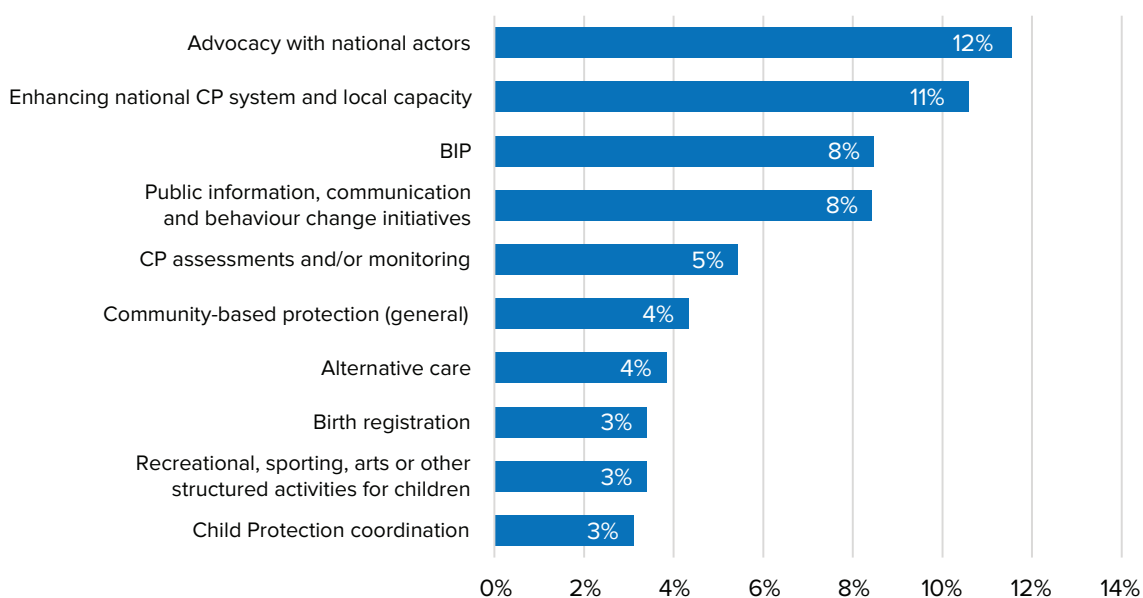
⁴⁸ See annex II's child protection analytical framework on interventions.

⁴⁹ In the period from 2015-2021, UNHCR operations reported 4636 interventions related to child protection or birth registration.

The seven broad intervention types further broken down into 41 specific intervention categories reported by UNHCR operations, including interventions to support empowerment, engagement, peer support and social networks, practical and psychosocial support for caregivers, support for community centres and safe spaces for children to play, learn and socialize. Other interventions include enhancing national child protection system and local capacity, registration and documentation activities, joint programming and integrated programming and mapping of existing child protection services (See annex II for full list).

The most frequently identified specific interventions were advocacy with national actors, enhancing national CP system and local capacity, Best Interests Procedure, public information, communication and behaviour change initiatives, CP assessments and/or monitoring, general community-based child protection, alternative care, recreational, sporting, arts or other structured activities for children, birth registration, and child protection coordination (Figure 11).

Figure 11 | Top 10 most frequently reported child protection interventions by subcategory globally, by per cent of interventions reported, between 2015-2021



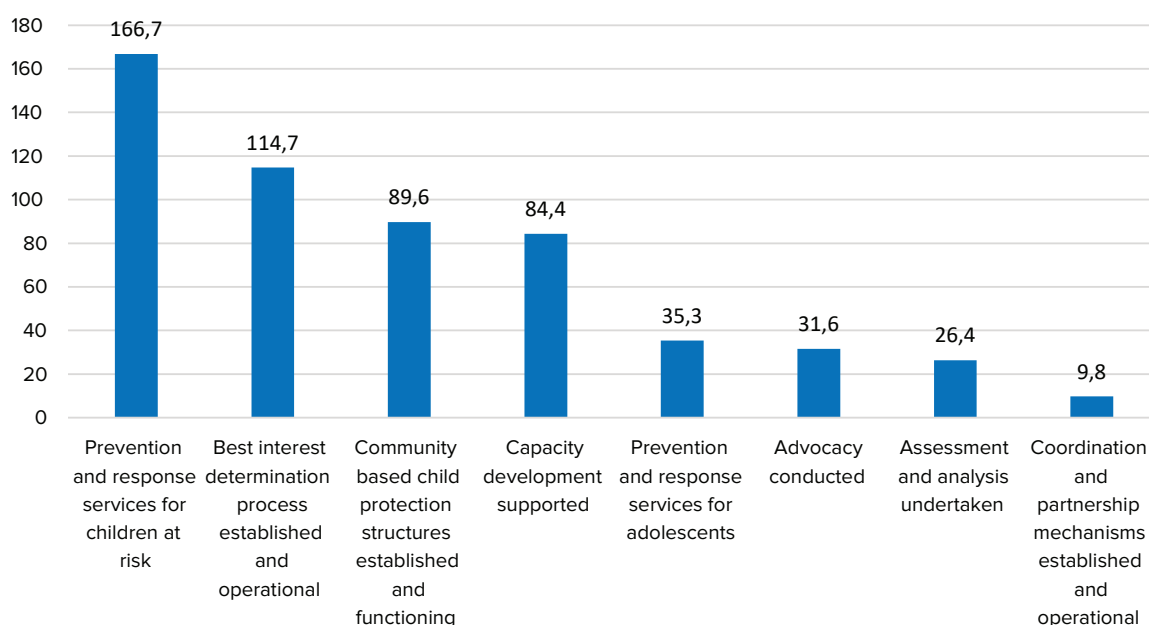
Source: Operational Narrative Reporting

Notes: CP stands for child protection, BIP stands for Best Interests Procedure.

The most frequently reported interventions were also reflected in the investments that were made in the different areas of child protection programme interventions. The most common intervention areas, including delivering child protection services and engaging communities, were among the top three child protection output areas where most resources were allocated. From 2015 to 2021, the output area with the highest allocation of resources for child protection was prevention and response services, which received 30 per cent of the overall programmatic budget for child protection, followed by the establishment of the Best Interests Procedure (BIP) with 21 per cent, the establishment of community-based structures with 16 per cent, capacity development with 15 per cent, prevention and response services for adolescents and advocacy both with 6 per cent, assessment and analysis with 5 per cent, and coordination and partnerships with 2 per cent (Figure 12).

While the specific interventions undertaken by UNHCR vary significantly depending on the capacity of the government, partners and local actors, UNHCR’s role in country, and available funding, the seven broad categories provide a menu of core UNHCR child protection interventions from which operations can select depending on their context. While UNHCR cannot, and should not, implement all child protection interventions in every context, operations should ensure an alignment between the risks identified and the programmes supported by UNHCR, including explaining how the work of UNHCR complements other actors with mandate and expertise in child protection to ensure a holistic response to the full range of child protection issues.

Figure 12 | Programmatic budget (OL⁵⁰) for child protection by output areas, 2015–2021 (cumulative, in USD 1 million)



Source: MSRP budget data

In conclusion, UNHCR narrative reporting combined with budget data on investments (that is budget allocated) that were made in the different areas of programme interventions has identified a core set of child protection interventions implemented by UNHCR and partners, which include 7 broad categories: Building children’s resilience and life skills, supporting families to care for children, engaging communities to protect children, strengthening child protection systems and child-friendly procedures, delivering child protection services, establishing child protection coordination, partnership and programming, and other child protection interventions. These 7 broad categories can be further divided into 41 subcategories (see Annex II), the ten most common child protection interventions of these 41 subcategories are listed below.

⁵⁰ The comprehensive budget of an Operations Plan sums the resources that will be required to implement all the interventions necessary to meet the new needs of persons of concern that are due to an emergency situation. Because needs almost always exceed the resources available, UNHCR also prioritizes its interventions, based on the Operating level. Each Operations Plan (OP) is broken down into two elements: activities and budgets in the operating level (OL); and activities and budgets above operating level (AOL). OL + AOL = OP.

Top ten most commonly reported child protection interventions 2015-2021

1. Advocacy with national actors
2. Enhancing national CP system and local capacity
3. Best Interests Procedure
4. Public information, communication and behaviour change initiatives
5. CP assessments and/or monitoring
6. General community-based child protection
7. Alternative care
8. Recreational, sporting, arts or other structured activities for children
9. Birth registration
10. Child protection coordination



FUNDING FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection interventions are often mutually supportive and interdependent. Although the cost of different child protection interventions may vary, sufficient funding is critical to guaranteeing a comprehensive and meaningful child protection response.

From 2015 to 2021, UNHCR's funding for child protection increased in line with the upward trend in the number of children that UNHCR works with and the overall budget of UNHCR. In addition, funding data on budgetary requirements and allocations indicates an increased prioritization of child protection by UNHCR over this period. In 2015, only 1.6 per cent of UNHCR funding went to child protection – six years later, in 2021, the percentage increased to 2.3 per cent (Figure 13). This contrasts with the trend in the broader humanitarian sector, where while the overall funding for child protection has steadily increased over the past 10 years, the proportion of humanitarian funding dedicated to child protection has remained minimal, at between 0.5 to 0.8 per cent of overall humanitarian funding between 2010 to 2021.⁵¹

Within UNHCR, increases in child protection funding have also been accompanied by increases in needs. In 2015, total funding requirements for child protection was USD 101 million. By 2021 this had nearly doubled to USD 192 million (Figure 13). Throughout the period, the comprehensive needs for child protection have been significantly higher than available funds, resulting in significant funding gaps.

In addition, the funding gap for child protection during this period varied, while consistently remaining below the level of the overall funding gap for UNHCR. In 2021, while UNHCR's total funding gap was at 46 per cent, the funding gap for child protection was at 43 per cent, with a variance in the funding gap from 33 to 43 per cent in the 2015–2021 period (Figure 13).

Budget allocated by UNHCR to specific child protection interventions showed different levels of funding invested in specific types of interventions. This is likely due to both the different costs of various interventions, as well as how common certain types of interventions were across operations.

Figure 13 | Trend of UNHCR's funding for child protection, 2015–2021

	# of operations with child protection objective	Funding requirements for child protection (in million USD)	Operating Level budget		Child protection funding gap %	Global UNHCR funding gap %	Child protection as % of UNHCR OL budget
			OPS (in million USD)	ABOD (in million USD)			
2015	69	101	25	32	43%	47%	1.6%
2016	69	64	22	15	41%	40%	1.8%
2017	73	136	51	40	33%	44%	2.1%
2018	68	153	47	43	42%	44%	2.1%
2019	69	102	36	32	33%	44%	2.3%
2020	74	169	56	50	37%	44%	2.2%
2021	77	192	54	56	43%	46%	2.3%

Source: MSRP

Notes: OPS stands for online project system; ABOD stands for administrative budget and obligation documents; OL stands for Operating Level.

⁵¹ For more information see the funding reports from The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action 2019-2021: Unprotected: Crisis in humanitarian funding for child protection (2019), Report I Still Unprotected: Humanitarian Funding for Child Protection (2020) and Report I The Unprotected: Annual Spotlight on Child Protection Funding in Humanitarian Action (2021)

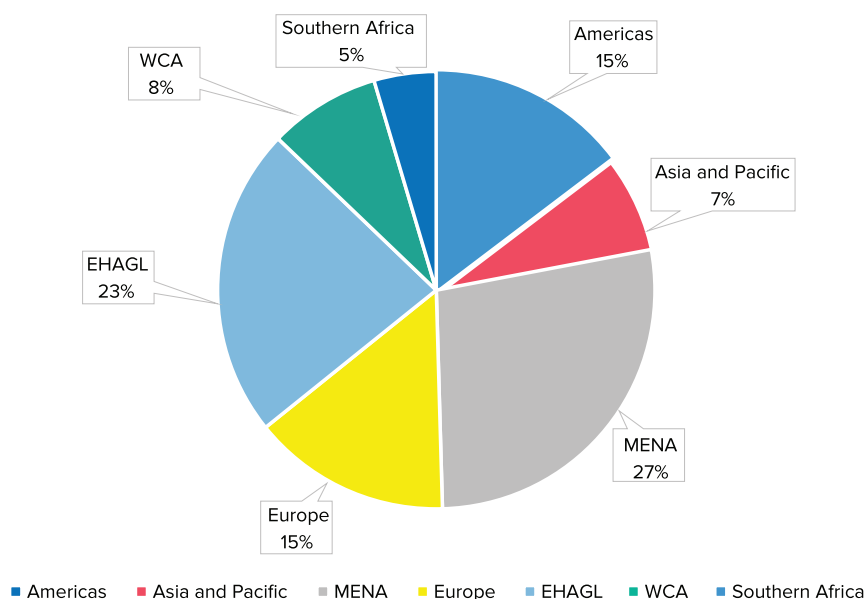
The second most common intervention area – strengthening child protection systems – is mainly achieved through advocacy and technical support, which are not cost-intensive but require that expertise and time is available for child protection through the presence of skilled staff. In comparison, the most frequently reported intervention – delivering child protection services – is highly cost-intensive and the most invested output area for child protection (Figure 12).

This indicates that different combinations of interventions will require different allocation of resources: strengthening child protection systems will require high levels of technical expertise, investments in staff and relatively modest financial investments, while providing child protection services requires both staff expertise and investments, which makes it more cost intensive.

Globally, the trend of increasing numbers of forcibly displaced and stateless children largely dictated the trend of increasing child protection funding requirements over the years. At the same time, the geographic spread of displacement was also reflected in the budgetary allocation across regions.

In terms of regional allocation of budget, data from 2021 is illustrative. In 2021 the total budget allocated by UNHCR for child protection was 110 million USD. Of this, the MENA region allocated 30 million USD for child protection, constituting 27 per cent of global UNHCR allocation for child protection. It is then followed by East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region (25 million USD, 23 per cent), Europe and the Americas (each with 16 million USD, 15 per cent) (Figure 14).

Figure 14 | Child protection budget in 2021 by region (per cent of global CP budget)



Source: MSRP budget data

Variations in the percentage of UNHCR’s overall budget that is allocated to child protection between regions are significant. In 2021, respectively 4.1 per cent and 6.6 per cent of the regional budgets were allocated to child protection in the Americas and Europe. Both regions, compared to others, had a relatively low proportion of children in their refugee population (18 per cent and 38 per cent respectively in 2021) and programming interventions were predominantly focused on strengthening national child protection systems. In contrast, the Asia and Pacific region had allocated only 0.8 per cent for child protection projects, while the proportion of refugees below 18 in the region was around 43 per cent, the highest proportion across all regions by the end of 2021. Considering that the vast majority of child protection programmes are implemented in refugee contexts, this finding indicates

unequal allocation of budget for child protection between regions, particularly for refugee responses.

While all regions are chronically underfunded for child protection, the underfunding across regions is unequal. Notably in 2021, the funding gap for UNHCR child protection in Asia and the Pacific (46 per cent) and the MENA (46 per cent) regions were significantly wider than in Europe and the Americas (funding gap at 37 and 38 per cent respectively).⁵²

STAFFING FOR CHILD PROTECTION

In UNHCR, child protection is a specialization within protection and is covered by dedicated child protection staff who work predominantly or exclusively on child protection, as well as protection or community-based protection staff, whose job descriptions cover a broader range of protection responsibilities. UNHCR has not systematically collected data on the numbers of protection staff who cover child protection nor the amount of their time that is allocated to this. However, a global level survey was undertaken by UNHCR in 2021 that provided a snapshot of how much time protection, community-based protection, child protection, GBV, CP/GBV and non-protection staff work on child protection (as well as other areas – see below).

As of 2021, UNHCR had 64 dedicated child protection staff⁵³ across all grade groups worldwide, of which 39 are staff and 25 are affiliate workforce.⁵⁴ This constituted 1.3 per cent of the total protection staff workforce (4,795) in the organization. This represents an increase from only 10 dedicated child protection positions that existed in 2016 across the organization, and which at that time represented 0.42 per cent of the total protection workforce (2,356). Nevertheless, the increase in child protection capacity is less than the increase in the total protection workforce. Between 2018 and 2021, the total protection capacity has increased by 41 per cent, from 3,400 to 4,795. In contrast, the child protection workforce in the same period only increased by 8 per cent, from 59 to 64. The number of dedicated child protection staff had been increasing from 2015, before experiencing a sharp 35 per cent reduction in dedicated child protection staff from 2020 to 2021.

Capacity on child protection is augmented by the affiliate workforce (AWF) consisting of staff working on a variety of shorter-term contractual arrangements including consultants for the United Nations Office for Project Service, individual consultants, secondments from other agencies, and UNHCR standby partnerships.⁵⁵ Of the total staffing capacity for child protection in 2021, 39 per cent was made up of affiliate workforce on a variety of types of contract and lengths of assignments (Figure 15).

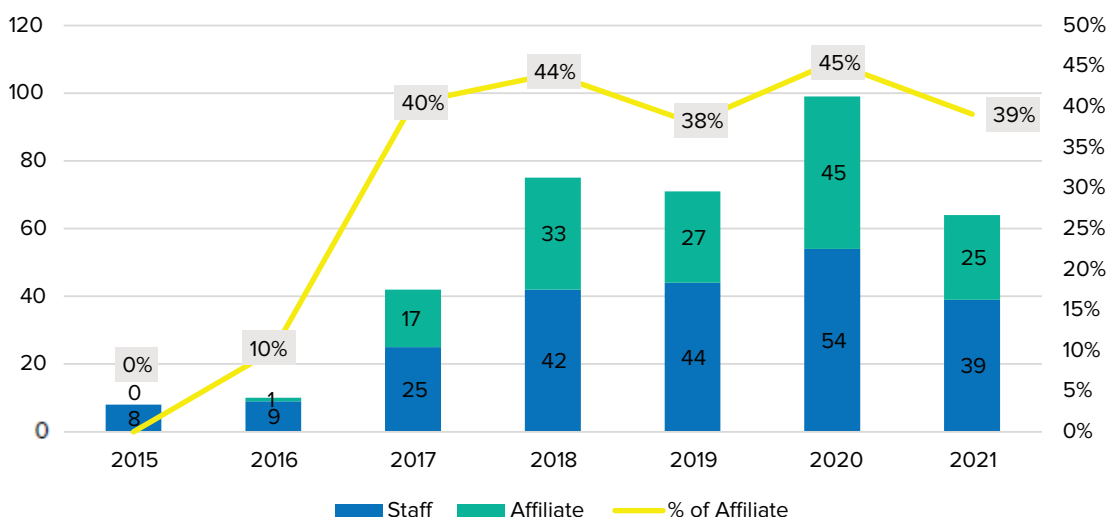
52 Figures for Europe are influenced by the funding situation for Greece and Turkey, which have some of the biggest child protection budgets for any operation of UNHCR.

53 Dedicate staff refers to those with child protection job titles and descriptions. These figures also refers to the actual number of staff and AWF that were in place, as opposed to positions which refers to the positions approved, but not necessarily the number of staff and AWF recruited and deployed.

54 DHR WABI Service Data, 2022

55 UNHCR has some 20 stand-by partners for emergency deployments. For more information, see the UNHCR Emergency handbook at <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/54026/emergency-standby-partners-deployment-of-personnel-and-service-packages>

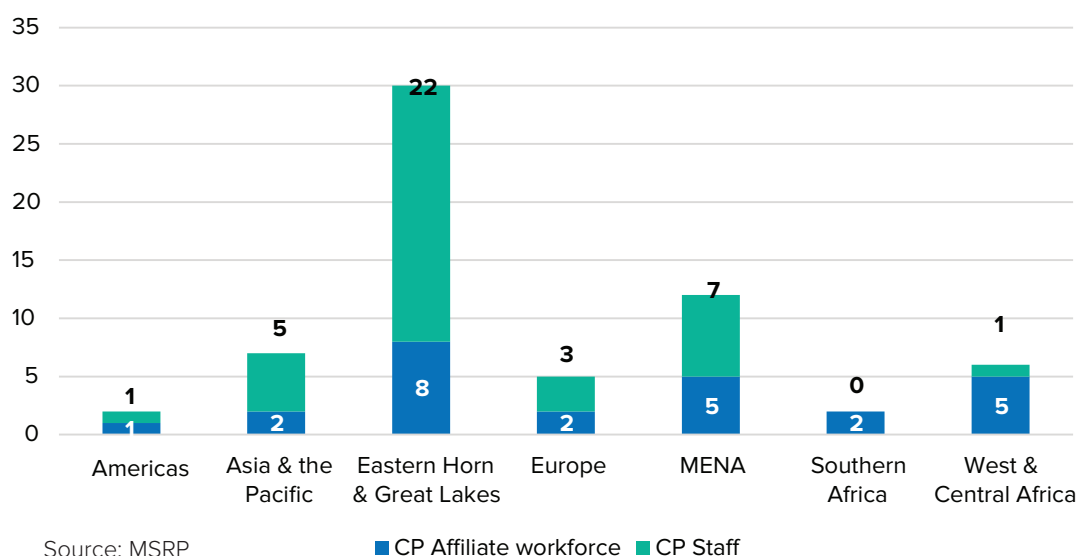
Figure 15 | Overall CP staffing by profile combined child protection workforce, by year, 2015–2021



Source: MSRP

Dedicated child protection workforce capacity varies greatly between regions. In 2021, operations within the Regional Bureau for East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes had a combined workforce of 30 positions, whereas Southern Africa and the Americas each had two (Figure 16). While some of this diversity can be explained by differences in overall protection staffing, number of operations in the area covered by the various Bureaux, and the overall size at regional level of the population that UNHCR works with, regions with similar profiles have different levels of dedicated child protection staffing. For instance, Europe (5) compared with the Americas (2), or MENA (12) compared with Eastern Horn and Great Lakes (30). In addition, dedicated child protection staff are often concentrated in a limited number of operations in regions.

Figure 16 | Number of child protection workforce, by region, 2021⁵⁶



Source: MSRP

There is a clear contrast between the increasing proportion of UNHCR budget allocations being dedicated to child protection and the declining number of dedicated child protection staff. Given the significant investments in child protection and the relatively small number of dedicated child

⁵⁶ The number of operations vary between regions, for more information see: <https://www.unhcr.org/where-we-work.html>

protection staff, it is evident that most child protection programming in UNHCR is managed by protection staff, including community-based protection staff.

The results of the 2021 staff survey undertaken by UNHCR⁵⁷ indicated that 43 per cent of all 375 protection and non-protection staff who responded spent more than 40 per cent of their time on child protection. This suggests that most child protection work in UNHCR is undertaken by staff who are not dedicated child protection staff with child protection job descriptions but rather staff with protection, CBP, GBV or other job descriptions who are responsible for child protection, usually along with other responsibilities. The lack of ability to track staff working substantially on child protection presents a challenge for child protection workforce planning, oversight and capacity building. The use of child protection specialisations – that is having staff with general protection, CBP or other titles working substantially on child protection also having a [child protection specialisation](#)⁵⁸ – would help to address this challenge. Overall, the mismatch between UNHCR’s significant and increasing investment in funding for child protection, and the low and decreasing numbers of dedicated child protection staff combined with the inability to identify and therefore support the overall child protection workforce in the organisation is striking.



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57 The survey was conducted with 375 protection (38%), community-based protection (32%), child protection (5.8%), GBV (6.4%), CP/GBV (4.5%) and non-protection staff (12%) in mid-2021, distributed across the different regions (EHAGL 102, MENA 96, Asia 57, Europe 39, WCA 41, Americas 18 and Southern Africa 9)

58 For more information, see the DIP Guidance on the Selection of Job Descriptions and Drafting of the operational Context for Protection, Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Child Protection positions, July 2020.

UNHCR ACHIEVEMENTS ON CHILD PROTECTION

Results of UNHCR's and partners interventions were measured globally by reporting from UNHCR operations on their achievements against UNHCR's corporate performance and impact indicators.⁵⁹ While progress has been achieved for some areas in the period under review, others have seen limited improvement. This trend was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2021, which reduced access to people UNHCR works with and required some programmes, such as community centres and group activities, to pause for varying lengths of time.

The below provides a summary of reporting from UNHCR operations on their achievements against UNHCR's corporate performance and impact indicators⁶⁰ for child protection:

- Children's [non-discriminatory access to national child protection and social services](#)⁶¹ showed modest progress between 2015 and 2019 with an increase from 52 to 70 per cent of programmes in country operations reporting against this indicator reaching an acceptable level⁶² of access. Due to COVID-19, however, these gains were reversed and the children that UNHCR works with and for had their access to national child protection and social services reduced to 48 per cent in 2020 and 40 per cent in 2021. This significant decline in access to national child protection and social services as a result of Covid-19 was a significant concern.
- On [advocacy and awareness-raising interventions](#)⁶³ for child protection, the percentage of programmes in country operations reporting against this indicator reaching their targets⁶⁴ rose from 55 per cent in 2015 to 64 per cent in 2020, before falling back to 55 per cent in 2021. Meanwhile, for [technical support](#)⁶⁵ the number initially declined from 62 per cent in 2015 to 57 per cent in 2020, before rising to 64 per cent in 2021. Overall, the ability of operations to meet their advocacy and technical support targets remained relatively constant over this period at between 55 to 64 per cent.

59 The indicator terminology used in this report pertains to the FOCUS RBM system, which was used in the 2015-2021 period under review. Note that the indicator framework and terminology has since been updated with the introduction of COMPASS in 2022.

60 In UNHCR's results-based management framework until 2022, performance indicators are selected by individual operations to measure progress at output level, with targets set for their programmes depending on the resources available; impact indicators are selected to measure the programme progress against baseline at the outcome level.

61 Indicator: *Extent children of concern have non-discriminatory access to national child protection and social services*. This indicator measures predominantly access in laws and policies such as the degree national legislation or policies allow forcibly displaced and stateless children to access to State child protection services, access to birth certificates, education- and health services.

62 Within UNHCR's RBM indicator guidance, recommendations are made towards the acceptable range of implementation in progress and results monitoring and operational reporting. While the percentage of children with access to safe community spaces for socializing, play, learning, etc. reaches an acceptable range of more 90 per cent or more, for example, other child protection indicators indicate an acceptable range level of 70 per cent or more. Hereafter in the report, reference to acceptable range or acceptable level can be presumed to be 70 per cent or more.

63 Advocacy interventions are measured at the output indicator level with the indicator "Advocacy conducted", comprised of several performance level indicators including the number of awareness raising campaigns conducted on child protection and advocacy interventions made to facilitate access of children of concern to national child welfare and social services.

64 Targets for performance indicators are set by individual operations for their programmes at the beginning of the year

65 Technical support is measured at the output indicator level with the indicator "Capacity development supported", comprised of several performance level indicators including the number of partner and government staff provided with general training on child protection and children's rights, and whether child protection or social welfare officers are assigned to work with children and families of concern.

- With the increased focus on [community-based child protection inventions](#),⁶⁶ roughly 67 per cent of operations met their targets in 2021 – an improvement from the 2019–2020 period where only 48 to 50 per cent met their target. This is likely the result of community-based child protection’s scaling up amid COVID-19 restrictions between 2020 and 2021.
- Between 2015 and 2021, 33 per cent of operations implemented [programmes to build children’s resilience and life skills](#).⁶⁷ Achievements in adolescent’s participation in targeted programmes⁶⁸ have increased from 39 per cent of operations meeting their targets in 2015 to 48 per cent in 2020 and 57 per cent in 2021.
- [Access to birth registration](#) has steadily declined. In 2015, among the operations reporting on this indicator, 44 per cent reported a satisfactory number of children below the age of 12 months having access to birth certificates while in 2021 this had dropped to 38 per cent. This downward trend reflects both a steady reduction in the percentage of children’s birth being registered prior to Covid-19, a trend which was further exacerbated by Covid-19 restrictions.
- Between 2015 and 2021, 31 per cent of operations reported implementing [best interests procedure](#) (the most common form of child protection services) yet only 44 per cent of those implementing them in 2021 reached an acceptable level of implementation for unaccompanied and separated children,⁶⁹ with an average BIP implementation rate of only 58 per cent initiated or completed.⁷⁰ Only 48 per cent of operations reached their targets for Best Interests Assessments (BIA), and only 23 per cent met their target for Best Interests Determination (BIDs) in 2021.
- From 2015 to 2021, the [implementation of BIA](#) did not keep up with the growing population of boys and girls under the mandate of UNHCR: the number of forcibly displaced children increased from an estimated 15.9 million in 2010 to 36.5 million in 2021 (a 130-per-cent increase) yet the total number of BIAs conducted between 2015 and 2020 decreased by 3 per cent from 47,303 to 45,974, with the 2017–2020 period specifically seeing a steady yearly decrease in BIAs. In 2021, the number of BIAs around the world increased by 16 per cent from the previous year to 53,449, though this still constitutes a significant reduction in overall numbers of BIAs conducted from 73,599 in 2017 (Figure 17). In addition, the ratio of BIAs to forcibly displaced and stateless children decreased significantly over this period from 1:286 to 1:683 due to the increased number of displaced children⁷¹, highlighting a growing gap in the ability to provide such child protection services to children at risk.

66 Community-based interventions are measured at the output indicator level with the indicator “Community based child protection structures established and functioning”, comprised of several performance level indicators including the number of children’s committees, groups and other structures that are operational and facilitate children’s participation, and the number of community-based committees/groups dedicated to child protection issues.

67 UNHCR operational Year-end reporting

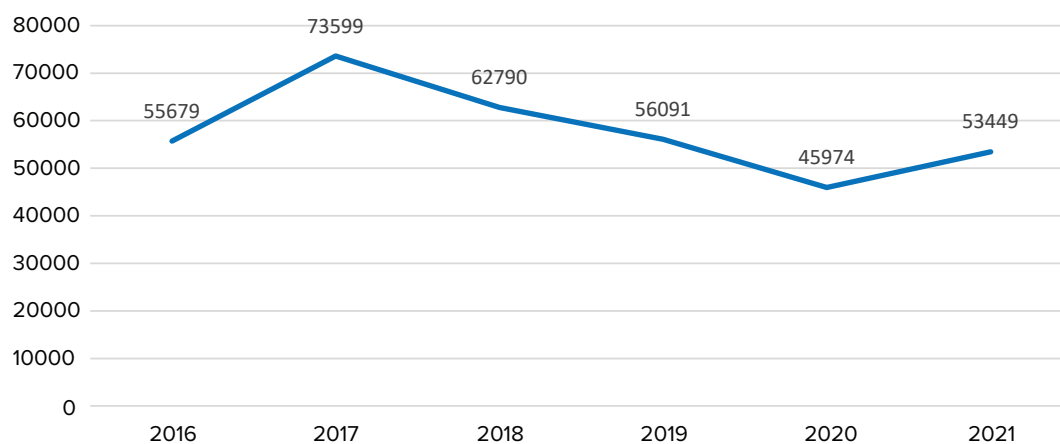
68 Adolescent’s participation in targeted programmes at the output indicator level with the indicator “Prevention and response services for adolescents”, comprised of several performance level indicators including # of adolescents participating in targeted programmes and # of targeted programmes for adolescents

69 A decrease of 47 per cent in operations, reaching the target in 2020. UNHCR considers 70 to 100 per cent to be an acceptable range.

70 A weighed average of BIP implementation for unaccompanied and separated children across operations with impact indicator ‘% of unaccompanied and separated children for whom a best interests process has been initiated or completed’ selected in Operations Plan.

71 While not all displaced children require Best Interests Assessments to be undertaken by UNHCR or partners, the ratio of BIA/children provides a proxy indicator for the ability of UNHCR to scale up child protection services to meet the needs of the growing child population.

Figure 17 | Global number of Best Interest Assessments (BIAs), by year, 2016-2021



Source: UNHCR FOCUS Data - Results-based planning and reporting database

In addition, reporting on performance indicators related to child protection programming and activities has declined over time. In 2015, one-third of the performance indicators and 38 per cent of impact indicators⁷² had less than 10 operations reporting against them. In 2021, 60 per cent of performance indicators had less than 10 operations reporting against them, while the total number of reports on impact indicators decreased 46 per cent, from 412 in 2015 to 223 by 2021. This suggests a need to both streamline the available indicators as well as reinforce the reporting on child protection results.

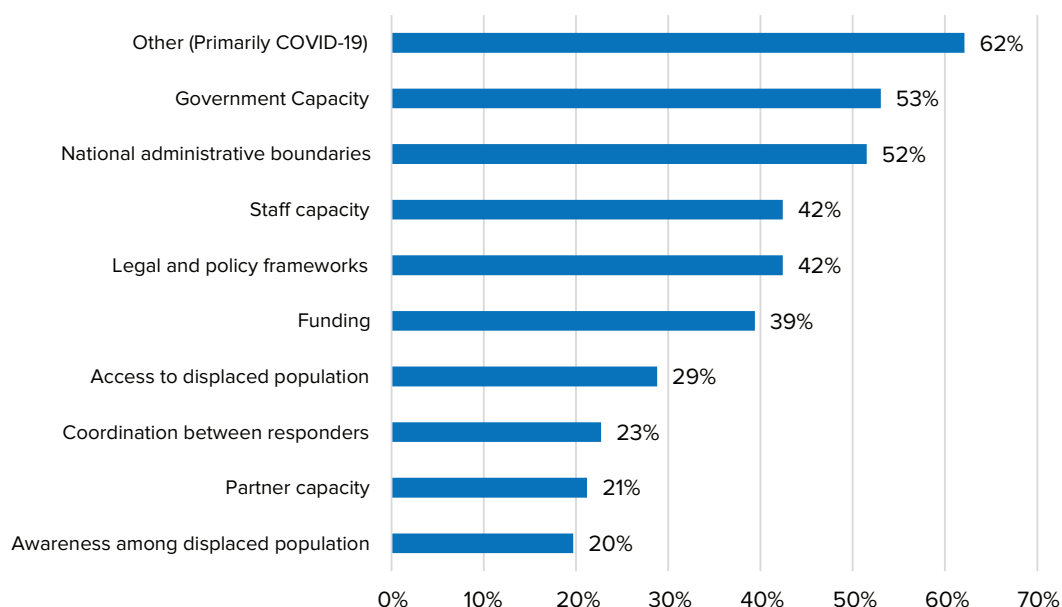
In summary, despite increased investment in Child Protection by UNHCR, the results achieved are uneven, and were strongly affected by COVID restrictions 2020-2021. While there has been modest progress in some areas, including the access of children to national child protection and social services, community-based child protection interventions, and adolescent's participation in targeted programmes, UNHCR's ability to reach targets in other areas including advocacy and technical support for child protection has remained stable, with approximately only 2 out of 3 operations meeting their targets on average in these two areas from 2015-2021. In other core areas of child protection interventions, including access to birth registration and best interests assessments, UNHCR operations experienced a decline in their ability to meet their targets, as well as decline in the proportion of children receiving key child protection services. This highlights a growing gap in child protection interventions meeting child protection needs across the organization as the numbers of forcibly displaced and stateless children increase. It also underscores the importance of analysing trends over time and across results in order to adjust UNHCR's human and financial investments accordingly.

72 Performance and impact indicators were two types of indicators used in the FOCUS system, the previous UNHCR RBM system. New indicators have been designed for the COMPASS RBM system, which was fully adopted in 2022.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

The implementation of child protection programmes by UNHCR, and the related results, as reported above, have been affected by several challenges. Between 2015 and 2019, the most common challenges reported by UNHCR operations in their Annual Reports were restrictive or non-conductive government policies, lack of national capacity and insufficient funding, followed by a lack of awareness by the population (most commonly on of the importance of birth certificates), lack of staff capacity and limited humanitarian access. From 2020 to 2021, COVID-19 was the most reported challenge, highlighted by 58 per cent of operations in 2021 (Figure 18). On staffing challenges, 42.2 per cent of operations reported insufficient staff capacity while 21.2 per cent reported insufficient partner capacity in 2021, mostly related to numbers of staff rather than limitations in staff expertise.

Figure 18 | Challenges reported by UNHCR Operations, UNHCR 2021



Source: Operational Narrative Reporting

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of 2015–2021 data conducted for this report has shown that child protection risks are present in the contexts where UNHCR works and have a relatively high degree of predictability. While the causes and nature of specific child protection risks during a crisis may vary, a core pattern of risks can be identified as occurring across most of the operational contexts. In addition, a predictable series of interventions that UNHCR's operations can opt for to respond to child protection risks and needs can be identified, depending on the operational footprint that UNHCR has in each setting. However, it is concerning that despite significant investment, results on key indicators, such as the number of births being registered or the absolute number of BIAs and the ratio of BIAs in proportion to the child population have been decreasing since 2015 – a trend worsened by COVID-19.

The report makes the following specific recommendations:

GAPS IN CHILD PROTECTION DATA AND UNDERUTILIZATION OF EXISTING DATA

UNHCR collects a significant amount of child protection data, but there is scope for greater utilization of such available data. Use has been limited by difficulties in accessing, comparing and analysing data, a lack of systems and processes that support the consolidation of available data in different systems, varying degrees of data literacy among staff, and time and resources to dedicate to such analysis.

Efforts to make child protection data more accessible are already ongoing through the development and launch of an internal UNHCR Child Protection Dashboard, which brings together key data relevant to child protection population, budgetary allocations, staffing levels, and other useful analytical parameters. It is the first time that available child protection data has been compiled and made available for use by UNHCR staff to support their analysis and better inform evidence-based decision-making, and effort that will be replicated in other fields of UNHCR protection activities. Launched in mid-2022, the [Dashboard](#) aims to improve access to consolidated child protection data but does not solve the underlying problems of the data's completeness, accuracy, consistency, accessibility and interoperability of data sets. A separate and concerted effort is required to address these areas.

UNHCR is also involved in inter-agency initiatives to improve official population statistics and data collection standards on forcibly displaced children, including the [Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics](#), the [International Data Alliance for Children on the Move](#), and the [Global Data Working Group of the UNHCR-UNICEF's Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children](#).

Moreover, information gaps limit the ability to develop a complete picture of the situation of child protection within the context of UNHCR's programmes. This also hampers efforts to present a compelling case for greater prioritization of child protection based on the number of children that UNHCR works with and for and the risks such children face. At a fundamental level, lack of age-disaggregated population data on people that UNHCR works with and for means that the overview of the population of forcibly displaced and stateless children is often based on estimations of varying

accuracy, including at interagency level. Efforts are already under way to mitigate some of these gaps by expanding the statistical modelling applied to demographic data and improving population estimates of the number of children that UNHCR works with and for. UNHCR is also working with data providers, such as the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, to improve the interoperability of published population statistics, including for children.

Other gaps include limited or consistent reporting on a number of UNHCR's child protection indicators, which complicates comparisons across contexts and makes it difficult to form an overview of global performance on a range of these indicators. Reporting on child protection indicators has generally declined between 2015 and 2021, further adding to this problem. The new COMPASS Results-Based Management system may be an opportunity to promote a more consistent use of a core set of indicators and more investment in ensuring quality and comparability of data on child protection for planning, program implementation monitoring and reporting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthen the collection of age-disaggregated demographic data.** The collection of age-disaggregated data and reporting of age-disaggregated data should be supported and encouraged. Available data should be published to increase awareness and access to the data, even if existing data sets may still be limited in terms of coverage. This is done for population statistics for forcibly displaced people through the Global Trends Report and a similar effort is made for other people that UNHCR works with and for not covered in the [Global Trends Report](#)⁷³. As mentioned in the conclusions above, while efforts are already under way to expand statistical modelling for age-disaggregated data for regions to fill in their gaps, this should be supported, prioritized and expanded in collaboration with partners in data and analysis and within inter-agency technical forums, and include ensuing age disaggregation of IDPs that UNHCR works with and for.
- **Maintain and promote the use of the Child Protection Dashboard** with the goal of a) promoting the more systematic use of child protection data for programming, advocacy and monitoring, and b) encouraging increased and better-quality data collection and reporting on child protection, allowing staff to see the value in the data that they contribute to generate and collect, including through global reporting requirements. The content of the Dashboard should be reviewed and updated in consultation with regional- and operational-level staff on annual basis and adjusted to the needs and priorities of users at different levels. The form and content of the dashboard should also be periodically updated to reflect the new data available in COMPASS. The possibility of using external data sources such as government or inter-agency forums should be explored to capture child protection more comprehensively.
- **Build capacity on the collection and use of available child protection data.** Build capacity of UNHCR staff and partners to collect, analyse and use child protection data for situation analysis, programme planning, monitoring and reporting, including the through the use of the child protection dashboard. The priority should be to familiarize all UNHCR staff with the available data and ensure it is more systematically used in programme planning and reporting.
- **Streamline procedures for collection, analysis and use of child protection data** to make data sets more coherent, ensure good quality in the COMPASS reporting system and allow for the analysis of different types of data and data from different sources. This entails adopting standard classifications for child protection data including categorisation of risks and interventions with UNHCR and its

⁷³ For an overview of population categories that UNHCR works with and for, see the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2022). Global Trends Report 2021

partners for compatibility of data and strengthening the sharing of aggregate data between UNHCR and its partners. Efforts are underway in this respect through the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.⁷⁴ Internally, it would also include strengthening the quality, compatibility and consistent use of child protection indicators data in COMPASS and ensuring alignment between interventions and indicators in specific operations so that indicators reflect the main interventions implemented by specific operations and across operations the same intervention is measured by the same indicators. Efforts are ongoing to enhance the interoperability of internal UNHCR data systems to allow consolidation of data. Furthermore, analysis of qualitative data must be facilitated through more efficient and standardized reporting mechanisms, such as standardized reporting templates and guidance, and additional analytical tools including through UNHCR's current work to better collect, systematize, store, retrieve and visualise qualitative data.

- **Strengthen national data systems and partnership for child protection data.** UNHCR should invest in work with national authorities and child protection systems to promote data collection and sharing of child protection data for the children that UNHCR works with and for through supporting national administrative data systems and statistical data collection, analysis and reporting. UNHCR's engagement with humanitarian partners such as UNICEF and other inter-agency initiatives for the purpose of collecting and sharing of child protection data should continue, including through the UNHCR-UNICEF Data Working Group and the International Data Alliance for Children on the Move.

PREDICTABILITY OF KEY CHILD PROTECTION RISKS AND STRENGTHENED ANALYSIS

The analysis shows that the types of child protection risks are relatively consistent across time and regions. The analysis highlighted a core set of child protection risks that have been identified by most of UNHCR's operations across the past years. This offers a degree of predictability in detecting the risks to which forcibly displaced and stateless children are exposed, while providing an initial reference point to identify and analyse child protection risks in each operational context and inform child protection programmes. Variations in child protection risks were identified over time and across operations, but they were largely related to how commonly each of the child protection risks were reported in a given operation or region over time.

This report also highlights gaps in the current reporting of child protection risks with some child protection risks not adequately captured by UNHCR. Risks such as sexual violence and violence by caregivers are only reported by some UNCHR operations. Yet, comparative analysis between UNHCR and UNICEF data often shows how, according to the latter, those child protection risks are indeed some of the most widespread child protection risks globally as well as in the contexts that UNHCR operates. These types of risks are typically less visible and more difficult to measure. However, prevalence data collected by national authorities with UNICEF's support indicates that they should be assumed to be present in all UNHCR's operations. End-Year reports by UNHCR Operations also contained little or no reflection on the protective factors for children nor information on how UNHCR might be supporting these.

This report also reveals an overwhelming focus among UNHCR child protection programming on unaccompanied and separated children, with child protection risks affecting other categories of children less consistently reflected in UNHCR planning and reporting. Since 2012, UNHCR's Framework for the Protection of Children has promoted a holistic approach to child protection, but this is not consistently reflected in reporting by operations. While this focus may reflect

74 See the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action – <https://www.alliancecpha.org/en>

the heightened risks that unaccompanied and separated children have and the added value that UNHCR often brings to the overall child protection response, this should not preclude highlighting other child protection risks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Analyse and report on core child protection risks and assume these are present in all operational contexts.** UNHCR's new child protection policy should acknowledge the presence of a core set of child protection risks affecting forcibly displaced and stateless children and should promote child protection analysis and programming that align with this assumption. Operations should use the core set of child protection risks as a starting point for their operational analysis of risks, including participatory assessments and other assessments, outlining if and how this set of child protection risks is relevant in their context. All UNHCR operations should report on child protection risks beyond unaccompanied and separated children.
- **Strengthen the understanding and reporting of protective factors for children.** An analysis and reporting of factors protecting children from risks, gathered also through consultations with communities, will help support a better understanding of how UNHCR can and is help support and enhance these factors.
- **Make the overall child protection risks more visible in UNHCR reporting.** In reporting, operations should provide a clearer analysis of the overall risk environment for forcibly displaced and stateless children. This includes paying attention to the less visible child protection issues such as violence in the family, sexual violence and other factors that contribute to risk, including the overall protection environment, lack of education, economic vulnerabilities and social norms.
- **Clearly articulate the link between the full set of child protection risks and programming responses.** There should be a clear link between risks identified and programming responses reported. Operations should take the broad range of child protection risks into account and prioritise the specific risk and protective factors in their context when planning and implementing child protection programmes. In reporting, the link between the risks identified, the interventions implemented, and the outcomes, should be coherent and clearly articulated. Where operations programming addresses a subset of these risks, the reasoning for the selection should be articulated in the Situation Analysis or description of the child protection outcome area and related outputs; for instance, the other partners' capacity or limited funding which requires operations to prioritize the most prevalent child protection risks.

CONSISTENCY AND ADAPTABILITY IN CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

Analysis of the 2015–2021 data in some cases revealed a degree of misalignment between the types of risks that were identified and the responses that were implemented. Reporting on risks overwhelmingly focused on unaccompanied and separated children, while the most frequently reported responses centred solely on advocacy and technical guidance, which in many cases address a broader range of child protection issues.

Although UNHCR's role in some settings focuses on advocacy and capacity-building, there are several contexts where UNHCR does have a more operational role, in coordination with other child

protection actors and duty bearers. In these settings, responses such as BIAs, alternative care and family tracing may be expected to feature more strongly than they do currently. While these trends may be explained by the presence of partners and authorities who are covering these aspects of the child protection response, other factors such as a lack of funding, prioritization of other activities, or reporting biases may influence UNHCR's delivery on child protection activities.

These considerations are largely absent from the reporting, making it difficult to situate UNHCR's programmatic response to child protection in a holistic context that comprehensively identifies child protection risks and demonstrates how UNHCR's interventions complement the child protection response of other partners, including authorities.

In the design of UNHCR child protection programming it is important that the identified risks and responses are coherent, and that the results chain is clearly articulated in the multiyear planning for UNHCR's child protection programming in a given operation. It is important that explanations be provided when the identified risks and UNHCR's response do not fully align, or where gaps remain in the operation's ability to respond to the identified risks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Build upon UNHCR's existing intervention expertise.** The seven types of child protection interventions implemented by UNHCR operations provide evidence of UNHCR's comparative advantage in specific aspects of child protection programming and a predictable list of programmatic interventions. Specific interventions implemented by UNHCR in a given context will vary according to the detected risks and operational role that UNHCR plays. Where the response is predominantly provided by national actors, including authorities, it would be expected that UNHCR's role focuses on advocacy and capacity-building. Where this capacity is not present, UNHCR may need to step in and provide a wider range of child protection services.
- **Leverage the expertise of partners, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.** The new child protection policy should continue to promote a holistic focus on ensuring protection for displaced and stateless children by adopting a whole of society approach to leverage a full range of partners, including government authorities, local civil society and international organisations to protect children. At the same time, the policy should acknowledge key areas where UNHCR has an added operational value and specific technical expertise, particularly in settings where other actors are present and better placed to provide part of the child protection response. This includes leveraging the expertise of other organizations to provide important child protection interventions where UNHCR does not possess the capacity or expertise to do so. This includes settings where government actors have capacity and are the main responders to child protection issues, and UNHCR's added value is on advocacy and the provision of technical support, as well as in large scale humanitarian responses where other partners implement substantial child protection programming, along accountabilities set forth by the Cluster system.
- **Operational reporting should explain how UNHCR's programmatic focus complements that of its partners.** UNHCR reporting should articulate its added value and provide a rationale for its focus. This not only add coherence to the reporting on UNHCR's interventions, in line with the identified risks, but also improve the identification of gaps in the child protection response and may inform efforts to address these gaps.
- **Provide a menu of interventions that can be adapted to specific contexts to respond to the comprehensive set of child protection risks.** UNHCR should provide a standardized menu of child protection interventions, from which operations can opt for the most suitable and adapt it to

a given operation. Based on the recognition of the patterns of child protection risks identified by the analysis and the seven intervention areas most reported by UNHCR operations, the new child protection policy should provide a menu of interventions to respond to a broad range of child protection issues. The policy should also offer a standardized and systematic way of prioritizing UNHCR interventions in each context based on a contextualized analysis of priority needs, protective factors and the capacity of the authorities and other partners. UNHCR should use these seven types of interventions as a predictable set of options for operations to consider, depending on the nature of the operation and the capacity of partners and other stakeholders. This will provide greater consistency and predictability in UNHCR child protection programming, while allowing operations to respond to the specific priority risks and gaps identified in each context.

- **Address gaps in programmatic responses.** The risks identified and the interventions reported also indicate that there are some child protection risks that are not being adequately addressed by UNHCR child protection programming. As such, UNHCR should invest and encourage partners to increase investment in programmes to address violence in the home against children including parenting programmes and addressing social norms through social and behaviour change on child protection issues.
- **Strengthen linkages with other programmatic areas to protect children.** As outlined, the analysis of the protection risks faced by children should articulate the risks related to the broader protection environment, lack of education, poverty or lack of documentation. Similarly, the child protection interventions should articulate how child protection is mainstreamed and linked with other intervention areas to address these underlying causes of child protection risks.

PREDICTABILITY AND CONSISTENCY OF RESOURCING

While resource allocation for child protection globally has grown significantly over the past six years, the analysis found that levels of resource allocation are still insufficient to meet the needs of a rapidly increasing number of forcibly displaced and stateless children. The number of forcibly displaced children grew from 15.9 million in 2010 to an estimated 36.5 million in 2021 (a 230-per-cent increase) and in some contexts made up more than 60 per cent of people for and with whom UNHCR works. Overall dedicated child protection staffing between 2015 and 2021 have increased from eight to 64. However, although funding for child protection has doubled during this period, trends on staffing do not match the high caseload. To ensure that child protection is prioritized, it is critical that the protection needs of the children that UNHCR works with and for are visible and that the interventions required to address these are adequately prioritized – including those to be achieved through advocacy, as well as the costs and staff needed to implement child protection programmes –.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Align resource allocation with the size of the population of forcibly displaced and stateless children at heightened risk and the required interventions for UNHCR in each specific operational context.** Resources should be allocated according to the size of the population of children and child protection interventions to be implemented by UNHCR. Inconsistent levels of child protection resource allocation across regions and operations should be reviewed to ensure more predictable allocations of child protection funding that aligns with the identified needed interventions and taking into account operational resources as well as complementarity with the action of other child protection actors. Given that more cost-intensive interventions (e.g., case

management) require higher levels of funding, funding should more predictably link to specific types of child protection interventions.

- **Predictable staffing levels.** UNHCR should identify more predictable staffing requirements for child protection, including when dedicated child protection staffing is needed and when child protection activities can be undertaken by protection officers (acting as child protection focal points). In addition, the requirements of these child protection focal points should be identified in terms of time allocated to child protection and expertise in child protection.

LINKING PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OPERATIONAL REALITIES

The information analysed for the purposes of this report suggests that monitoring performance and reporting on child protection responses needs strengthening. Selection of and reporting on many indicators has been too low to ensure meaningful analysis. Moreover, indicators have not been clearly linked to the existing Framework for Child Protection, creating a discrepancy between strategic priorities and performance measurement. The ability to measure progress on key strategic priorities on child protection has been consequently limited and somewhat detached from efforts to standardize child protection programmes. The new results-based management system, COMPASS provides an opportunity to address these issues by providing a core set of mandatory indicators plus a set of good practice indicators which are clearly linked to UNHCR's key programmatic interventions identified in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Link achievements to strategic objectives for child protection.** The new Child Protection Policy is an opportunity to articulate clear objectives and benchmarks for child protection programming in UNHCR. A clear policy supported by meaningful and realistic benchmarks aligned with mandatory and good practice indicators in COMPASS, integrated into UNHCR's organisational data collection and reporting systems will contribute directly to increased coherency between UNHCR's strategic priorities for child protection and organisational systems to track and report on these results.
- **Harmonize indicators based on the operational profile of each operation.** To ensure that it is possible to derive a meaningful analysis on results, reports on the child protection RBM indicators must be sufficient in number and be comparable across operations to determine trends. Existing mandatory child protection outcome indicators should be complemented by greater coherency in output indicators. To enhance comparability and encourage reporting on relevant indicators, child protection programmatic areas should be grouped according to different intervention types and related output indicators, giving operations the possibility to select interventions and corresponding output indicators to report on according to their operational profile to ensure a logical results chain for the child protection outcome area. The [child protection programming](#) guidance provides useful guidance on how to develop a coherent child protection results chain to both link operations programmatic interventions to output indicators and increase coherency in output indicators across UNHCR Operations.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings in this report call for a more systematic approach to identifying the full range of child protection risks, more predictable interventions directly linked and responding to those risks, a more consistent and comparable monitoring and reporting on results. A more systematic allocation of resources and staff is also required, based on the number of forcibly displaced and stateless children at heightened risk, the capacity of authorities and partners and the type of interventions required to protect children that UNHCR works with and for.

In conclusion, this report has demonstrated that systematic, consolidated analysis of available data has provided a clear overview of core questions on child protection:

- 1. Who are the children that UNHCR works with and for?** Children make up 41 per cent of forcibly displaced people, and up to 60 per cent in some operational contexts. For refugees, children make up 42 per cent of the population, while the proportion is higher for IDP and Stateless children, each making up approximately 45 per cent of the population.
- 2. What child protection risks are forcibly displaced and stateless children exposed to?** The analysis identified a predictable set of child protection risks that UNHCR, and partners need to address, of which the top ten most common child protection risks are (in order): Separated children, unaccompanied children, lack or loss of birth certificates, child labour, lack of access to national birth registration and certificates, child marriage, lack of adequate care arrangements, abuse, violence or harassment outside of home or school, lack of child-friendly asylum procedures, and unmet educational needs due to economic, social or cultural obstacles. In addition, sexual violence and violence in the home are prevalent in all settings and need to be addressed by UNHCR.
- 3. What child protection interventions is UNHCR implementing to address these risks?** UNHCR implements a set of seven programmatic interventions, which provide a menu of options that operations can select from, depending on their operational context, resources and capacities of local and international partners. These include 7 broad categories: Building children's resilience and life skills, supporting families to care for children, engaging communities to protect children, strengthening child protection systems and child-friendly procedures, delivering child protection services, establishing child protection coordination, partnership and programming, and other child protection interventions.
- 4. How is UNHCR resourcing child protection programming?** UNHCR's allocation of budget to child protection increased over time, both in absolute amounts and as a proportion of UNHCR's overall budget. Yet, they are not always consistent across regions and operations. Most of UNHCR's child protection workforce are not dedicated child protection staff, which makes analysis and capacity development of the child protection workforce difficult. UNHCR dedicated child protection capacity is limited and decreased significantly in 2021.
- 5. What are the challenges?** The implementation of child protection programmes by UNHCR are affected by several challenges. Between 2015 and 2019, the most common challenges reported by operations were restrictive or non-conducive government policies, lack of national capacity and insufficient funding, followed by a general lack of awareness by the population on the importance of birth certificates), lack of staff capacity and limited humanitarian access. COVID-19 was the most reported challenge, reported by 58 per cent of operations in 2021.

ANNEX I. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK – CHILD PROTECTION RISK CATEGORIES

Risk category	Risks that forcibly displaced and stateless children are exposed to
Physical or emotional violence or abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse and violence at home • Abuse and violence in school • Abuse, violence, harassment outside of home or school • Abduction/kidnapping • Generalized violence and criminality
Health and psychosocial support risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health/psychosocial distress • Children living with disabilities • Substance abuse
Care arrangement or family status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unaccompanied children • Separated children • Children carers for an adult • Child heads of household • Teenage pregnancy • Lack of adequate care arrangements
Gender-based violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage • Sexual violence or exploitation • Gender-based discrimination • LGBTIQ+ or SOGIESC issues for children • Gender-based violence other • Trafficking
Exploitation and discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced recruitment into armed groups or gangs • Harmful social norms • Abandonment/neglect • Street children • Child labour • Out-of-school children • Discrimination, xenophobia

Legal and documentation risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statelessness • Detention • Lack or loss of birth certificates • Lack or loss of ID (national or refugee or other) • Refoulement • Asylum procedures not child-friendly
Lack of access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to national child welfare and social services • Lack of access to national birth registration and certificates • Lack of access to national education system • Lack of access to national health care services • Lack of access to asylum procedures
Unmet needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmet basic needs due to abject poverty or other economic obstacles • Unmet education needs due to economic, social, cultural or obstacles • Unmet food and nutritional needs due to economic, social, cultural or other obstacles • Unmet housing/shelter needs due to economic, social, cultural or other obstacles • Unmet health needs due to economic, social, cultural or other obstacles
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other risks or unmet needs

Source: Operational narrative reporting

ANNEX II. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK – UNHCR’S PROGRAMME INTERVENTION TYPES

Intervention Category	UNHCR Interventions
Building children’s resilience and life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth/child-led or peer-to-peer activities • Information on asylum, solutions, and services • Life skills, education and learning opportunities • Recreational, sporting, arts or other structured activities for children
Supporting families to care for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic strengthening (incl. multi-purpose cash programmes) • Practical and psychosocial support for caregivers (incl. parenting skills) • Legal counselling and support for families • Support for foster families
Engaging communities to protect children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based protection (general) • Community outreach workers • Community centres and safe spaces for children to play, learn, and socialise • Community-led initiatives, community mobilisation • Public information, communication and behaviour change initiatives
Strengthening child protection systems and child-friendly procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy with national actors • Legal and policy reform • Enhancing national CP system and local capacity • Facilitating and monitoring access to national service providers • Child friendly procedures (Registration, Refugee Status Determination, Resettlement, etc). • Integrating refugee children in national plans and services

<p>Delivering child protection services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MHPSS • BIP • Alternatives to detention • Targeted support for children with special needs (incl. children living with disabilities) • Alternative care • Family tracing and reunification • GBV prevention and response • Access to other forms of documentation (aside from Birth Registration) • Birth registration • Referral to services by other actors/sectors • Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Groups and Forces
<p>Establishing child protection coordination, partnership and programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping of existing CP services • Child protection mainstreaming and integrated programming with other sectors • Child Protection coordination • Partnerships • Developing CP standards and SOPS • CP assessments and/or monitoring • Studies and research on CP • Child Protection strategy and planning • Enhancing CP capacity of UNHCR and partner staff • Information management and data analysis on child protection
<p>Other child protection interventions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other child protection interventions

Source: Operational narrative reporting

ANNEX III. OVERVIEW OF DATA AND DATA SOURCES INCLUDED IN THE REVIEW

Main research questions (Key issues)	UNHCR data reviewed	Data sources (Data collection paths)
Who are the children that UNHCR works with and for?	Demographic data on children (Annual Statistic Reporting/ASR data)	UNHCR Refugee Statistics
What child protection risks are children exposed to?	Registration and Protection case management data (ProGres v4 – Registration and Child Protection modules data)	PRIMES Dataport (PowerBI dashboard for proGres v4)
	Global statistical data on child protection	UNICEF Data Warehouse, https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/overview/
	Annual narrative reporting for child protection objective (FOCUS – Results-based planning and reporting database)	Global Focus Insight portal (Objective narrative reports)
What child protection interventions does UNHCR implement?	Budget and expenditure data (FOCUS – Results-based planning and reporting database, & MSRP – integrated enterprise management database)	Global Focus Insight portal (Budget and expenditure reports)
	Annual narrative reporting for child protection objective (FOCUS – Results-based planning and reporting database)	Global Focus Insight portal (Objective narrative reports)
How is UNHCR resourcing child protection programming?	Budget and expenditure data (FOCUS – Results-based planning and reporting database, & MSRP – integrated enterprise management database)	Global Focus Insight portal (Budget and expenditure reports)
	Human resource data (MSRP – integrated enterprise management database)	People Analytics – DHR Workforce Analytics Business Intelligence portal and direct MSRP data queries (Positions reports)

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