

Children in Crisis

What Children Need from the World Humanitarian Summit



With the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals, the global community has made an unprecedented commitment to tackling some of our greatest collective challenges. At the core of the Goals is a pledge to meet the needs of those who have been left behind. As attention now turns to implementing the agenda, perhaps no group should be prioritised more urgently than children living in crises.

Children make up nearly half of the world's displaced people and more than half of all refugees.^{1 2} Some 250 million children live in areas affected by conflict, at risk whether they stay or they flee. Over half a billion children already live in high flood risk areas and climate change threatens to imperil even more.

These are the children at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals. They are also the children at the heart of the new humanitarian agenda. The global community's success or failure in reaching these children will not simply determine whether we reach our collective goals in 2030 – fulfilling their rights and needs must be our starting point in 2016.

To deliver on the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals and the World Humanitarian Summit, UNICEF calls on all relevant parties to:

1 Respond to the unique protection and education needs of children in humanitarian situations

2 Give children and young people a voice in the decisions that affect them

3 Prepare better for the risks that children will face in the future

4 Better match resources to children's needs

Underpinning each of these pillars is an urgent call to bring together work that has been traditionally categorized as either humanitarian or development. For too long, the humanitarian and development systems have worked in silos: relying on different assessments, planning in isolation, and missing opportunities to leverage common assets and knowledge. These patterns have made it increasingly difficult to reliably deliver what children and communities need when they need it.

Realising the promise of both the World Humanitarian Summit and the Sustainable Development Goals requires simultaneously addressing immediate needs and supporting longer-term outcomes for children. It relies on real, practical action to break with the patterns of the past and to better integrate humanitarian and development work. This integrated humanitarian and development work must promote community engagement, early investments in preparedness, collaboration for joint assessments, and improvements in longer-term planning.

¹ UNHCR. 2015. Protection and Building Resilience. Accessed July 2015. <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c1e8.html>.

² UNHCR. 2014. World at War: UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2014. Geneva: UNHCR., p. 2

1. We must respond to the unique protection and education needs of children in humanitarian situations



THE CHALLENGE

All people affected by humanitarian crises have a right to protection. Girls and boys, however, face different risks than adults. From family separation to recruitment by armed forces and groups, the protection needs of children are distinct, wide-ranging, and require dedicated attention. The right to protection is not consistently respected or fulfilled, particularly when children are forced to leave their homes in search of safety.

Protracted crises may mean that children do not return to their homes for years, but extended displacement cannot be allowed to stand in the way of a child's education. An entire generation's potential can be lost if children are not provided with safe, accessible learning environments. Despite these clearly identified needs, protection and education remain among the most underfunded portions of humanitarian appeals.³ To make good on commitments to children in crisis, appeals for child protection and education must be fully and predictably funded.



UNICEF COMMITMENTS

UNICEF is providing direct education and protection support to children in crisis, making safe spaces and learning facilities available while strengthening the education and protection systems needed to deliver services in the long term. UNICEF is continuing its longstanding work to monitor and report grave violations of children's rights and to support survivors. UNICEF also plays a leading role in global partnerships such as the No Lost Generation initiative. These and other initiatives address immediate needs while also investing in a more promising future for the children facing today's crises.



A CALL FOR FURTHER ACTION

UNICEF endorses calls to prevent the erosion of international humanitarian and human rights law and to strengthen enforcement mechanisms that hold violators to account. This includes directly protecting children and other civilians as well as keeping schools, hospitals, water points, and other vital elements of civilian infrastructure safe from attack. UNICEF supports improved coordination of humanitarian and development work while reaffirming the vital importance of always upholding humanitarian principles – including impartiality and neutrality – in the midst of humanitarian crises.

To meet the unique protection and education needs of children, UNICEF urges all relevant parties to:

- » Strengthen national capacities to prevent violations of children's rights and to enforce the protections guaranteed to children under international law; and
- » Support the Education Crisis Platform in securing \$3.85 billion in additional funds by 2020.

³ UNESCO. 2013. Education for All Global Monitoring Report: Policy Paper 10. Paris: UNESCO, p. 2; OCHA. 2015. "Strategic Response Plan(s) 2015: Global requirements & funding per sector." unocha.org. Accessed 23 July 2015. [https://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R30_v2015_23_July_2015_\(15_36\).pdf](https://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R30_v2015_23_July_2015_(15_36).pdf).

2. We must give children and young people a voice in the decisions that affect them



THE CHALLENGE

Although children and young people are the majority of those living through and affected by emergencies, their voices are rarely heard in crisis preparedness, response, or recovery. This represents a lost opportunity to capitalise on their specific experiences and skills. It is also a denial of their right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. When it comes to charting the recovery of their countries, young voices are missing in both direct representation and in consultations. Only one in seven parliamentarians worldwide is under the age of 40 and two in three countries fail to consult young people in the creation of long-term national planning processes.⁴



UNICEF COMMITMENTS

Around the world, meaningful engagement of children and young people has produced better mapping of community-level hazards, better prepared and safer schools, and more effective peer-to-peer communications. Engaging young people allows decision-makers to hear their views and can provide opportunities to mobilise young people on topics such as climate change, risk reduction, peacebuilding and recovery. Recognizing this potential, UNICEF is expanding its investments in inclusive approaches to solicit and incorporate the views of children and young people. By 2017, UNICEF plans to engage ten million young people in both crisis and non-crisis settings through an open-source rapid feedback platform.



A CALL FOR FURTHER ACTION

When given the chance, children and young people have the potential to shape their communities and futures for the better. To support this, UNICEF calls on all relevant actors to:

- » Build the capacity of young people to serve their communities as mobilisers, peacebuilders and leaders; and
- » Engage children and young people from all backgrounds in crisis preparedness, response, and recovery processes and reflect their perspectives in the design and management of programming that impacts them.

⁴ The Global Partnership for Youth in the Post-2015 Agenda. 2015. "The Global Youth Call." Accessed July 2015. http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The_Global_Youth_Call.pdf. p. 3, p. 6

3. We must prepare better for the risks that children will face in the future



THE CHALLENGE

While the world's crises have become more protracted, some risks can be better mapped and anticipated than ever before. Despite this, children continue to suffer during emergencies because of inadequate investments in planning, disaster preparedness and risk reduction. Taking preventative action is increasingly urgent as threats such as climate change and political instability put more and more children at risk.



UNICEF COMMITMENTS

A wealth of evidence confirms the effectiveness of preparing for and reducing the risk of disasters, conflict and other crises. Preparedness saves lives, speeds response, and is significantly more cost effective than responding to emergencies. UNICEF is expanding its commitment to risk-informed programming that promotes resilient development and is making risk analysis a core element of its planning processes. UNICEF also is increasing investments in social protection programming, based on evidence that well-designed safety nets can help families prepare for, manage, and overcome a wide variety of challenges.



A CALL FOR FURTHER ACTION

Spending on preparedness and risk reduction produces real results and provides a strong return on investment. Recognising this, UNICEF urges all countries to take action on the four priority areas outlined in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In addition, experience has shown that in high, middle, and low-income countries alike, social protection systems have helped families prepare for – and often prevent – the worst effects of crisis. They are vital to reducing the risks that families face and should be designed with that in mind. To protect children from the hazards they may face in the future, UNICEF calls on all governments to:

- » Make child-sensitive risk assessment, disaster preparedness, and risk reduction core elements of national and local planning processes; and
- » Deepen investments in social protection and related safety net systems and embed risk-reduction in their design.

4. We must better match resources to children's needs



THE CHALLENGE

Despite large increases in financial support for humanitarian crises over the past fifteen years, the gap between requirements and available resources has never been wider.⁵ Cyclical and protracted crises, in particular, are taking an unprecedented toll on humanitarian budgets and agencies. The result has been devastating for children and families. Making the most efficient use of funding for children is both a practical and moral imperative. Efficiency improvements alone, however, cannot fill the gap between available resources and children's needs. The pool of available resources must be broadened and deepened.



UNICEF COMMITMENTS

UNICEF endorses the three-pronged recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing and is already actively working to implement them. In addition to the improved alignment of planning and support for joint assessments described earlier, UNICEF is:

- » **Shrinking the needs** by growing its investments in preventative programming – including on climate change, peacebuilding, and disaster-risk reduction – to keep the preventable crises at bay;
- » **Growing the base** by continually seeking new ways to expand the pool of available resources, including by striking new partnerships with the private sector and pursuing new financing opportunities; and
- » **Improving efficiency** by increasing its use of cost-effective, flexible programming options, such as cash transfers, that can either build on or form the basis for sustainable social protection systems. UNICEF also is using its procurement capacity to influence product development and supply availability, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian response. This effort alone will yield US\$1 billion in savings between 2012 and 2017. UNICEF has already made commitments to improve data transparency and has been a signatory to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) since 2012.



A CALL FOR FURTHER ACTION

The Grand Bargain proposed by the High-Level Panel recognises that both donors and aid organisations have a role to play in addressing the challenges of humanitarian financing. Recognising the particular challenges posed by restricted funding, UNICEF echoes the call of the Panel for donors to remove earmarks from at least 30 per cent of their humanitarian funding by 2020. Additionally, UNICEF urges donors to:

- » Partner with the private sector and UN agencies to implement innovative financing modalities such as micro-levies, social impact bonds and insurance tools; and
- » Commit to flexible multi-year funding that can be used for both immediate needs as well as longer-term outcomes for children.

Children's needs in complex humanitarian settings – like those of all people affected by crisis – are wide-ranging and regularly changing. The four priority areas here represent the initial investments needed to fulfil children's rights and offer them the opportunities and hope they deserve.

⁵ High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing. 2016. Too important to fail – addressing the humanitarian financing gap. New York: HLPF; and United Nations, General Assembly, *One Humanity: Shared Responsibility – report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit, A/70/709*.