



Organisation Mondiale pour L'Éducation Préscolaire
World Organization for Early Childhood Education
Organización Mundial para la Educación Preescolar



Terre des Hommes
International Federation



Leveraging development cooperation for forcibly displaced children in all their diversity

Development cooperation is an important aspect of reducing poverty among both forcibly displaced persons and their host communities, as part of a broader effort to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹ while also fostering social cohesion and reducing risks of conflict. Investing in development action in displacement-affected contexts can help to address structural challenges that drive displacement, prevent the attainment of solutions and reduce vulnerabilities specific to forcibly displaced people which affects their ability to seize economic opportunities, keeping them in poverty.

Putting forcibly displaced children at the heart of development cooperation to address displacement is critical to ensure inclusion and find durable solutions. Forcibly displaced children, including unaccompanied children, represent approximately 41 per cent of the forcibly displaced population and are amongst the most at-risk groups.² Conflict, climate change, violence and other crises left a record 36.5 million children displaced from their homes at the end of 2021.³ Today, children account for 2 in 5 refugees worldwide. Realizing the rights of forcibly displaced children is therefore essential to leave no one behind in the realisation of the SDGs.

At the same time, forced displacement does not impact all children in the same way. Their experiences and the inequalities and discrimination they face vary based on their gender, disability status, and other forms of diversity. Due to their gender, forcibly displaced girls and the ones in host communities, face particular challenges in accessing a variety of goods and services and are exposed to different forms of gender-based violence, including human trafficking, child, early and forced marriage. Gender inequalities and discrimination represent a major hindrance in efforts to ensure the protection of children, alleviate poverty and ensure prosperity.⁴

Governments hosting refugees must create an enabling environment for inclusion and pave the way for durable solutions

Governments have the responsibility to provide durable solutions, and to protect the rights of children in their territories. The inclusion of forcibly displaced children in national systems and plans is one of the best ways to protect their rights and ensure durable solutions, particularly in displacement crises that are protracted. It helps reduce their vulnerability and ensures they have material, physical, psychosocial and legal safety.

Countries hosting refugees and internally displaced children often have varying levels of capacity, resources, infrastructure or political will to include forcibly displaced persons, including children, in

¹ UNHCR, [Including forced displacement in the SDGs: a new refugee indicator](#), 2019

² UNHCR, [Global Trends Report 2021](#)

³ UNICEF, 'Nearly 37 million children displaced worldwide – highest number ever recorded', 2022

⁴ UN, [Sustainable Development Goals – Gender Equality: why it matters?](#)

their national system. As a result, issues about forcibly displaced children and their families are often addressed in parallel systems, supported by short-term humanitarian resources and services, which many times are unsustainable and costlier in the long run.

Governments should work with UN actors, NGOs/CSOs, refugee-led organisations and children and youth organisations in national planning processes and budgets that consider the needs of forcibly displaced children and their inclusion in national systems. This process should identify challenges and opportunities and develop multi-year plans reflecting priority actions to be taken in the short, medium and long term. This is particularly important in the areas of education, child protection, adequate housing, and health, including psycho-social support and justice. Doing so ensures coherence and adequate support from different actors from the humanitarian and development sectors, and paves the way to truly durable solutions.

The inclusion of forcibly displaced children must go hand-in-hand with measures to reduce inequalities based on gender, disability and other forms of diversity

Individual experiences of displacement and the risks that children encounter are influenced by their gender, age, disability status, and separation from their families and communities, among others. Governments should ensure measures to promote the inclusion of forcibly displaced children in national systems considering the particular barriers those groups of refugees face in accessing a range of goods and services and realising their rights.

As a key part of this approach, governments should budget for the inclusion of refugee children in national plans to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence (GBV). GBV is a human rights violation and affects all aspects of a person's protection and well-being. Governments should ensure that national laws and policies address prevention and guarantee forcibly displaced children who are at risk or survivors of GBV to access services that reduce risks, ensure their safety, improve their physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health, and facilitate their access to justice and reparations.

Governments should also create an enabling environment to promote gender equality. This means not only tackling the needs but to improve the position of girls in society, both forcibly displaced and from host communities, understanding and addressing how gender norms influence children throughout their life course.⁵ Governments should create or adapt policies that strengthen girls' agency and promote equal access to quality education, protection and health services.⁶ It is important to work with and support boys to promote gender equality.

Empower children and young people to participate and be at the centre of solutions and establish sustainable mechanisms to support their participation

Children are key stakeholders and agents for change both for themselves and their community. Meaningful participation of children in decisions that affect them is a right set out by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is an integral part of the Global Compact on Refugees programme of action. Children and youth should be engaged in identifying needs, designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating policies and programmes. Plans should include consultations with diverse groups of children and put in place mechanisms and enablers for their systematic, active and meaningful participation.

⁵ Plan International, [Gender Transformative Approach](#), 2019

⁶ UNHCR, [UNHCR - Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability 2018](#)

Donors and financial institutions must ensure their financing systems are adapted to support the inclusion of forcibly displaced children.

Including forcibly displaced children in national systems requires resources, capacity and coordination to move from theory to practice. We recognise that most displaced and stateless persons are hosted in low and middle-income countries, where there are limited resources and absorption capacity to include forcibly displaced people in national systems.

Donors, across their humanitarian and development branches and international financial institutions, should work with governments, UN actors, NGOs/CSOs, refugee-led organisations and children and youth organisations to identify key areas of investment that would allow for the inclusion of forcibly displaced children in national systems. Providing multi-year and flexible funding, improving the collection of age, gender and diversity disaggregated data as well as capacity sharing are effective ways to ensure resources are directed towards long-term change.

International Financing Institutions should ensure that the needs and rights of forcibly displaced children are included in their displacement strategies. In this sense, the World Bank Window for Host Communities and Refugees represents a good example but could benefit from a greater focus on access of displaced children to public services in the countries eligible for this source of funding. NGOs, refugee-led organisations and refugee children should be included in decision-making.