



2026

GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES INDICATOR BRIEF

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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*Thailand. Close-up of the completed collaborative artwork created during an art workshop at NIST International School in Bangkok.
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Introduction

Refugee children face heightened risks and long-term consequences from forced displacement.

By the end of 2025, there were **14 million refugee children**.¹ Between 2018 and 2025, an estimated **2.4 million children were born as refugees**, highlighting that displacement affects not only those who flee but also a generation growing up in exile. For many children, displacement can disrupt safety, education, health care, development and future opportunities.

Refugee children are entitled to international protection and to the rights and freedoms set out in the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and the [1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) (the 1951 Refugee Convention) without discrimination. Recognizing that children face distinct risks and vulnerabilities in displacement, the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) affirms that States and the international community share responsibility for their protection. Grounded in international refugee and human rights law, the GCR calls for age-sensitive and inclusive responses that enable refugee children to access protection, education, health care and other essential services.

It also emphasizes protection from violence, abuse and exploitation, the importance of family unity, and the meaningful participation of children and adolescents in decisions that affect their lives.

This Brief examines the situation of refugee children through the lens of the GCR. Drawing on the [GCR Indicator Framework](#) and related data sources, it highlights **where progress has been made, where gaps remain, and where further action is needed, including in advancing UNHCR's 50 by 35 vision** of expanding opportunities for refugees to achieve greater self-reliance and access pathways to solutions by 2035. Released in the lead-up to the [High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection and Solutions 2026](#), the Brief contributes evidence to discussions on the future of protection and solutions and helps inform priorities, commitments and pledge development in preparation for the Global Refugee Forum 2027. As the first thematic GCR Indicator Brief, it provides timely evidence between biennial [GCR Indicator Reports](#) and supports accountability, policy dialogue and action to advance the rights and well-being of refugee children.

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Key findings and recommendations

Scale of refugee child displacement and unequal hosting responsibility



The number of refugee children remains high, and they are disproportionately hosted in low- and middle-income countries.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Increase predictable support to low- and middle-income host countries, focusing on protection, education and inclusion and using the GCR and the 50 by 35 vision to expand self-reliance and durable solutions.

By the end 2025,
nearly 14 million
children were refugees



accounting for almost
two in five
refugees worldwide,

with **82% of refugee children**
were hosted in low- and middle-
income countries.

Children killed and displaced by armed conflict



Widespread displacement, persistently high conflict-related deaths among children and growing aid cuts are increasing protection risks for children and eroding access to protection and essential services.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Prevent forced displacement and protect children by investing in diplomacy, conflict prevention and sustainable development, while upholding international humanitarian and human rights law.

A devastating toll
for children:



1 in 5

recorded conflict-related
deaths are **children**.

OBJECTIVE 1: EASE PRESSURES ON HOST COUNTRIES

Child-focused assistance to refugee situations



Child-focused Official Development Assistance (ODA) for refugee situations in low-income countries (LICs) and middle-income countries (MICs) grew through 2023 but fell in 2024, raising concerns about sustaining progress amid wider aid cuts.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Protect and expand flexible child-focused financing by broadening the donor base and mobilizing private sector and innovative finance.

Child-focused ODA for refugee situations in LICs and MICs rose from

USD 2.6 billion
(18% of refugee-related ODA)
in 2020 to

USD 3.6 billion
(24%) in 2023, before
declining to

USD 2.9 billion
(21%) in 2024



National arrangements for refugee responses

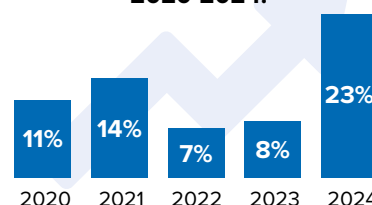


National actors played an increasingly prominent role in refugee responses, with direct funding through child-focused ODA for refugee situations rebounding sharply in 2024 after a decline in 2022-2023.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Increase direct, transparent and predictable funding and decision-making authority for national and local actors delivering services to refugee children.

The share of child-focused ODA for refugee situations channelled directly through national actors rose in 2024, **the highest level recorded during 2020-2024.**



OBJECTIVE 2: ENHANCE REFUGEE SELF-RELIANCE

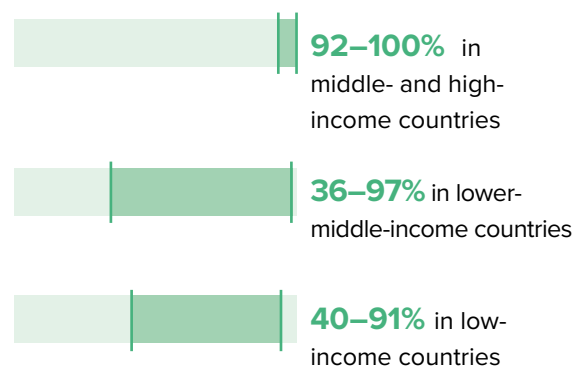
Birth registration

Large disparities in birth registration coverage suggest that refugee children's access to legal identity depends on the quality and inclusiveness of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems, which matter more than income level alone.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Remove legal, administrative and financial barriers to birth registration, link registration with health services and guarantee equal access to birth certificates for refugees and stateless people.

Birth registration coverage among refugee children under five ranged from:



Education inclusion

Education inclusion is improving, with a majority of refugee children enrolled in public schools, but nearly half remain excluded.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Turn inclusive education policies into enrolment, retention and learning by addressing documentation, language, cost, capacity and data gaps.

As of 2025,
51% of refugee children



were enrolled in public schools,
up from **48%** in 2022.

Child poverty

Refugee children face disproportionately high levels of poverty, with at least three-quarters living below international poverty lines in seven of the 10 countries studied, reflecting persistent gaps in income, services and opportunities compared with host populations.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Reduce child poverty by expanding caregivers' access to decent work and including refugee households in social protection, education, health care and other national services.

In 7 out of 10
countries with data,



3 out of 4
refugee children **lived below the**
international poverty line.

OBJECTIVE 3: EXPAND ACCESS TO THIRD-COUNTRY SOLUTIONS

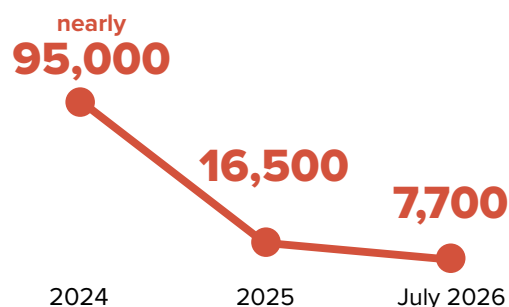
Resettlement

After reaching record highs in 2024, resettlement opportunities for refugee children declined sharply in 2025 and 2026, despite persistently high global needs, limiting access to protection and durable solutions for children facing the greatest risks.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Increase resettlement places, broaden participation among States and communities, and prioritize children and families with acute protection needs.

Resettlement opportunities for refugee children collapsed after 2024, **with submissions to States declining sharply**



OBJECTIVE 3: EXPAND ACCESS TO THIRD-COUNTRY SOLUTIONS

Complementary pathways



Family reunification remains the main pathway for refugee children, with study and work pathways remaining minimal as most programmes target adult students and workers.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Identify and address the barriers that children face, incorporate child-sensitive safeguards into pathway design and implementation, protect family unity throughout the process, and improve the data landscape on complementary pathways.



Between 2021 and 2024, an estimated

145,045 children

received permits, almost entirely for family reunification purposes.

OBJECTIVE 4: SUPPORT CONDITIONS IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN FOR RETURN IN SAFETY AND DIGNITY

Assistance for returnee children



Support for returnee children remained limited, representing only a small share of child-focused ODA despite rising return movements and substantial reintegration needs.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Align predictable, multi-year reintegration financing with the number, location and needs of returnee children, especially in high-return and underfunded areas.

Between 2020 and 2024,

only 3.2%
(USD 474 million)

of child-focused ODA for refugee situations supported returnee children and their communities of return.

Return and reintegration



Returning home does not always bring safety or stability, as many children return to conflict-affected communities where education, health care, protection services and livelihood opportunities remain limited.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Ensure returns are voluntary, informed, safe and dignified, and invest in documentation, education, health care, protection, infrastructure and livelihoods in communities of return.

Refugee child returns reached a ten-year high in 2025, with an estimated

1.1 million children



accounting for around **two in five** of all refugee returns.

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGES

Child-focused pledges



Strong progress on child-focused pledges demonstrates that GCR stakeholders are translating commitments into action, helping embed refugee and stateless children's inclusion within national systems, services and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Use GRF 2027 to close the implementation gaps identified in this Brief through targeted commitments, stronger accountability and additional partnerships and financing.

Approximately
480 child-focused pledges have been made, with
nearly 90%
already being
implemented
or fulfilled.



The scale of refugee child displacement and hosting responsibility

The number of refugee children remains at a historically high level, despite a slight decline in 2024.

Nearly **14 million refugee children** were living in displacement at the end of 2025. They accounted for **39 per cent** of the world's 35.6 million refugees, including people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection (see Figure 1). The number of refugee children remains much higher than a decade ago despite a slight decrease in recent years. Having risen from 14.2 million in 2022 to 15 million in 2024, the number of refugee children fell slightly to 14 million in 2025, mirroring trends in the overall refugee population.

Over the past decade, the number of refugee children **nearly tripled**, rising from **4.7 million at the end of 2015 to almost 14 million at the end of 2025**. Most of this growth occurred between 2017 and 2022, driven by large-scale displacement from Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, and Venezuela.

Since 2022, refugee population growth has slowed and recently reversed. The total refugee population fell by **3 per cent between 2024 and 2025**, while the number of refugee children declined from **15 million to 14 million, a 7 per cent decrease**. As a result, the share of children among refugees decreased from **42 per cent in 2021 to 39 per cent in 2025**. Increased returns, particularly to Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Sudan, contributed to this decline, although many occurred under adverse circumstances

Guatemala. A refugee girl plays with her shadow in front of a mural of Solidarity Cities, near a health centre benefited by UNHCR.
© UNHCR/Victor Sánchez Mejía



and with uncertain prospects for sustainable reintegration and at risk of further displacement. At the same time, opportunities for resettlement and complementary pathways continued to decline.

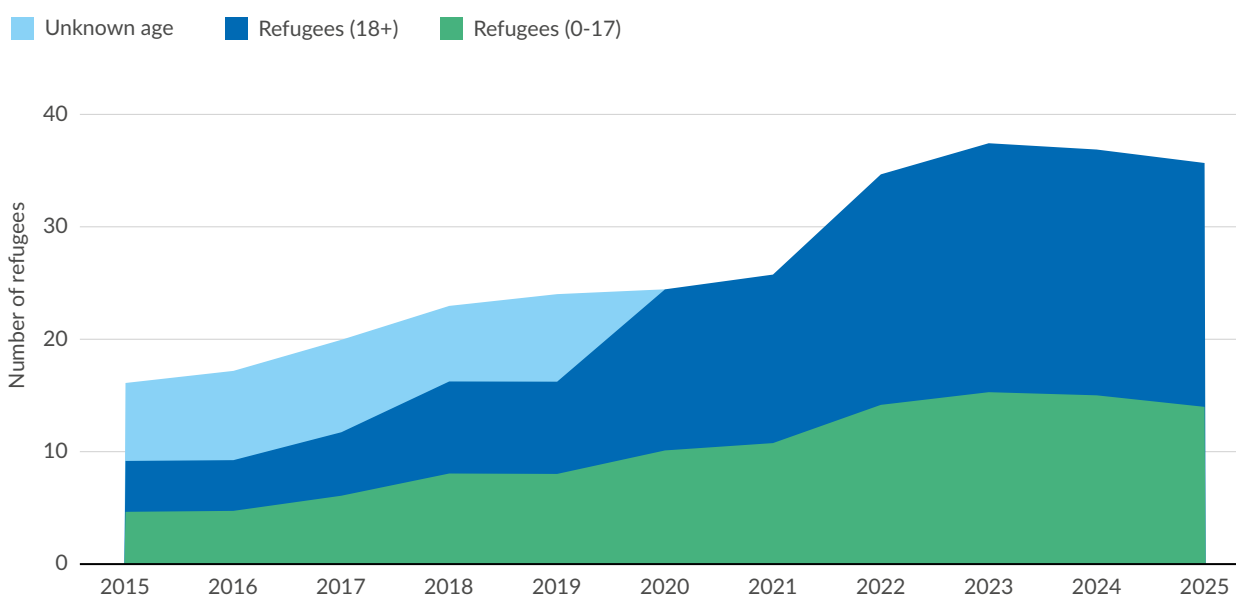
Despite this recent decrease, children remain disproportionately affected by forced displacement. **In 2025, they made up 39 per cent of refugees, against**

29 per cent of the global population. While children's share of the global population declined from 31 per cent in 2015 to 29 per cent in 2025, their share among refugees remained consistently higher, with **nearly two in five refugees worldwide being children in 2025.**

This imbalance reinforces the unequal hosting pattern discussed below and the need for responsibility-sharing examined under Objective 1.

Figure 1: Number of refugees, by age | 2015-2025 (year-on-year)

Million



International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC)

Established in 2020, [IDAC](#) works to improve data and statistics on children who have been directly or indirectly affected by displacement and migration, and to promote evidence-based policies and programmes.

IDAC is a global, cross-sectoral coalition jointly led by the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with support from the European Union.

IDAC's key tasks include mapping data gaps and data needs, identifying measurement challenges and providing solutions, and strengthening data systems and capacities in countries. It brings together governments, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, academics, civil society and young people to strengthen the evidence base for improving the lives of displaced and migrant children.

Refugee children are primarily hosted in low- and middle-income countries

Most refugee children live in countries with limited resources. By the end of 2025, **82 per cent of refugee children were hosted in low- and middle-income countries²**, much higher than the share of total refugees (67 per cent), while **13 per cent lived in high-income countries** (Figure 2). Middle-income countries hosted the largest share (53 per cent), followed by low-income countries (29 per cent).

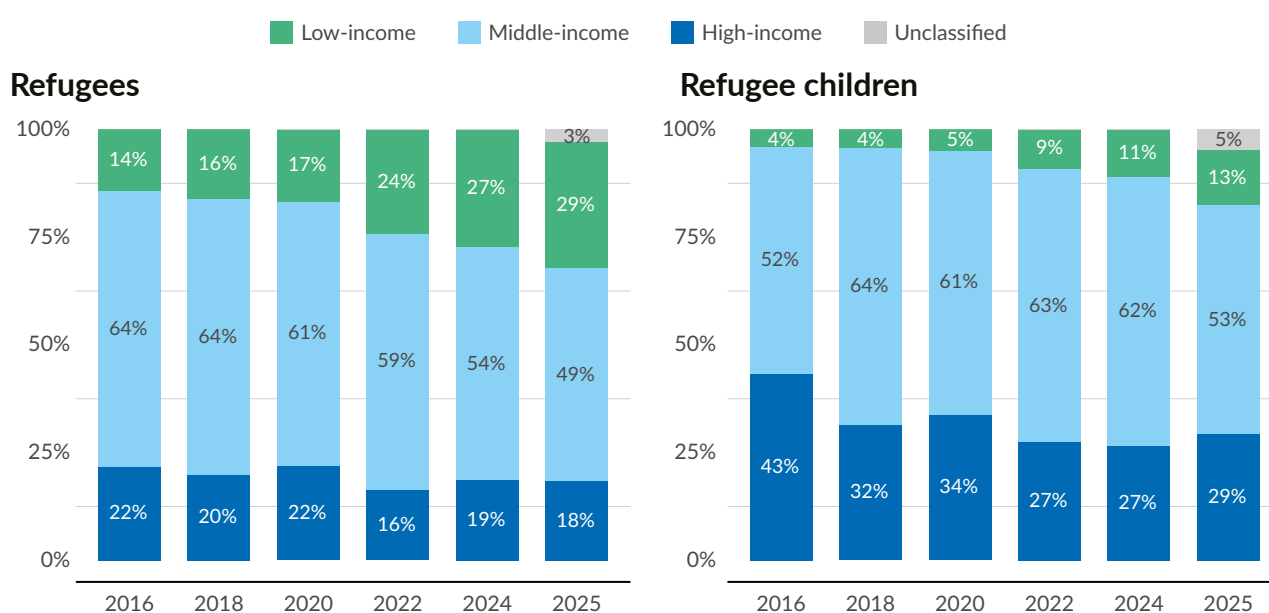
This pattern is even more pronounced for refugee children than for refugees overall. Although the share of refugees hosted by high-income countries increased from **14 per cent in 2016 to 29 per cent in 2025**, the share of refugee children hosted by high-income countries rose only from **4 per cent to 13 per cent** over the same period.

Most refugee children remain close to their countries of origin, as families seek safety in nearby countries where they can more quickly access protection, support networks, and opportunities for eventual return. Those neighbouring countries are predominantly low- and middle-income, and

low-income countries consequently shoulder a disproportionate responsibility. In 2025, they hosted **29 per cent of refugee children**, against **18 per cent of the overall refugee population**. Uganda (1 million), Chad (570,000), Sudan (420,000), South Sudan (330,000) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (270,000) each host large refugee child populations despite significant development and resource constraints.

This concentration of refugee children in lower-income settings makes international responsibility-sharing essential. Where protection gaps, limited services and insufficient prospects persist in countries of asylum, some families move onward, often along routes also used by migrants. These same pressures drive protection risks in countries of asylum, pushing families towards harmful practices such as child labour and child marriage. Addressing them closer to countries of origin can reduce children's exposure to dangerous journeys and support access to protection and solutions.³ The financing analysis under Objective 1 therefore examines whether international support is keeping pace with hosting responsibilities, while later sections assess inclusion in national systems and access to solutions.

Figure 2: Hosting refugees and refugee children, by country income level | 2016-2025
Percentage



DISCLAIMER: Figures do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

The number of children killed in armed conflicts remains alarmingly high, and forced displacement remains widespread.

Child casualties in armed conflicts highlight the devastating human cost of warfare conducted with insufficient regard for the principles of distinction and proportionality, exposing children to grave harm across civilian settings, where they should have been safe. **Children accounted for one in five conflict-related deaths globally.⁴ The number of children killed in conflict fell between 2024 and 2025, but the toll remains high, and millions of children continue to be forcibly displaced by violence.** Across a selected set of armed conflict situations covered by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 16.1.2, excluding the State of Palestine,⁵ child conflict-related deaths fell from more than **4,800 in 2015 to around 2,200 deaths in 2025**. Displacement did not decline at the same pace. The number of refugee children from the same selected armed conflicts rose from **3.4 million**

in 2015 to more than 10.2 million by 2024, before falling to around 8.8 million in 2025 (see Figure 3).

Conflict can end long before its consequences do.

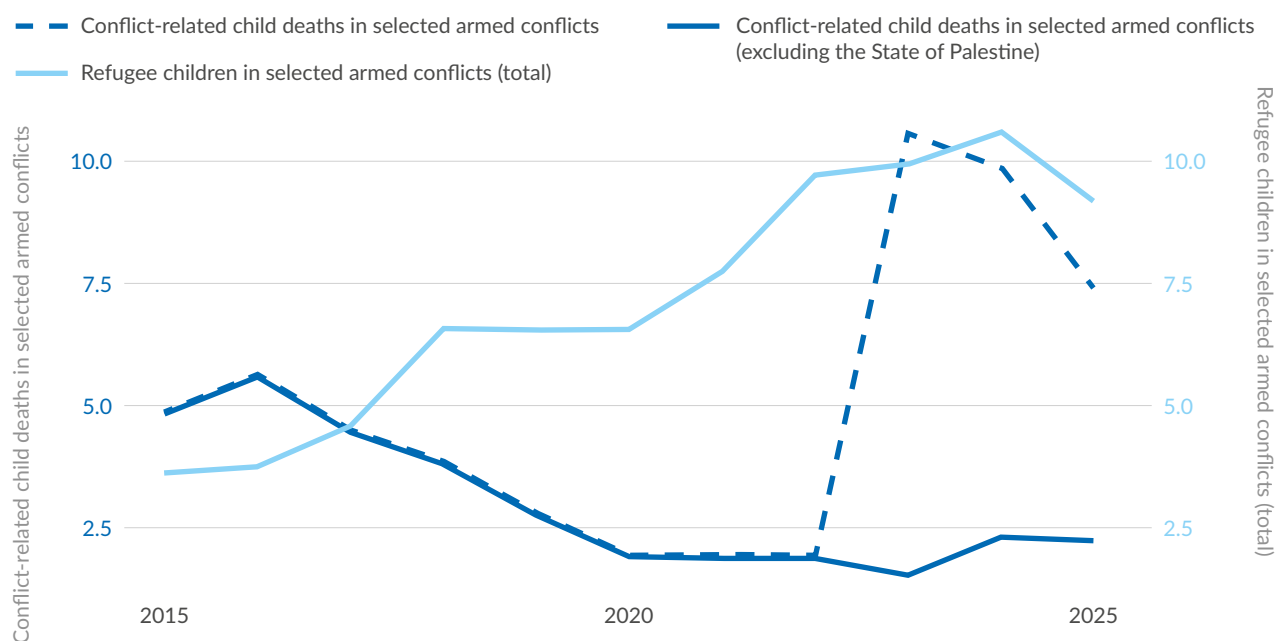
Children face particular risks during armed conflict, including exposure to explosive weapons in populated areas, attacks on schools and hospitals, recruitment and use by armed actors, abduction, and other grave violations. **Repeated attacks on civilian infrastructure and essential services continue to disrupt children's safety, education, and well-being.⁶** These effects outlast the fighting: many children cannot return because insecurity, damaged infrastructure and limited services persist long after violence subsides.

Large refugee child populations persist because displacement is increasingly protracted.

Saving lives is essential, but children also need a future. Many refugee families hope to return home when it is safe, yet displacement often lasts for decades. Durable solutions require creating the conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified return while ensuring refugee children can learn, grow, and thrive wherever they are. This means investing in protection, education, inclusion, and self-reliance, while addressing the root causes of displacement.

Figure 3: Comparing conflict-related child deaths and number of refugee children | 2015-2025

Number of conflict-related child deaths (thousand), number of refugee children (million)



The extent of responsibility-sharing

The last chapter showed that most refugee children are hosted in low- and middle-income countries. This chapter examines how that responsibility is effectively shared, looking at financing, inclusion in national systems and access to solutions under the four objectives of the GCR. The analysis follows

the GCR Indicator Framework: each section takes one of the Framework's outcomes and examines it from the perspective of refugee children, using the corresponding indicators where child-disaggregated data are available.

Objective 1: Ease pressures on host countries

GCR INDICATOR FRAMEWORK OUTCOME 1.1: Resources supporting additional instruments and programmes are made available for refugees and host communities by an increasing number of donors

Child-focused ODA for refugee situations grew throughout 2023 but fell in 2024, raising concerns about sustaining progress amid wider aid cuts.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) reaching refugee children increased between 2020 and 2023, although recent trends suggest this progress will be difficult to sustain. In low- and middle-income countries (LICs and MICS), child-focused ODA⁷ for refugee situations **rose from approximately USD 2.6 billion in 2020 to USD 3.6 billion in 2023**, before falling to **USD 2.9 billion in 2024**. Its share of total ODA for refugee situations followed the same trend, **increasing from 18 per cent in 2020 to 24 per cent in 2023**, before falling to **21 per cent in 2024** (see Figure 4).⁸ These findings indicate that child-focused ODA for refugee situations grew faster than overall refugee-related ODA in 2023, although the decline in 2024 points to growing pressure on this progress.

Child-focused financing also accounted for a larger share of ODA for refugee situations than of ODA overall. Across all ODA, the share identified as child-focused increased only modestly, from **14 per cent in 2020 to 16 per cent in 2024**.⁹ This suggests that a larger share of refugee-related ODA was child-focused than of ODA overall, although children and broader refugee populations also benefit from many interventions not classified as child-focused. As the broader aid environment contracts, maintaining investment in refugee children may become increasingly challenging. These figures should be interpreted with caution, as estimates of child-focused ODA depend on the methodology used to identify activities benefiting children (see **Note on data sources and methodology**) and on the completeness and quality of donor reporting.

The estimates also point to differences in the composition of assistance. Humanitarian assistance consistently made up the largest share of overall ODA to refugee situations. In contrast, child-focused ODA appeared more development-oriented, with development assistance exceeding humanitarian assistance throughout 2020-2024. This pattern suggests that investments targeting refugee

children were more likely to focus on longer-term development outcomes than on humanitarian response alone. **This overall pattern, however, varied across regions.** Child-focused ODA remained predominantly development-oriented across much of Asia and Europe, while humanitarian assistance represented a larger share in the Americas and the Middle East. Peace-related assistance remained relatively small overall but was more prominent in parts of Africa, reflecting differing humanitarian, development and peacebuilding priorities across refugee situations.

The sectoral distribution of child-focused ODA for refugee situations further reinforces this finding.

Compared with overall ODA to refugee situations, a larger share of child-focused assistance was directed towards sectors such as education (e.g. schools and teacher training), government and civil society (e.g. civil registration, identity documents and local governance), health (e.g. primary health care and maternal and child health services), and infrastructure and services (e.g. water, sanitation, housing and electricity). This aligns with broader evidence that child-focused financing prioritizes investments in services and systems that support

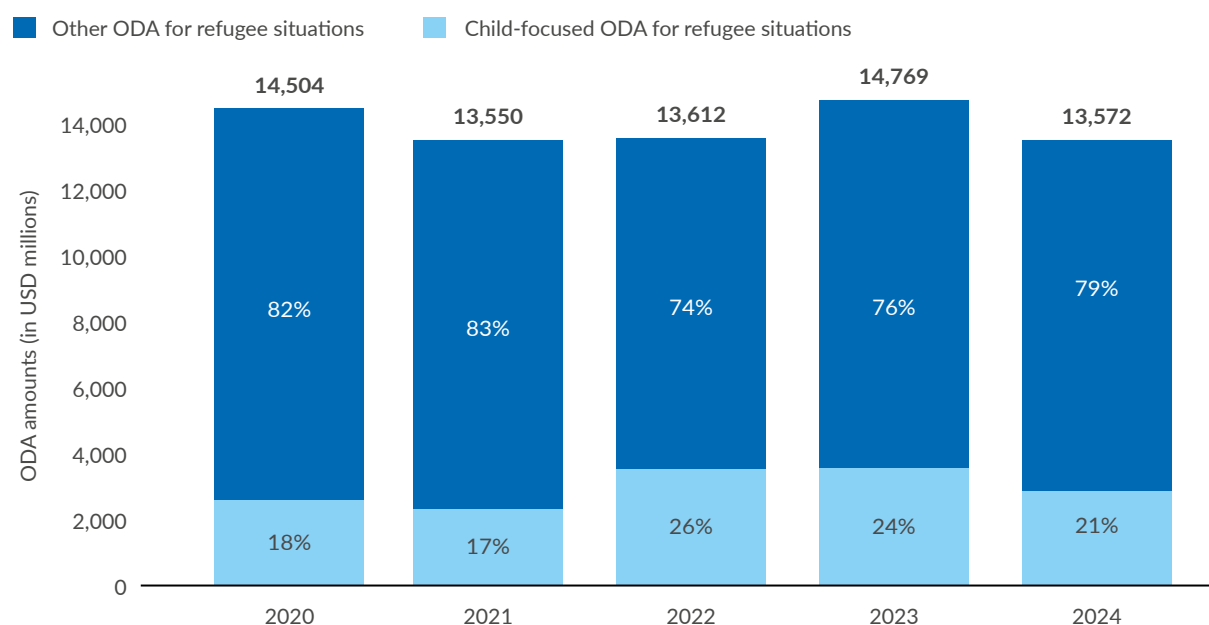
children's wellbeing and development over the longer term. A smaller share was allocated to humanitarian assistance, even though a high proportion of refugee children live in humanitarian settings. The longer-term orientation is welcome, but it needs to be matched by sustained humanitarian funding: where it is not, acute protection needs are the first to go unmet.

Sustained investment in refugee children will be particularly important given recent reductions in humanitarian and development financing.

Preliminary OECD data indicate that ODA from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors fell by more than 23 per cent in 2025, the largest annual contraction on record, while humanitarian assistance declined by nearly 36 per cent. Further reductions are projected in 2026¹⁰ (see *Impact of Aid Cuts on Children*). The decline in overall aid increases the importance of protecting the child-focused share of financing and broadening the support base. The next section examines a separate question: whether available resources are reaching the national and local actors responsible for implementation.

Figure 4: Child-focused ODA for refugee situations | 2020-2024, USD disbursements in 2024 constant prices

Million



Impact of aid cuts on children

Aid cuts are putting children's protection at risk

Child protection services are shrinking as funding falls and needs go unmet. In 2024, UNHCR identified USD 246 million in child refugee protection needs but was only able to allocate USD 108 million, leaving 56 per cent unmet. In 2025, expenditure fell further to USD 76 million against budgeted needs of USD 224 million, leaving 66 per cent unmet. For 2026, UNHCR's global financial requirements for child protection have declined again, to USD 197 million.¹¹

These shortfalls are already reducing child protection coverage. In 2025, UNHCR planned to reach 2.74 million children and caregivers with child protection services across 69 country operations but reached approximately 1.4 million. Support through [Best Interests Procedures](#) (BIP) reached only around 299,000 children, less than one third of the annual target. The impact is visible at country level. In Kenya, BIP coverage fell by 67 per cent compared with 2024, while alternative care coverage dropped from 77 to 45 per cent. In Burundi, alternative care coverage declined from 92 to 5 per cent.

Funding cuts are reducing access to protection services that children and families rely on.

As resources decline, essential services such as registration, education, cash assistance and support for survivors of violence are being scaled back. In Mali, education programmes stopped for 11,500 Burkinabè refugee children while 13,000 families lost access to cash assistance. In South Sudan, 75 per cent of UNHCR [safe spaces for women and girls](#) ceased providing services, leaving up to 80,000 survivors of violence without support. In Egypt, the closure of two of three registration centres limited access to protection and documentation services.

At the same time, national systems and child protection services are under growing strain. Many national child protection systems remain under-resourced, while reductions in UNHCR and partner staffing are limiting the quality, consistency and reach of prevention and response services.

Sustained and flexible funding is needed to maintain protection services and specialized capacity. Despite slower growth rates, global displacement continues to reach record levels, placing increasing pressure on already overstretched systems. Continued investment is essential to protect forcibly displaced and stateless children and safeguard their rights, well-being and future opportunities.

GCR INDICATOR FRAMEWORK OUTCOME 1.2: National arrangements and coordinated refugee responses are supported

National actors received a larger share of child-focused ODA in 2024, reversing a three-year decline.

The share of child-focused ODA for refugee situations channelled directly through national actors fell between 2021 and 2023 before rising sharply in 2024. It went from 11 per cent in 2020 to

14 per cent in 2021, fell to 7 per cent in 2022 and 8 per cent in 2023, then rose to 23 per cent in 2024, its highest level in the period examined. A similar pattern was observed for overall ODA for refugee situations, suggesting that the decline observed in 2022-2023 reflected a broader shift rather than a pattern specific to child-focused assistance.

National actors, including governments, local NGOs and public institutions, are central to delivering services and to strengthening national systems for

refugees and host communities. The increase in direct funding in 2024 points to renewed investment in nationally led responses and capacity development needed to support refugee children and their families and advance more sustainable responses over time. These estimates capture only the first implementing partner. They do not include funding initially channelled through United Nations agencies or other international organizations and later transferred to national actors. As a result, they measure direct funding to national actors rather than the total resources that may ultimately have reached them.

Other evidence also points to a growing role for local and national actors in refugee responses. Although data on refugee responses specifically

targeted to children are not available, the proportion of local and national partners in Refugee Response Plans (RRPs) rose from 28 to 35 per cent between 2024 and 2025. Between 2020 and 2025, data show that organizations led by women, refugees, youth, faith-based actors, and persons with disabilities assumed a larger role in RRP. Local actors continued to account for the vast majority of UNHCR-funded partners (87 per cent in 2025), including local NGOs and refugee-, IDP- and women-led organizations. These findings suggest that local actors continue to play a substantial role in refugee responses. When refugee responses are jointly planned, locally anchored and supported through national systems, they can deliver more coherent, efficient and sustainable results.

Objective 2: Enhance refugee self-reliance

GCR INDICATOR FRAMEWORK OUTCOME 2.1: Refugees are able to actively participate in the social and economic life of host countries

Many refugee children still face barriers to birth registration.¹³

Participation in the social and economic life of a host country begins with legal recognition. Birth registration is often a child's first official recognition by the State and provides proof of legal identity. For refugee and stateless children, it is a critical protection tool. It helps establish entitlement to a nationality, reduces the risk of statelessness, and can facilitate access to education, health care, social protection, family reunification and other rights and services throughout life.¹⁴

Available data from 27 host countries between 2022 and 2025 show that birth registration coverage among refugee children under five varies widely across host countries with different income levels. Registration is nearly universal in high-income countries, ranging from **97 to 100 per cent**, and remains similarly high in upper middle-income countries, where rates range from **92 to 100 per cent**. In contrast, coverage varies widely in lower middle-income countries, from **36 to 97 per**

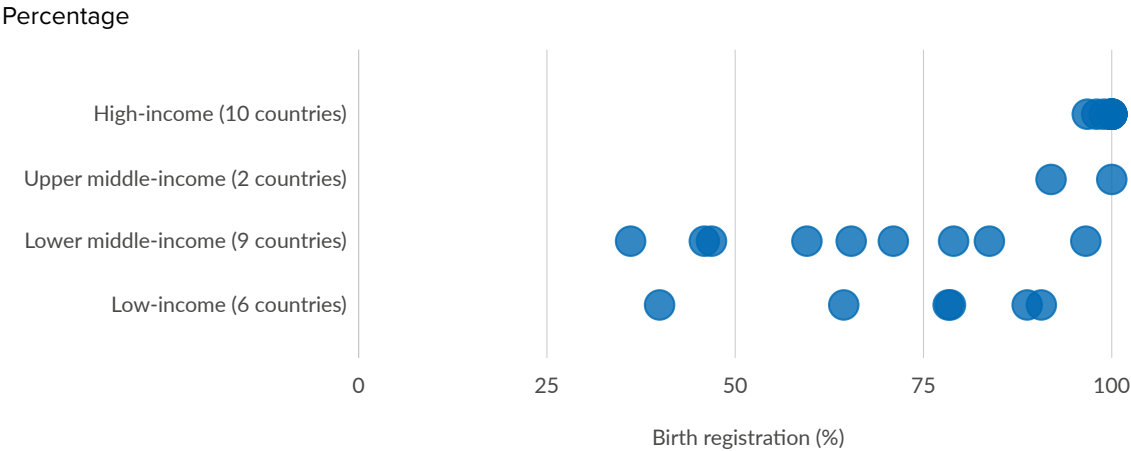
cent, and in low-income countries, from **40 to 91 per cent** (see Figure 5). These wide disparities indicate that refugee children's access to birth registration depends not only on a country's income level but also on the accessibility, quality and inclusiveness of national registration systems. These figures come from different surveys with varying methodologies, sampling designs and reference periods. They indicate the range of situations refugee children face rather than a strict country-by-country comparison (see **Note on data sources and methodology**).

Near-universal birth registration is a hallmark of strong civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems. Countries with the highest coverage have typically expanded access to registration services, integrated birth registration with health systems, reduced administrative and financial barriers, and ensured timely issuance of birth certificates. The experiences of Romania, a high-income country, and the Republic of Moldova, an upper-middle-income country, where birth registration for refugee children is effectively universal, as well as Burundi, where coverage reaches 91 per cent of refugee children despite low-income levels, suggest that the accessibility, quality and inclusiveness of CRVS systems may matter as much as national income

in determining whether refugee children obtain a legal identity. Sustained progress is also associated with strong governance, adequate financing, digitalized processes and effective coordination among civil registration, health and statistical authorities. Importantly, these systems are inclusive and accessible to all population groups, including refugees and stateless people.¹⁵

Lower registration levels often reflect practical and legal barriers faced by displaced families, including disrupted services, lost documents, movement restrictions, costs, distance, complex procedures and discrimination. Removing these barriers is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal target 16.9, legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030. Documentation can facilitate school enrolment (discussed below), family reunification and complementary pathways under Objective 3, and reintegration after return under Objective 4.

Figure 5: Refugee birth registration coverage¹⁶ | 2022 and 2025



GCR INDICATOR FRAMEWORK OUTCOME 2.2: Refugee and host community self-reliance is strengthened

Education inclusion is improving, but nearly half of refugee children remain outside national school systems.

Education is central to the GCR’s objectives and critical to helping refugee children rebuild their lives, develop skills, and contribute to their communities. As of 2025, data from 48 countries show that **51 per cent** of primary- and secondary-school-aged refugee children were enrolled in national education systems, up from **49 per cent** in 2024 and **48 per cent** in 2022 (see Figure 6). Despite this modest progress, nearly half of

refugee children in the countries covered by the indicator were still not enrolled in national schools, highlighting the gap between policy commitments and actual access.

The policy environment for refugee inclusion in national education systems has improved in recent years. More countries have adopted laws and policies that allow refugee children to access education alongside nationals, reflecting growing efforts to include refugees in national systems. **Yet inclusion on paper does not always translate into inclusion in practice.** Refugee families continue to face barriers such as documentation requirements, language differences, indirect schooling costs, and other socio-economic constraints that limit school participation. Many countries with inclusive education policies still report relatively low

refugee enrolment rates, underscoring the need to strengthen implementation and address obstacles beyond the policy framework.

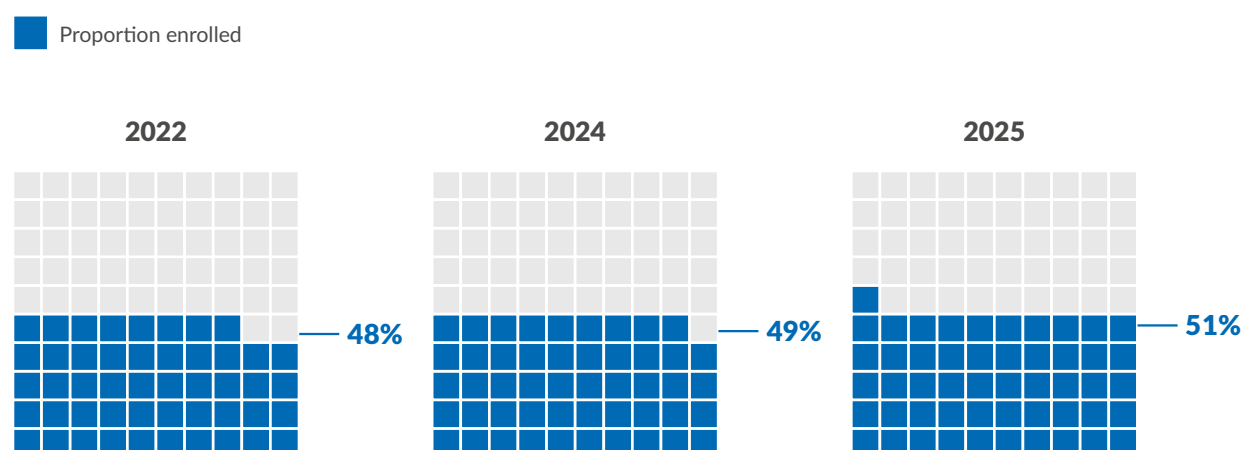
Findings from the [UNHCR Education Report 2025](#) reinforce this picture. While refugee enrolment has improved across education levels and progress has been made towards gender parity, access remains highest at primary level, with participation falling before and after primary education. Despite a small recent decline in the global refugee population, growth in the number of school-aged refugee children continues to outpace the expansion of school places, leaving millions of refugee children and youth out of school. Recent reductions in humanitarian and development funding also threaten hard-won gains, increasing pressure on

host countries and the national educational systems serving refugees and host-community learners.

Policies that allow refugee children to attend national schools are only the first step. Sustained investment, stronger partnerships, and better education data are needed to ensure that refugee children can enrol, remain in school, and learn effectively. As more countries integrate refugees into national education systems, strengthening data systems to identify and track refugee learners will become increasingly important for measuring progress and ensuring that no child is left behind. The poverty analysis that follows underscores the importance of household income, livelihoods and social protection in shaping educational outcomes.

Figure 6: Proportion of refugee children enrolled in the national education systems (primary and secondary) | 2022, 2024 and 2025

Percentage



Refugee children face a higher risk of poverty than children in their host populations.

As the number of forcibly displaced children remains at historically high levels, poverty remains one of the greatest threats to their well-being and future prospects. Evidence from the [World Bank-UNHCR Refugee Welfare Report 2026](#) shows that refugees are consistently poorer than host

populations across all countries analyzed, with children among the most affected. **In seven out of the 10 countries examined, at least 75 per cent of refugee children live below international poverty lines**, undermining children's overall well-being and protection and increasing the risk that poverty persists across generations (see Figure 7).¹⁷

The data show a consistent poverty gap between refugee and host-community children in every context examined. The challenge is particularly acute in low-income countries, where refugee monetary poverty is widespread. When assessed

through a multidimensional lens, deprivations remain widespread, encompassing not only low incomes but also limited access to education and basic infrastructure such as clean water, sanitation and electricity. The gap reflects not only a lack of income, but also a lack of opportunities. Refugee children are more likely to live in households with restricted access to jobs and livelihoods, lower school participation, and inadequate access to basic infrastructure and services. These overlapping forms of exclusion limit refugee children's ability to develop the skills, health and resilience needed to break the cycle of poverty and expose them to harmful practices, such as child marriage, child labour and other child protection risks.

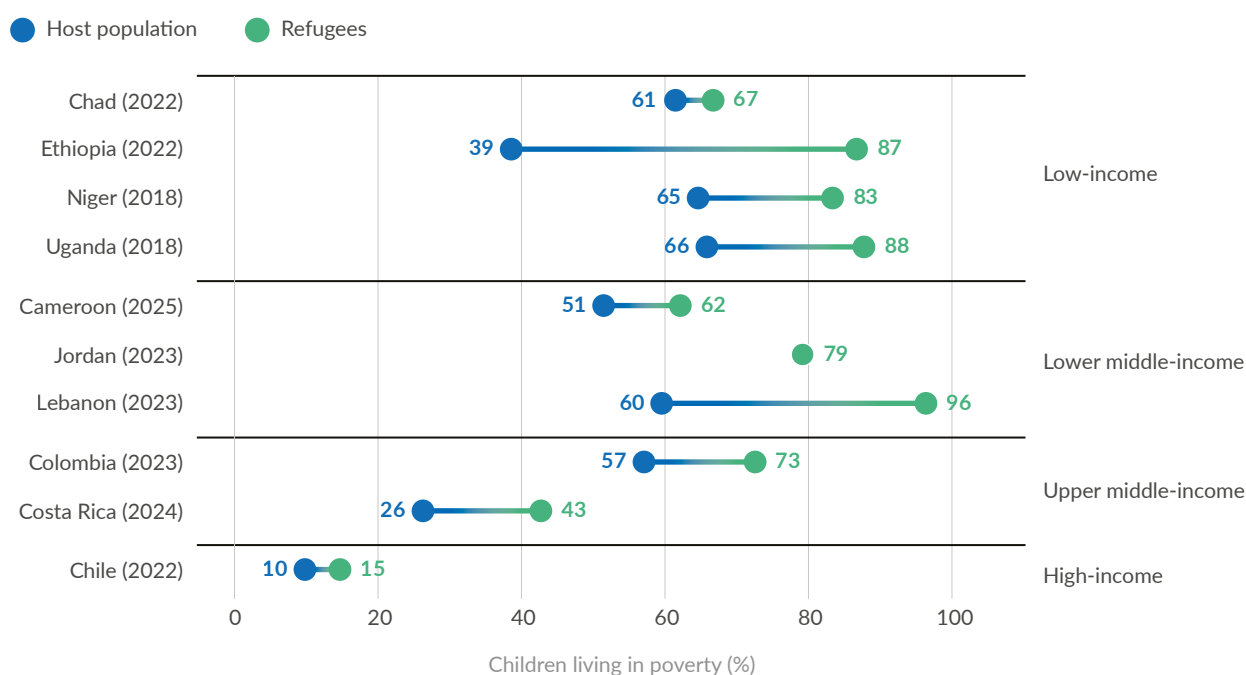
The evidence also points to clear pathways to improved welfare. Refugee households derive most of their income from work rather than assistance, underscoring the importance of economic inclusion. Refugee children tend to experience better welfare outcomes when their caregivers can access labour markets and secure sustainable livelihoods. For

this reason, refugee households in urban and out-of-camp settings with stronger access to income-generating opportunities as well as national schools and health care facilities generally fare better than those in more isolated hosting areas.

These findings suggest that reducing child poverty among refugees requires going beyond short-term assistance. Expanding refugees' access to decent work and strengthened national services, including social protection systems, can help address the structural drivers of poverty while enhancing self-reliance. Investments in inclusion are particularly important for children because poverty experienced early in life can have lasting consequences for their development and future success. As displacement becomes increasingly protracted and resources for refugee responses come under strain, policies that promote socioeconomic inclusion, backed by predictable international responsibility-sharing, are essential to preventing a generation of refugee children from being left behind.

Figure 7: Children living in poverty¹⁸, by refugees¹⁹ and host population

Percentage



Objective 3: Expand access to third-country solution

GCR INDICATOR FRAMEWORK OUTCOME 3.1: Refugees in need have access to resettlement opportunities in an increasing number of countries

Resettlement opportunities for refugee children have fallen sharply since 2024.

Resettlement reached a record high in 2024, expanding protection opportunities for refugee children and their families. More than **116,000 refugees** departed for a new country through UNHCR-assisted resettlement, exceeding for the first time the annual target under the [Third-country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030](#). UNHCR submitted over **203,500 refugees** for resettlement, the highest number recorded since the 1990s, including **approximately 95,000 refugee children, also a record**. That progress was not sustained. Submissions of refugee children for resettlement **fell sharply to 16,500 in 2025 and just 7,700 in the first seven months of 2026** (see Figure 8). Reduced resettlement quotas in several major resettlement States are the principal driver. Because submissions precede departures by several months, these figures also indicate that departures will fall in turn.

The decline has significant implications for refugee children, given that they have consistently accounted for close to half of all refugees referred by UNHCR for resettlement over the years.

Resettlement is used for refugees with acute protection needs, including those facing legal and physical protection risks, women and girls at risk, children and adolescents at risk, and survivors of violence or torture. In 2025, **19.8 per cent** of submissions were processed as urgent and **0.8 per cent** as emergency cases. The largest submission categories were legal and/or physical protection needs (**45.7 per cent**), survivors of violence and/or torture (**25.2 per cent**), women and girls at risk (**22.6 per cent**) and children and adolescents at risk (**4.5 per cent**). Children are represented across all resettlement submission categories and not only in the *children and adolescents at risk* category. Many children are submitted as part of their family's case, or under other categories such as legal and

physical protection, medical, or survivor of violence or torture. The *children and adolescents at risk* category therefore captures only a small subset of all children submitted for resettlement. Resettlement remains a critical protection tool for children whose safety and well-being cannot be secured in countries of asylum.

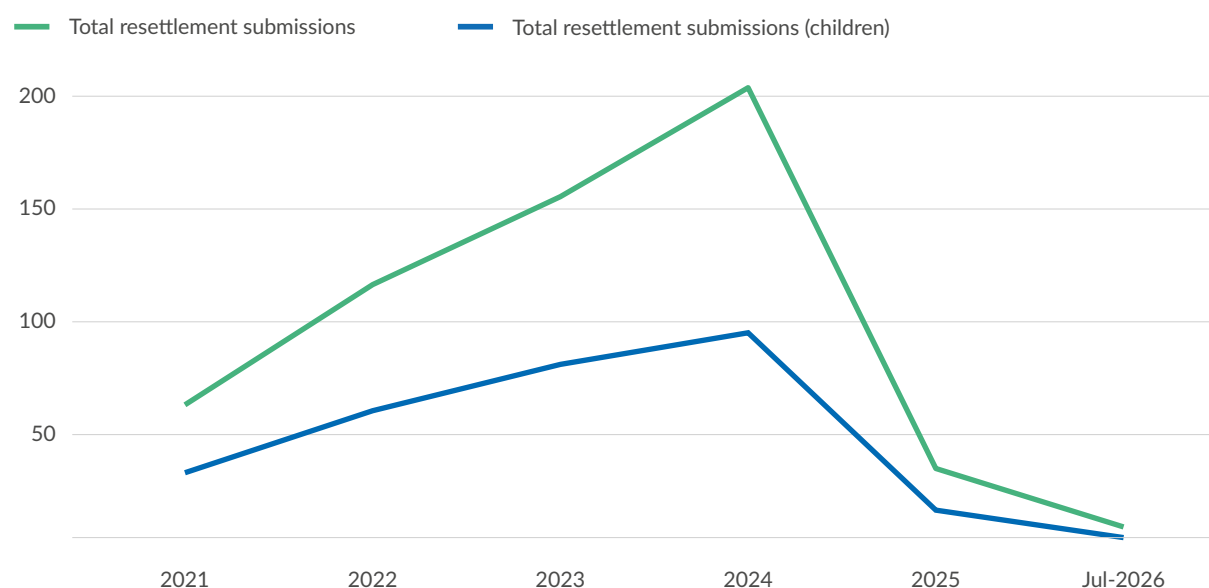
Resettlement needs remain high, with significant implications for refugee children.

An estimated **2.37 million refugees will [require resettlement in 2027](#)**. While this is slightly lower than projected needs for 2026, available places remain far below demand. Current quotas cover only a fraction of identified needs, leaving many refugees without access to this life-saving solution.

For refugee children, the consequences are particularly acute where needs are greatest. In Bangladesh, more than half of Rohingya refugees are children, and nearly 4,000 unaccompanied and separated children face heightened protection risks. In Ethiopia, children account for 51 per cent of the refugee population, including around 20,000 unaccompanied and separated children. In Kenya, approximately 22,000 unaccompanied and separated children are among those projected to require resettlement. Across refugee-hosting countries, children face risks including family separation, child labour, child marriage, trafficking, exploitation, school dropout, detention, barriers to documentation and exposure to violence.

For children with acute protection needs, resettlement often remains a vital route to safety and family unity. Its sharp decline, alongside the limited reach of complementary pathways examined next and the increase in returns under Objective 4, strengthens the case for a balanced approach across all solutions.

Figure 8: Submissions for UNHCR-assisted refugee resettlement | 2021-2026 (July)
Thousand



GCR INDICATOR FRAMEWORK OUTCOME 3.2: Refugees have access to complementary pathways for admission to third countries

Almost all permits issued to refugee children were for family reasons, while study and work pathways remain negligible.

Complementary pathways help maintain family unity or enable family reunification while progressing towards a durable solution. Between 2021 and 2024, an estimated **145,045 of the 443,040 first-entry permits** were issued by 24 European countries to children from eight countries with high refugee recognition rates (for the list of countries, see section on *Note on data sources and methodology*), or approximately **one in three**. When compared overall with other permit types (work, study, and other), issuance was almost entirely for family reasons: **143,510 permits, or nearly 99 per cent** of the total permits issued to children. Study routes accounted for an estimated **1,501 permits**, while labour routes accounted for **34** (see Figure 9). Study and work pathways remain minimal

for many refugee children as most programmes target adult students and workers. Other types of complementary pathways that refugee children may benefit from include sponsorship or humanitarian pathways, and UNHCR is working with actors to improve data in this area.

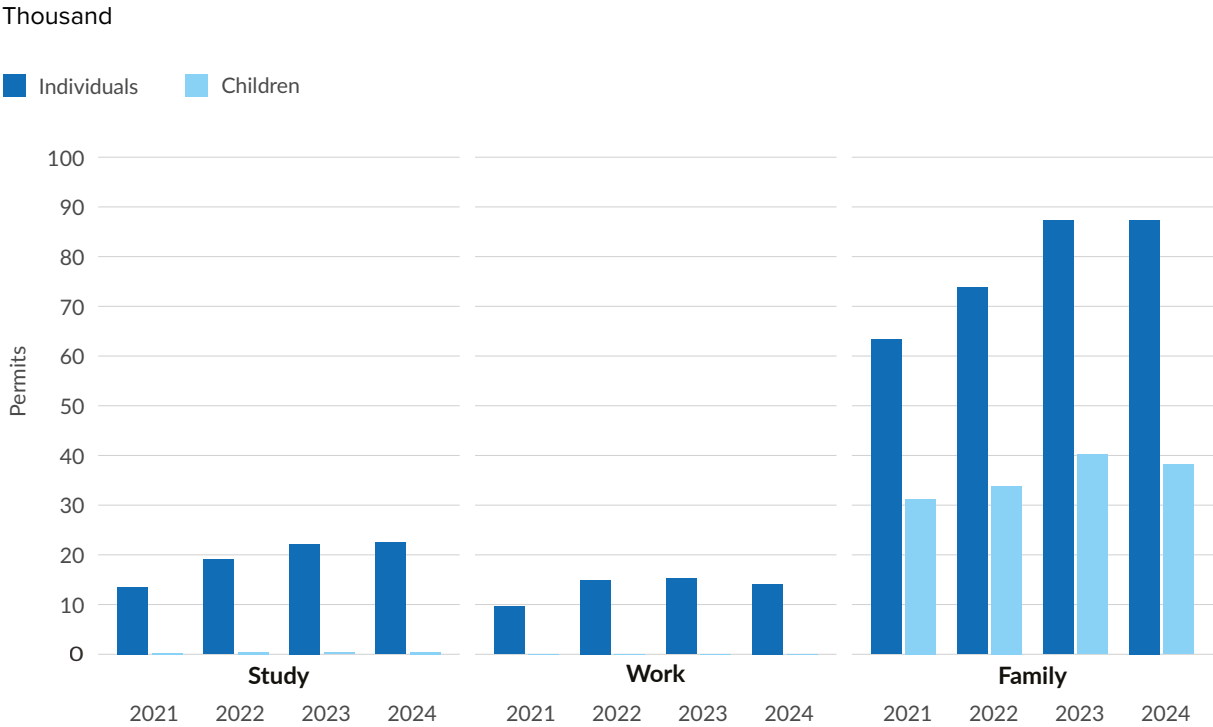
The estimated number of permits issued to children rose from **31,528 in 2021 to 40,596 in 2023**, before declining to **38,644 in 2024**. Despite this decline, the 2024 figure remained **23 per cent** above the 2021 level. This trend was driven almost entirely by family permits, which increased from **31,277 to 40,216 between 2021 and 2023, before falling to 38,184 in 2024. Issuance was highly concentrated.** Germany accounted for 66,551 children obtaining family permits, or 46 per cent of the total. Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain together accounted for approximately 83 per cent of children who received family permits.

Expanding complementary pathways requires deliberate action. States and partners should systematically identify and address the barriers that

children face, incorporate child-sensitive safeguards into pathway design and implementation, and protect family unity throughout the process. Supporting more children to access primary and secondary education and vocational training for adolescents can increase future access to

tertiary-level education pathways and labour mobility. Improvements to the data landscape on complementary pathways, as well as better age-disaggregated data, are also needed to more widely monitor whether children benefit from these opportunities.

Figure 9: Number of individuals and children from eight nationalities with high refugee recognition rates provided first-time permits to specific countries, by type | 2021-2024



Objective 4: Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity

GCR INDICATOR FRAMEWORK OUTCOME 4.1: Resources are made available to support the sustainable reintegration of returning refugees by an increasing number of donors

Between 2020 and 2024, just over 3 per cent of child-focused ODA for refugee situations supported returnee children, even as the number of children returning more than tripled.

Between 2020 and 2024, just **3.2 per cent (USD 474 million)** of child-focused ODA for refugee situations in low- and middle-income countries supported refugee returnee children and their communities of return. The remaining **96.8 per cent (USD 14.5 billion)** supported refugee children in countries of asylum and their host communities.

This reflects a wider pattern in refugee financing rather than a gap specific to children. ODA

allocated to refugee returns has consistently represented only a small share of the total ODA for refugee situations. That the shortfall is not child-specific does not lessen its consequences for children, who accounted for around two in five refugee returnees with known age in 2025 (see Outcome 4.2).

The share of child-focused ODA supporting returnee children remained low throughout the period, ranging from 2 per cent in 2020 to 3.8 per cent in 2022, before falling to 2.6 per cent in 2024. In absolute terms, funding rose from **USD 50.5 million in 2020 to USD 131.3 million in 2023, before declining to USD 75.1 million in 2024, a decline of more than 40 per cent in a single year,** steeper than the contraction in child-focused ODA overall. **Even at its peak, financing did not keep pace with the increase in returns.** Between 2020 and 2024, the number of returnee children more than tripled, while funding for returnee children rose by a smaller margin. As a result, support for reintegration remained limited relative to identified needs.

Funding has not consistently followed returnee

children. In 2020, Burundi accounted for nearly three-quarters of all child refugee returns (73 per cent) but received only about 6 per cent of child-focused ODA for returnees. By contrast, Nigeria received almost one-third of funding, despite reporting no refugee child returnees that year. Similar imbalances were observed in both 2023 and 2024. In 2023, for example, Sudan accounted for approximately 12 per cent of child returnees yet received very limited funding specifically earmarked for this group. Likewise, in 2024, Afghanistan accounted for 66 per cent of child returnees but received only 17 per cent of child-focused ODA allocated to returnee children. While challenges remain in distinguishing support for returnees from support for refugees in aid reporting, the available data suggest that funding allocations do not always correspond to the distribution of returnee children and their reintegration needs. This matters because successful return depends on access to education, protection, documentation, livelihoods and basic services. When reintegration support falls short, returnee children may face heightened risks of poverty, family separation, exploitation and disrupted access to essential services.

GCR INDICATOR FRAMEWORK OUTCOME 4.2: Refugees are able to return and reintegrate socially and economically

Refugee child returns reached their highest level in a decade in 2025, but returning home does not always mean finding safety, stability, or a viable future.

Refugee returns increased sharply in 2024 and 2025, reaching more than 4 million in 2025.

Children accounted for an estimated 1.1 million of them, the highest number recorded over the past decade (see Figure 10). While the share of children among returnees fluctuated between 2015 and 2024, it rose to around two-fifths of all refugee returns with known age in 2025, highlighting the growing importance of child-focused return and reintegration support.

The rise in returns reflects major developments in several displacement situations, including

large-scale movements to Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Sudan, South Sudan and Ukraine.

Returns on this scale do not necessarily indicate improved conditions at home and are not always voluntary. Most returns in 2025 occurred under adverse circumstances and/or to fragile contexts. In some situations, deteriorating conditions in countries of asylum, reductions in assistance, insecurity, or limited prospects in the host country have contributed to decisions to return, raising concerns about whether returns can be sustained.²⁰

For returning refugee children, the challenges are particularly significant. Many return to communities affected by conflict, damaged infrastructure, limited access to education and health care, and weakened child protection systems. For instance, 770,000 Afghan children returned in 2025 to communities struggling to provide education, food, livelihoods and other essential services. Most refugees returned due to changes in the policies of host countries

neighbouring Afghanistan, and most returns were assessed as involuntary. Many of those who returned in 2025 had weak ties to Afghanistan and limited social networks given the length of their displacement. Access to education for returnee children is more limited than for Afghans who remained in their country, particularly for girls: only two-thirds of boys and less than half of girls reported having the same access to education as other children in their communities. Girls faced particular barriers to schooling, while widespread economic hardship and limited reintegration support threatened children's well-being and long-term prospects.²¹

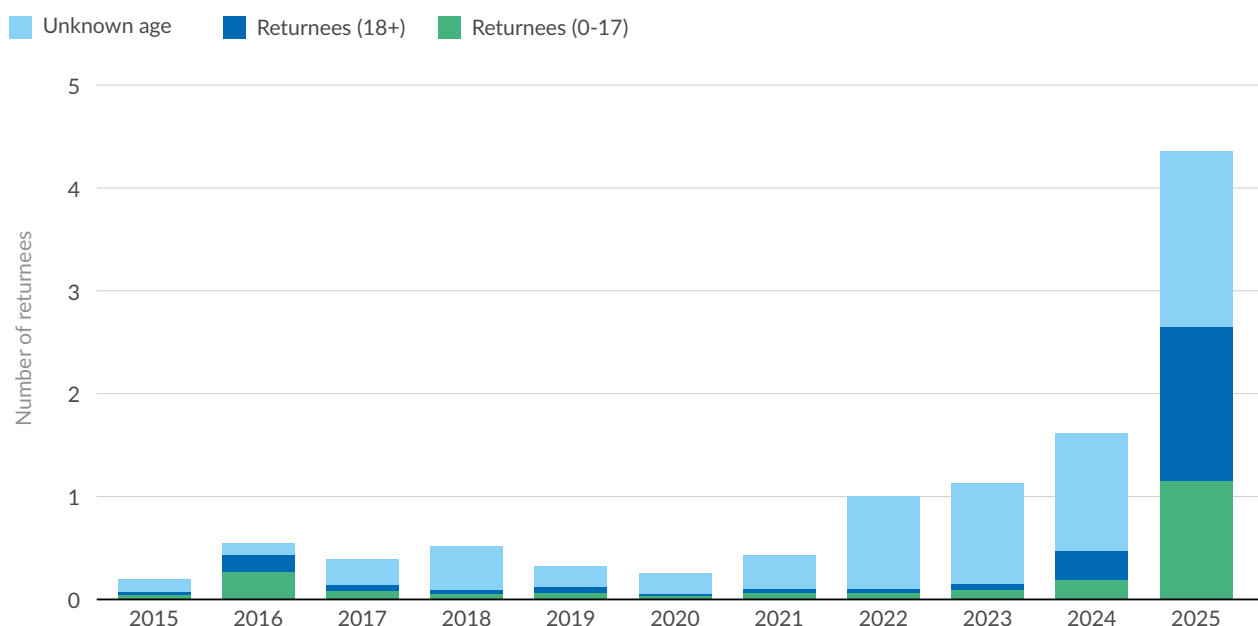
In the Syrian Arab Republic, more than a decade of displacement has left nearly 900,000 Syrian refugee children born outside their country of origin. While growing numbers of families are returning, damaged infrastructure, limited services and widespread poverty threaten children's ability to safely reintegrate and rebuild their futures.²² Refugee returns to Sudan have continued despite the country's severe humanitarian and protection challenges. However, the conditions needed to support children's safe and sustainable reintegration remain limited in many areas of return. The estimated 350,000 children who returned in

2025 face grave protection risks, including family separation, recruitment by armed actors, sexual violence, trafficking and exploitation, while severely constrained child protection services leave many without the support they urgently need.²³

Sustainable return and reintegration require more than crossing a border. Returning refugee children need access to education, health care, documentation, protection services and opportunities for their families to rebuild their lives. Without adequate investment in recovery and reintegration, returns may not be durable and can increase the risk of renewed displacement. Following an increase in the number of refugee children returning home in recent years, ensuring that returns are voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable remains essential. Strengthening support for communities of return, alongside continued international solidarity and responsibility-sharing, will be critical to helping refugee children translate returning into a genuine opportunity for a better future.

Figure 10: Number of refugee returnees, by age | 2015-2025

Million



Global Refugee Forum pledges

Child-focused commitments are being implemented at a high rate, showing that stakeholders can deliver when commitments are specific and embedded in national systems.

Children remain at the centre of international efforts to support refugees and stateless people. As of August 2026, the [GRF pledge database](#) included approximately **480 child-focused pledges** out of around **2,800 active pledges, roughly one in six. Nearly 90 per cent of child-focused pledges are either being implemented or have already been fulfilled.** These commitments demonstrate broad recognition that displaced and stateless children require targeted support to access protection, services and opportunities. The high rate of progress suggests that the GCR stakeholders are translating commitments into concrete action across a wide range of contexts, sectors, and partnerships.

Most child-focused pledges are not implemented as stand-alone initiatives. Instead, they are integrated into broader efforts to strengthen the inclusion and well-being of refugees and host communities alike. Common areas of focus include education, health care, child protection, economic inclusion, and gender equality. Many pledges also support legal identity, birth registration, prevention of statelessness, mental health and psychological support, nutrition, family unity, and access to national services. Embedding children's needs within wider programmes strengthens inclusion in national systems, so that they can benefit from long-term development investments. This approach is especially important because children's protection, learning and well-being depend on connected systems, including schools, health services, social protection, civil registration, community-based

protection and child-friendly justice systems. It may however make the results for refugee children harder to isolate and track, which is one of the reasons some data gaps identified in this Brief persist.

Partnerships are central to this approach. Multi-stakeholder pledges bring together governments, development actors, humanitarian organizations, civil society and refugee-led organizations to pool expertise, mobilize resources and scale up effective solutions. By working together, stakeholders can strengthen national capacities, expand service delivery and improve outcomes for children and their families. These partnerships also help align humanitarian support with national development plans, while creating space for affected communities, including refugee-led organizations, to contribute to design, implementation and monitoring where this can be done safely and meaningfully.

These efforts contribute directly to the objectives of the GCR. They help ease pressures on host countries, strengthen refugee self-reliance, expand access to solutions and support conditions for return in safety and dignity. They also support **UNHCR's 50 by 35 vision**, which aims to expand opportunities for refugees to achieve greater self-reliance and access pathways to solutions by 2035.

But the evidence in this Brief shows persistent gaps and, more importantly, the risk of losing the gains achieved. Child-focused financing fell in 2024, and the wider aid contraction is deepening. Resettlement submissions for children fell by more than 80 per cent between 2024 and 2025. Children access complementary pathways almost exclusively through family permits. Returns have risen faster than the financing that would make them sustainable. **The Global Refugee Forum 2027 offers the opportunity to close these gaps through specific, measurable and adequately financed commitments, with reporting that shows not only that pledges are implemented, but what changed for children as a result.**

Note on data sources and methodology

OBJECTIVE 1: Ease pressures on host countries

Data Source: [OECD Creditor Reporting System \(CRS\)](#). The CRS systematically records Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Other Official Flows (OOFs) reported by members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and by multilateral institutions, including United Nations entities, which report on the use of unearmarked or core funding. A small number of non-DAC providers also report voluntarily. The decision to track ODA for refugee situations in the CRS reflects the OECD's commitment to regularly provide data for the GCR indicator framework.

Data Coverage and Methodology: The data cover development financing to OECD's low- and middle-income countries as provided by 72 respondents, including 45 bilateral donors (33 DAC donors and 12 non-DAC donors) and eight multilateral development banks. It also covers core funding used by 15 United Nations agency partners and four other international organizations. In the 2024 data, there are also eight private philanthropic providers.

This analysis applies an adapted version of UNICEF's methodology to estimate child-focused ODA in refugee situations. Using the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) and other official development finance data for 2020-2023, activities benefiting refugees, host communities and refugee returnees were screened using project descriptions, sector and purpose codes, delivery channels, policy markers, SDG classifications and child-related keywords. The methodology was adapted to capture investments benefiting refugee children, host-community children and child returnees across humanitarian, development and peace interventions. The estimates indicate the scale and composition of child-focused ODA, not funding that directly reaches children. Results should be interpreted with caution. OECD CRS data do not systematically capture beneficiaries' ages, so classification relies on project coding and donor-reported descriptions. Some child-focused activities may be missed, while broader programmes may be included when children are identified as a significant beneficiary group. The estimates are therefore best suited for analyzing broad funding patterns and trends over time.

OBJECTIVE 2: Enhance refugee self-reliance

Refugee birth registration coverage

Data Source: UNHCR household survey and assessment data compiled through [Results Monitoring Surveys](#) (RMS), Multi-Sector Needs Assessments (MSNA), [Forced Displacement Surveys](#) (FDS), and Socio-Economic Insights Surveys (SEIS), 2022-2025.

Data Coverage and Methodology: The data measure the proportion of refugees and asylum-seekers under age five whose births have

been registered with a civil authority. Estimates are derived from country-specific surveys and assessments across 34 country-year observations in 27 countries. Data are available for: Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Czechia, Djibouti, Estonia, Ethiopia, Hungary, India, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Somalia, Tajikistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia. Results are not globally representative and should not be compared

directly across countries, as survey methodologies, sampling designs, target populations, reference periods, and questionnaire wording may differ. Sample sizes vary considerably, and some datasets lack information on sampling frames and case counts. Data are available only for countries and years where relevant surveys were conducted and should therefore be interpreted as indicative rather than representative of all refugees and other forcibly displaced populations worldwide.

Proportion of refugee children enrolled in the national education system (primary and secondary)

Data Source: [UNHCR's Global Results Framework, COMPASS](#), and UNHCR annual education data reporting, which includes data compiled by UNHCR operations from national reports, administrative records and/or other authoritative sources.

Data Coverage and Methodology: The data on gross enrolment covers 48 countries with data available for 2022, 2024 and 2025. Data are available for: Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines,

Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Türkiye, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Proportion of refugee children and host community populations living below the national poverty line of the host country

Data coverage: Cameroon, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, Niger, and Uganda. For Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Niger, and Uganda, the survey population coverage includes refugees and host communities. Specifically, this covers refugees from various countries of origin living in camps, settlements, informal sites, urban areas, or both camp and out-of-camp settings, as well as host communities residing in surrounding areas. For Chile (2022), the survey population coverage includes Venezuelan, Haitian, and Colombian foreign-born nationals, together with the general national population. For Colombia (2022, 2023), the survey population coverage includes Venezuelan foreign-born nationals and the general national population. For Costa Rica (2023, 2024), the survey population coverage includes Nicaraguan foreign-born nationals and the general national population. For Jordan (2021, 2023), the survey population coverage is limited to Syrian refugees, including those living in Za'atari and Azraq camps as well as those residing outside camps across all regions.

OBJECTIVE 3: Expand access to third-country solutions

Number of refugee children who departed on resettlement from the host country

Data Source: UNHCR's Administrative Records, [Refugee Data Finder](#).

Data Coverage and Methodology: Data are available for the countries of origin, asylum, and resettlement from 2003 to 2025. Departure figures reported by UNHCR may not match resettlement statistics published by States, as Government figures may include submissions received outside of UNHCR resettlement processes.

Number of children from eight nationalities with high recognition rates provided first-time permits

Data Source: OECD, [Eurostat](#) and UNHCR's Administrative Records.

Data Coverage and Methodology: Data on complementary pathways remain limited, and the [OECD-UNHCR Safe Pathways for Refugees](#) report remains the most comprehensive source. The dataset covers eight key nationalities with high refugee recognition rates (Afghanistan, Eritrea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Venezuela) and provides information on first-time entry permits issued for education, labour and family reunification purposes. For this analysis of children, the data focus on 24 destination countries, primarily Euro area countries, for which Eurostat provides age-disaggregated data. The analysis estimated the number of permits

granted to children through complementary pathways by applying child-age proportions from Eurostat age-disaggregated data to the corresponding OECD-UNHCR permit data. The Eurostat data are available for the period 2016-2024 and cover the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France,

Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Despite these limitations, the available data provide a sufficiently robust basis for assessing progress in expanding access to complementary pathways for refugees.

OBJECTIVE 4: Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity

Volume of ODA for the benefit of child refugee returnees in the ODA recipient country of origin

See data source, coverage and methodology for Objective 1 above.

Number of refugee children returning to their country of origin

Data Source: UNHCR's Administrative Records, return monitoring and household surveys.

Data Coverage and Methodology: Demographic data of refugee returnees is limited, while returnee data is more widely available. In 2025, 61 former asylum countries and 42 countries of return reported refugee returns, but the number of reporting countries varies by year. The number of children is calculated from figures reported by countries of return, where available. The figures include all recorded returns, including those occurring in precarious conditions, highlighting the need for improved methodologies to better identify returns that are sustainable and carried out safely and with dignity.

Endnotes

- 1 Includes children (0-17 years old) who are refugees, people in refugee-like situations and other people in need of international protection. This excludes Palestine refugee children under UNRWA's mandate. All further references to refugee children in this brief include all three of these population groups unless otherwise stated.
- 2 The underlying classification of countries into low-, middle- and high-income groups is based on the [World Bank's income groups](#), which are updated annually. Countries' income levels are determined by calculating Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.
- 3 UNHCR (2026), "[Route-based approach: Strengthening protection and solutions in the context of mixed and onward movements](#)," EC/77/SC/CRP.12, 96th meeting of the Standing Committee, 4 June 2026.
- 4 UN DESA (2026), [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026](#).
- 5 The conflict-related deaths data used in this analysis are drawn from SDG indicator 16.1.2 and were provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). OHCHR has documented conflict-related deaths for 20 armed conflict situations: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq,

Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Philippines, Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen. From 2023 to 2025, thousands of Palestinian children died in the conflict in Gaza, accounting for nearly seven out of ten children killed in conflicts worldwide and resulting in hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people. Because this displacement was overwhelmingly internal rather than refugee displacement, the State of Palestine falls outside the scope of this analysis of refugee children. For more information on the data for conflict-related deaths, see United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), [Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Statistical Annex](#) (E/2026/73, Annex), 2026, page 225.

- 6** United Nations, General Assembly and Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General](#), A/80/723-S/2026/357, 17 June 2026.
- 7** For the purpose of tracking concessional development finance for refugee situations from the recipient perspective, the use of the term ODA in this report refers to “ODA and concessional outflows from multilateral organisations”. For more information, see E. Boral-Rolland, A. Hurwitz (2025), [“Development Finance for Refugee Situations 2022-23”](#), OECD Publishing, Paris.
- 8** Child-focused ODA for refugee situations was identified using an adapted version of [UNICEF’s Child-Focused ODA Analytical Pipeline](#), which identified activities benefiting refugees, host communities, and refugee returnees based on purpose codes, policy markers, delivery channels, SDG classifications, keywords, and project descriptions. As the OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS) does not systematically track child beneficiaries, these estimates should be interpreted with caution and depend on the completeness and quality of donor reporting.
- 9** Child-focused ODA accounted for a relatively stable share of total ODA between 2014 and 2021, ranging from 13 to 17 per cent. The share increased to 18 per cent in 2022, before declining to 16 per cent in both 2023 and 2024. Overall, the data suggest a modest increase in the prioritization of children within ODA over the past decade, although recent gains have not been sustained.
- 10** OECD (2026), [A historic decline in foreign aid: Preliminary 2025 ODA data](#), OECD Data Explainers, Paris.
- 11** UNHCR (2025), [Global Report 2024, Outcome Area 5: Child Protection](#); UNHCR (2026), [Global Report 2025, Outcome Area 5: Child Protection](#); UNHCR (2025), [Global Appeal 2026, Outcome Area 5: Child Protection](#).
- 12** UNHCR (2025), [Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report 2025](#), page 37.
- 13** While the GCR indicator framework measures refugees’ legal access to decent work and freedom of movement, these indicators are less applicable to young children. This brief therefore examines birth registration, given both data availability and its conceptual relevance to inclusion.
- 14** UNHCR (2025), [Birth Registration of Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons](#).
- 15** UNICEF (2024), [Birth Registration for Every Child by 2030: Are We on Track?](#), and UNICEF (2024), [The Right Start in Life: Global Levels and Trends in Birth Registration](#).
- 16** UNHCR household survey and assessment data compiled through Results Monitoring Surveys (RMS), Multi-Sector Needs Assessments (MSNA), Forced Displacement Surveys (FDS), and Socio-Economic Insights Surveys (SEIS), 2022-2025. Data cover 27 countries, including 10 high-income, 2 upper-middle-income, 9 lower-middle-income and 6 low-income countries, with available survey data on birth registration among refugees and asylum-seekers under age five. Estimates are not globally representative and may not be directly comparable across countries due to differences in survey methodology, population coverage, sampling, and reference periods. Data availability is uneven across countries and years.
- 17** World Bank and UNHCR (2026), [Refugee Welfare Report 2026: Poverty and the Importance of Socioeconomic Inclusion \(2026\)](#). Estimates are based on harmonized household survey data comparing

refugee and host-community poverty outcomes across 10 host economies. These estimates represent a lower bound of child poverty, as they are based on children living in poor households. Household-level poverty measures may underestimate child poverty because they do not capture intra-household inequalities. Evidence from refugee settings in Kenya and Uganda, as well as from the general population in Africa, shows that children often receive less than their per capita share of household resources (Beltramo, Calvi, De Giorgi and Sarr, 2023; Brown, Ravallion and Van de Walle). In the report, child poverty refers to the poverty rate among children ages 0-14, in line with the World Bank's Poverty and Equity Assessments guidelines. This differs slightly from the 0-17 definition used throughout this Brief.

- 18** International poverty lines vary by country depending on the country classification applicable in the survey year (see [World Bank country classification](#)). In low-income countries, the \$3/day (2021 PPP) line is applied; in lower-middle-income countries, the \$4.20/day (2021 PPP) line is applied; and in upper-middle-income countries, the \$8.3/day (2021 PPP) line is applied. Please see Table 3 of the [Refugee Welfare Report 2026: Poverty and the Importance of Socioeconomic Inclusion \(2026\)](#) for the application of the various international poverty lines, taking into consideration the specific country cases.
- 19** In Cameroon, the refugee group refers to refugees from the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including those living in and outside camps/settlements in the Far North, North, East and Adamawa, as well as host communities near refugee camps/settlements. In Chad, it refers to Sudanese and Central African refugees and host communities. In Chile, it refers to Venezuelan, Colombian and Haitian refugees and migrants with protection needs. In Colombia, it refers to Venezuelan foreign-born nationals. In Costa Rica, it refers to Nicaraguan foreign-born nationals. In Ethiopia, it refers to refugees from Eritrea, South Sudan and Somalia living in camps and out-of-camp locations, as well as nearby host communities. In Jordan, it refers to Syrian refugees living in camps and out-of-camps. In Lebanon, it refers to Syrian refugees and host communities. In Niger, it refers to refugees from Mali and Nigeria living in camps or informal sites, and host communities near refugee sites. In Uganda, it refers to refugees from Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo living in settlements and nearby host communities.
- 20** UNHCR (2026), [Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2025](#).
- 21** UNHCR (2025), [Afghanistan Post-Return Monitoring Survey Report](#).
- 22** UNHCR (2025), [Coming Home: One Year Into Syria's Transition](#).
- 23** UNHCR (2026), [Sudan Situation: UNHCR Monthly External Update #120 – June 2026](#)

2026

GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES INDICATOR BRIEF

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

COVER: Kindergarten students celebrate 5th of June Environment Day
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