



BLUEPRINT FOR JOINT ACTION:

CASE FOR INVESTMENT



The vision

All refugee children deserve a fair chance in life: they should be safe from physical harm and exploitation, be living in clean and hygienic environments, be able to learn, and to look forward to a future where they can have the same life opportunities as other children.



*Cover photo: A young Syrian refugee girl is photographed outside her family shelter in Bardarash refugee camp in Duhok Governorate. © UNHCR/Firas Al-Khateeb
This page: Somali boy at Kobe refugee camp in Ethiopia. © UNHCR/Jiro Ose*

The challenge

Over 10 million children today are refugees, and the number keeps growing. More than 60 per cent of all refugees are displaced for decades, served by under-resourced humanitarian systems designed for the short term. Children are unable to access education and protection services on par with nationals and are thus unable to thrive.

The impact of a response aimed for the short term – a ‘sticking plaster’ response - is eroded by competition for resources and the lack of a long-term vision. The development system is mostly calibrated to focus on nationals, and often does not extend to reach the marginal areas and camps where refugees are hosted. For too long refugee-hosting states and the international community alike have missed the opportunity to leverage development capacities to build sustainable solutions, to the benefit of all children.

As a result, 3.7 million refugee children are out of school. Whereas the enrolment rate of refugee children at primary level is 63 per cent; by secondary level less than a quarter (24 per cent) are in school - and many suffer exploitation and violence in situations of child labour and early marriage. At tertiary level, only 3 per cent of refugees have access to learning opportunities.

Globally, 6 out of 10 children suffer some form of violence, and refugee children are amongst the most vulnerable, with higher proportions of at-risk groups such as unaccompanied children, working children and children with disabilities. Refugees are often hosted in poor, marginalised areas where infrastructure is threadbare, and diseases linked to unsafe water and sanitation are a serious threat to life. Every child in a refugee settlement has to share a shower with an average of 22 other people. Less than half of refugee households in settlements have a toilet, and for each useable water tap there are over 350 users.



Providing potable water and raising awareness among children about the importance of hand washing is essential for preventing the spread of COVID-19. © UNHCR/Rasheed Hussein Rasheed

The COVID-19 pandemic has put refugee children and their families at even greater risk and introduced new threats to their survival and wellbeing. Securing equitable access to essential services like water, sanitation, protection and education has taken on a new urgency in the current crisis and the economic aftermath that will follow. Refugees' limited access to water and sanitation and overcrowded environment puts them more at risk of infection. Already faced with barriers to accessing health services pre-COVID, refugees are now at risk from a breakdown in continuation of essential services, such as routine immunization, maternal, newborn care, HIV treatment, nutrition services and treatment for other life-threatening diseases such as pneumonia.

The closing of schools has exposed refugee children to severe protection risks. Many rely on schools for key health and protective services, and are less likely than those not displaced to access other ways of continuing education, such as virtual classrooms. This is exacerbating both learning and protection risks, likely to result in increases in trafficking, child labour, child marriage and other forms of abuse and exploitation. Many refugee children- especially girls – may never return to school.

The global increase in xenophobia and discrimination is taking its toll on refugee children and their families. Refugee youth, especially those moving irregularly, are at heightened risk of being stigmatized or becoming targets of violence.

To emerge stronger from the economic disruption that COVID-19 has caused, and to build a more equitable and resilient society, we need to include refugees and other forcibly displaced in recovery plans and to remove all the barriers that inhibit them from reaching their full potential. If we don't accelerate efforts to reach the most vulnerable children in the world, we cannot realise the SDGs and we will miss out on the contribution these children can make to a prosperous and peaceful future - simply because we failed to seize the opportunity before us to build economically and socially sustainable solutions for refugees and the communities that host them.

The opportunity

The current political and economic climate offer an unprecedented historic opportunity to achieve lasting positive change for refugee and vulnerable host community children:

1. There is unprecedented political will to facilitate inclusion of refugees in national service delivery systems. At the Global Refugee Forum at the end of 2019, member states and development partners committed to a paradigm shift in refugee support and protection. Rather than creating duplicate unsustainable and costly humanitarian structures for refugees, such as camps, there was global commitment to work with governments to include refugees and returnees in relevant development programmes.
2. In the current economic downturn, more than ever before the world needs smart solutions with multiplier benefits – like strengthening service delivery systems that benefit vulnerable host communities as well as refugees. Beyond avoiding the costly fall out of xenophobia and its impact in fragile contexts, the positive dividends of social cohesion and enhanced human capital produced by an inclusive approach are sustained and amplified over generations, as both host communities and refugees access the support they need to flourish and contribute socially, culturally and economically. Strengthening local service delivery systems and facilitating access to these for refugees is not only more efficient and sustainable than maintaining parallel systems, it also offsets the risk of discrimination and disenfranchisement by creating the conditions conducive for a peaceful and prosperous future for refugees in the host country or in their country of origin, should voluntary return become possible.
3. The recovery to the current Covid-19 crisis is a tipping point. As the UN Secretary-General has said: inclusion pays, exclusion costs. With refugees having been widely included in immediate health response plans, they also need to be included in the multi-billion dollar social protection schemes, safety nets and recovery packages now being mobilized to provide the lasting support and stepping stone to self-reliance that the poorest families need.
4. UN reform has created both the pressure and the space for UN Agencies to innovate. This is a new, time-bound opportunity for large agencies such as UNICEF and UNHCR to streamline; double down on efficiencies; leverage our complementary capacities; and refocus on achieving our urgent shared objectives.

The proposition: a triple dividend

Between now and 2021, UNHCR and UNICEF will work intensively across 11 focus countries (comprising of 20% of the refugee child caseload) to transform the way we programme for and advocate on behalf of refugee and host community children. In 2022, we will take this to scale globally across all countries where we work.

The blueprint proposition is a bold one, as together we seeking to make a shift in the way that refugees are supported internationally. The blueprint is UNHCR and UNICEF's premier initiative to realize the inclusion agenda and strengthen national services so that they are sustainable and inclusive for everyone. The theory of change is built around outputs which seek to change the way governments include refugees in national systems. This is the first step towards the end of camps, and the end of a parallel and unsustainable system, designed for a short-term humanitarian response.

Through the blueprint, we are also taking up the challenge and the imperative afforded by UN reform to innovate, build on success and reimagine our collaboration to redouble our effectiveness, predictability and efficiency in achieving sustainable results for children. From 2022 onwards, we will scale what works well to a globally-led transformation.

The resources invested in the first two years of this joint effort will generate a three-fold dividend:



-  **1. Positive results now for millions of children at risk of being left behind**
-  **2. Sustainable solutions for refugee children and their families through inclusion and eventual self-reliance**
-  **3. Globally scaled efficiency gains, capitalizing on and accelerating UN Reform**

The plan

In each of 11 focus countries¹, UNICEF and UNHCR will work jointly to advocate for refugees and returnees to have access to national services in countries of origin, countries of transit and refugee-hosting countries, and, where needed, support governments in making nationally led services a reality for all children, regardless of their status.

Since working to achieve this level of inclusion in national systems is a new approach, UNHCR and UNICEF will use the Blueprint period to innovate, learn and develop approaches to support a global scale up in 2022.

While the primary aim of the Blueprint is to move the needle on refugee inclusion in nationally led Education, WASH, Child Protection services, its secondary objective is to reform and refresh the UNICEF/UNHCR partnership so that it is more predictable, cost effective, streamlined and efficient. Administrative costs will be reduced as a result of the work under the blueprint, with country offices devising operational strategies to, inter alia, share common services, human resources, supply chains and partnerships. The blueprint results framework includes a series of metrics for monitoring results as well as cost efficiencies and savings to the UN system.



Nagham al Kasem, a Syrian refugee from the suburbs of Damascus who has been living in Lebanon less than one year during an accelerated learning program at the Qalamoun School outside of Tripoli, Lebanon. © UNHCR/Shawn Baldwin

¹ These countries (Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, and Rwanda), which include 3 of the top 10 refugee hosting countries in the world, are a diverse group of contexts with unique challenges and opportunities, offering a rich basis for learning.

Leveraging complementary strengths

As the two UN agencies mandated to support children and refugees respectively, UNICEF and UNHCR have complementary strengths which can be leveraged to achieve amplified results for refugee children and the communities that host them, as set out below.

UNICEF STRENGTHS	UNHCR STRENGTHS	POTENTIAL FOR AMPLIFIED RESULTS
Data and evidence on host community children and strong voice on the rights of all children	Data, evidence and understanding of the specific needs and protection of refugee children	Equitable and inclusive approach benefitting both refugees and host communities, in line with SDGs
Strong teams at capital level working on both humanitarian and development tracks	Extensive field presence in refugee hosting locations and proven track record of delivery in humanitarian settings	Effective, evidence based support to and capacity building of government which is informed by participation of refugee and host community populations – and accountable to them
Expertise in social policy and public financing for children, child rights and systems strengthening	Expertise in refugee protection and frontline delivery of tailored services for refugees	Sustainably funded, strengthened national service delivery systems that are accessible to and appropriate for the most vulnerable children, including refugee children and their families
Established collaboration with line ministries providing services for children, as well as national statistics offices, planning offices and other parts of central government	Mandated authority on refugee issues, close collaboration ministries handling refugee population and supervisory responsibility based on the refugee convention	A whole of government approach to ensuring delivery of services to refugees, grounded in inclusion of refugees in national data sets, development plans, policies and budgets

Building on successes to date

Our proposition is underpinned by experience in bold, out-of-the box thinking and the pursuit of common goals in some of the worlds largest and most protracted refugee settings. For example:

Since 2014 UNHCR and UNICEF have collaborated with a wide range of other partners to strengthen the response to the Syria crisis through a joint initiative called No Lost Generation. The agencies used this platform to jointly advocate and programme for inclusion of refugee children in national schools. Today, over 1.3m refugee children from Syria are in formal general education, where their learning achievements can be recognized and certified, supporting their future opportunities. Using the joint No Lost Generation platform and their leadership roles in the response, UNICEF and UNHCR have been able to align both the advocacy messages and the datasets of all key actors in the response to help accelerate and measure further progress.

In Gambella in Ethiopia UNICEF, UNHCR, private sector actors and various government entities partnered to provide resilient integrated water and sanitation services for both the refugees and host communities. In the spirit of localization and to improve the sustainability of services, UNICEF and UNHCR developed a public–private partnership model that leveraged private sector expertise to professionalize the government’s institutional and human resource capacities. And having developed a sound business model for service delivery, which includes optimal service provision and improved cost recovery, the service providers are now better placed to cover their operation and maintenance costs and remain sustainable in the long run.

This strategic shift from water trucking for refugees to the development of a permanent water system serving 210,000 refugees and 20,000 local community members has helped to alleviate tensions between the refugees and the host community, and it is also generating learning around a model potentially replicable at scale. An economic analysis found that the costs of water trucking for two years were equivalent to the capital expenditure required to build the entire water network; and that nationwide for every 1 USD spent on permanent water systems 5 USD could be saved by eliminating the costs of water trucking once the system is fully functional.

Results for refugee and host community children

Under the Blueprint UNICEF and UNHCR will accelerate progress towards 3 goals:

1. Support refugee hosting governments to include refugee children and families in national policies, plans, budgets and service delivery systems where feasible;
2. Accelerate access to education, WASH and child protection & Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response services for refugee and host community families at risk of being left behind; and
3. Deliver a measurably more effective and efficient joint response for refugee children, their families and host communities.

In the 11 focus countries our actions for refugee and host community children will, by 2021:

- Reach up to 10 million refugee children, their families and host communities with essential services such as education, clean water, sanitation and hygiene.²
- Achieve a significant increase in provision of clean water, safely managed sanitation services, and hand hygiene services for refugees and host communities.
- Secure access to hand hygiene for more than 1.2 million refugees within the first year.
- Ensure access to learning for nearly 1.8 million refugee and host community children and youth.
- Double the number of children, adolescents and caregivers accessing child protection services and increase by threefold the number of staff trained on key issues.
- Close the gap in birth registration by registering 36,000 new-born refugees, an increase of 88 per cent to address the low birth registration rates in some Blueprint countries.
- Strengthen national data systems to ensure refugee children are no longer invisible but are counted and can be included in plans and budgets.

Efficiencies

By modelling an innovative, effective and efficient collaboration, the Blueprint will also directly contribute to UN reform in the following ways:






- Through strategic use of complementary expertise and human resources across 6 UNICEF regions / 5 UNHCR regions the initiative can, by 2021, secure significant cost efficiencies.
- Globally agreed data sharing and analysis practices will add value and generate efficiencies in support of country level programming and facilitate the provision of timely, effective protection and assistance.
- Other significant efficiencies will be achieved across Blueprint countries through sharing technical staff; consolidating common processes such as assessments of partners; and alignment of procurement and distribution pipelines.

² This figure, which represents an increase of 68 per cent in service delivery to children in Blueprint focus countries, is an aggregate figure based on targets per delivery of each service rather than per child.

Resources required

To achieve the goals set out above, adequate funding is required for the full range of planned activities in Education, Wash and Child Protection for both agencies in the Blueprint countries, as set out in planning documents and appeals. Within this broader envelope, the following resources are required specifically to achieve Blueprint goals.³

All activities are being conducted together with, and in support of Government, to improve capacity to include refugees in national systems, and strengthen these systems.

GOAL	RESOURCES REQUIRED	RESULTS BY 2021 IN 11 COUNTRIES
 <p>Increase inclusion of refugee children in national policies, plans, budgets and service delivery systems</p>	USD 1.7 million	Measurable increase in inclusion of refugee children in national budgets within a defined scale
 <p>Support government to accelerate education for refugee and host community children</p>	USD 44.3 million	<p>800,000 children and youth provided with individual education learning materials</p> <p>1 million children and youth enrolled in pre-primary, primary and secondary education levels</p> <p>9,000 refugees enrolled in tertiary level technical and vocational education and training</p>
 <p>Support government to accelerate WASH for refugee and host community children and their families</p>	USD 150 million	<p>1.9 million people served with basic+ water services</p> <p>1.8 million people served with safely managed sanitation services</p> <p>2.8 million people served with basic hygiene services</p> <p>1.2 million people reached with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items) and services</p>
 <p>Support government to accelerate child protection & GBV services for refugee and host community children</p>	USD 40.7 million	<p>37,000 refugee children with birth registered</p> <p>900 staff across all sectors trained in basic psychosocial support principles</p> <p>201,600 children, adolescents and caregivers receiving community based mental health and psychosocial support and child protection services</p>
 <p>Increase effectiveness and efficiency of UNICEF and UNHCR's joint response</p>	USD 0.8 million	Efficiencies achieved, costed and scaled
Total	USD 236.5 million	

³ This table is based on plans jointly developed by UNHCR and UNICEF in 8 out of the 11 Blueprint countries; projected results and resources required will increase when the remaining 3 plans are finalized.

